



CAREER SERVICES OFFICE

Navigating the Perfect Storm: job search advice for alums in a difficult economy

Historically, the legal job market lags behind a downturn in the general job market and, unfortunately, we have reached the point in this economy where the legal market has caught up to the economy's generally poor employment picture. New law school graduates all over the country are now struggling to find jobs. Here are a few things graduates should keep in mind when searching for a job in what seems like a perfect economic storm.

1. Many alums are unaware that they have lifetime privileges with the Career Services Office. We regularly meet with and counsel alums who graduated 1, 5, 10, 15, or 20 years ago. Alums are encouraged to make an appointment and speak with a CSO counselor to discuss any aspect of their job search, including negotiating salary and benefits. In addition, stay connected to CSO through our blog at tourolawcso.blogspot.com, where we have a number of job search articles and website links to make your search a bit more organized. Pay particular attention to the Practice Area Links section of the blog which can inspire you to look for employers in different ways.

2. Make sure that your documents – your resume and cover letter – are in top form by having them reviewed by a CSO counselor. These documents must be perfect, as an employer is looking for any reason to throw them away. In addition, contact CSO to schedule an interview prep session before your next interview, particularly if you have not had an interview in awhile.

3. It is more important than ever to join bar associations, attorney affinity groups, and practice area and other committees and sections of bar associations in the geographical areas in which you would like to practice. The New York City Bar Association, for example, has a great section called *Young Lawyers Connect* which meets regularly and hosts job search and other programs. If you want to learn how to be a more effective networker, *Young Lawyers Connect* is a great place to start (check out their website on the City Bar Association website). Local Inn of Court groups also are a fun and casual way to join a community of attorneys. Of course, you should list on your resume your membership in any and all of these associations.

4. Consider volunteering for substantive *pro bono* legal work with public interest organizations or bar association *pro bono* projects. These are great opportunities to list as legal experience on your resume while you seek paying employment. In addition, you also will meet

attorneys, potential employers, along the way. *Pro bono* work shows a prospective employer that you are enthusiastic about the practice of law and that your skills have not grown stale.

5. Contact bar associations about scholarships to attend CLE programs, as many bar associations will allow unemployed attorneys (and new graduates) to attend programs at a reduced rate or at no cost. Attending CLE programs allows you to highlight on your resume your interest in a particular practice area, places you in a setting to meet other attorneys interested in that practice area, and shows potential employers that you are staying on top of current developments in the law. Bar association websites usually have a good list of CLE programs available in the coming weeks and months. Any programs you attend should be listed on your resume and perhaps discussed in a cover letter (ask CSO about how to do this).

6. Look at the websites for city, county, state, and national bar associations and their practice area committees and sections to see if they have monthly or quarterly online and/or print journals. Set aside some time in between your job search responsibilities to research and draft an article or essay for one of these journals. A publication is a great thing to have on your resume and to talk about in a cover letter, and it shows your commitment to and knowledge of a particular practice area. It might also attract the attention of a prospective employer.

7. In a challenging market, it may prove to be a wise course of action to take a job that you might not take in a more robust economy, just to keep yourself in the mix. *Remember, this is your first job, not your last.* Even in a good economy, first jobs usually last only one or two years as new graduates become admitted, start to practice, and make contacts with fellow attorneys. If you accept a job offer that is less than appealing, keep in mind that you should attend CLE programs in practice areas in which you would like to someday make a transition and you should join bar association committees in practice areas that *are* appealing to you. If you are working for a small to mid-size firm, talk to a CSO counselor about negotiating techniques to increase an unattractive salary, including six month salary reviews, a salary increase upon bar admission, and participating in the legal fees you generate for the firm.

8. Finally, keep in mind that Touro Law Center is a resource for you now and as your career develops. Not only is the Career Services Office here for you, but faculty and staff make it a point to welcome back alums who need help and assistance. Join the Alumni Association and attend events in order to meet attorneys who may be potential employers. Join the Touro Law Center community on linkedin.com as a way to communicate with classmates and more experienced attorneys. Yes, a job search in this kind of economy can be a long and humbling journey, but it is not one that you need to make on your own. Rather, you can draw energy and enthusiasm from a group of people who support you in your efforts and who will do what they can to make your job search a success.

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