

Career Tips

By Linda E. Laufer*

When you find a position – maybe even your dream job – you may feel relieved and think you have reached the end of the road, perhaps a long road. But you have taken just the first step in your journey. Now is the time to think about next steps and consider how to manage and advance in your career.

Ten career tips for attorneys who are currently employed:

1. Develop a strategy for managing and advancing your career. Take an active approach. Consider the skills that are expected of attorneys at your level of experience and how you can meet, or exceed, them.
2. Be visible within your organization. Seek opportunities to work with a wide range of attorneys and others. Participate in events and other activities.
3. Become known outside of your organization. Join and become active in bar associations, organizations that interest you, or your community. Engage in activities that you enjoy. Assume leadership roles. Publish articles. Speak on panels. Attend and participate at conferences.
4. Cultivate and maintain professional relationships with individuals inside and outside of your organization. Develop a network of mentors.
5. Build a reputation for quality work. Become known for your expertise.
6. Be a problem-solver.
7. Provide outstanding client service. Be responsive to clients and individuals in your organization.
8. Collaborate and cooperate. Be a team player.
9. Project a positive attitude. Be enthusiastic about and engaged in your work.
10. Persevere. Demonstrate your determination to succeed.

And here are ten tips for attorneys engaged in a job search:

1. Tailor your resume so that you emphasize credentials most relevant to a particular opportunity and most likely to catch the attention of employers. This may mean developing many versions of your resume. When saving different versions of your resume, use neutral document names so that potential employers do not become aware that you have different resumes designed for different types of opportunities. If you email your resume, send a .pdf so that your formatting stays intact.
2. Treat your cover letter as a writing sample that highlights your qualifications, but does not simply restate the items on your resume. Take advantage of the narrative form to give employers an overview of your background and experience.
3. Develop a short, easy to understand, description of your experience. Two or three sentences are enough to serve as a starting point in an informational or job interview or any other conversation.
4. Make sure that you are well prepared for interviews. Never try to wing it; you run the risk of giving a poor, rambling answer. Have an agenda of the points that you want to make. You want an interviewer to remember your accomplishments so make sure that you are prepared to include them in your answers.
5. Be positive about your background and experience, and what you have to offer a potential employer. Anticipate that you will be asked about gaps or weak points in your background, so be prepared with an answer. Be brief. Avoid defensive language and explanations. End on a positive note.
6. Network.
7. Network.
8. And...Network some more! And reframe networking so that you think of it as informational interviewing, as well as a way to build relationships with individuals with whom you can maintain contact over the course of your career. Make sure that you periodically update contacts about your job search; they will likely be interested in hearing about your progress and they may have additional ideas.
9. Be prepared for ups and downs in your job search.
10. Maintain momentum. Develop a routine. Regard your job search as your job. Some attorneys make many changes over the course of their careers, while others stay put.

Either way, be prepared for challenges and opportunities. Think about ways you can continue to develop.

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