



Event Synopsis: “Nuts and Bolts of Re-Entry”

Co-sponsored by Committees on Career Advancement and Management and Women In The Profession of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York on March 29, 2012 at 8:30 a.m.

Moderator: Angela Rella

Panelists: Suzanne Brown, Linda Mercurio, Maureen Reid, Carroll Welch

The four panelists articulated a step-by-step process for attorneys embarking on re-entering the work force. They offered practical advice on job search tools, resumes and interviewing. The panelists each emphasized that the most effective way to find the re-entry position is to “get out there” and connect with people who can provide you with information and ultimately connect you with potential employers. Following is a synopsis of their collective advice.

Support: Create your own support network

Join a local bar association group, law school alumni group and or other group of fellow job-seekers with whom you can meet regularly.

Enlist one person to serve as your sounding board, advisor and accountability partner.

Honest Assessment of Skills & Strengths: Start with an honest self-assessment.

Take inventory of your skills, strengths and gaps – without judgment

Take “Peak Performance” exercises to identify what distinguishes you from the rest of the pack. Access a bar program or career counselor to facilitate.

Identify Specific Job Target: Be as specific as possible in your job target.

Narrow down your job options:

- First, determine if you want to return to traditional law practice and to your original practice area.
 - Re-entry is a “second bite at the apple” and can be an opportunity to pursue a different area of practice.
 - Alternatively, explore options where you have personal or professional experience that can become the foundation for your pursuit of a new practice area or field.

Tap into your skills, experience, interests, and passions.

- Explore alternative careers if you do not want to return to traditional practice.
There are many ways to use lawyer skills in alternative ways.
Integrity: Find the next position that keeps you in balance.
Recognize that there are always trade-offs. Make your choices and be sure there is something in the position that you are pursuing that speaks to you.
If you don't know what to target, get in front of a lot of people and research.
- First, connect with people who are not your potential employers. Save the meetings with potential employers for later in the process when you are prepared to interview.
 - Start with counselors, acquaintances, former-colleagues and friends.

Elevator Speech: Create and master a 30-second “elevator speech.”

Informational Interviews: So called “informational interviews” are a crucial tool at two stages of your search: (i) First, at the beginning to zero in on your target job; and (ii) second, when you are clear on your target and your message.

“Informational Interviews” for information: While you are in the process of trying to determine what area and what position you want to pursue, find people who are working in the field or practice and arrange to speak to them in person to get information about the experience and skills that are required.

- You can connect to your target information interviewees through common friends, acquaintances, former colleagues, community organizations.
 - An excellent tool for making connections is LinkedIn.
- “Informational Interviews” for potential job: Once you are clear on your goal position, seek out informational interviews with the people in a position to hire you.

RESUMES: Revise and update your resume.

Do not hide the period of time that you have been out of the workforce – include it on your resume in a professional way.

- Do not discount or devalue any of your experiences.
- Include community service in a professional way that shows your skills.

Many large employers use scanners – if your resume does not include the search words for a particular position, your resume is filtered out.

Know the process if you are looking for a government job, and hire an expert.

INTERVIEWING: Confidence is reflected in everything! You need to “own” and exude the fact that you have something valuable to contribute.

The employer is thinking about “what can you bring to the table?”

Behavioral interview: prepare for “break in workplace” questions:

- What position are you seeking?
- Employers are looking for the “how?”
 - How do you approach problems?
 - How is what you do different than other candidates?
- What are the lessons you learned along the way?
- Look at your resume and say: What would you ask me?

Be prepared for interview:

- You are being interviewed from the minute you walk in.
- You have to sell. Tell your story.
- Determine 3 “sell points” that distinguish you from your peers and find an opportunity to convey to your interviewer.
- You are also interviewing the employer:
 - Is there a lot of turnover?
 - Is it a good place to work?
 - Is the culture a good fit for you?

PRACTICAL FIRST STEPS: Before you start...

Networking

- Embrace the idea.
- Draft a friendly email stating your situation and that you are seeking to re-enter the legal workforce, and send it to everyone you know.

Check on your Bar admission status.

Create a business card with your basic contact information.

Technology: Hone your skills to get to a good comfort level.

Practical Skills – if you need to re-learn Nexus or Lexus or Excel or substantive skills, brush up by taking classes.

Join Bar Association: Excellent for networking and support during your search, and you will be able to access programs and panels on job search.

Resume – do a first cut.

Join community groups and volunteer.

- Develop skills.
- Hear of job opportunities.
- Network and make connections.

Final Tips From Panelists

Be fearless and talk to people in your community.

Stubbornly persist. Re-entry is challenging and takes time.

Be a positive person and exude positivity.

Identify the 3 things about you that you want the employer to know:

- Why should they hire you?
- What do you bring to the party?
- What makes you better or value added from every other candidate for the job (everyone's smart!)?

Get out there and good luck!

Article by Carroll Welch, Associate Director of the New Directions Program, Pace University School of Law and Eve Birnbaum, Eve Birnbaum Associates. Both Carroll and Eve are members of the Career Advancement and Management Committee. March 2012.