

## Are There Any Jobs Out There?

***Q. I was a third-year associate at a midsize law firm until four months ago, when I was told that there was not enough work in my department. Despite my best efforts, I am having great difficulty finding a new position. I have sent out dozens of emails and letters, many in response to advertised positions. I don't even get rejection letters – I just don't hear anything. I am so discouraged. Are there any legal jobs out there?***

A. Yes, there are jobs out there. But they are much harder to find. In these times, one must be willing to do much more than mass mailings and answering ads. Mass mailings are seldom effective, even in a strong legal market. [Read more . . . .](#)

Most firms receive dozens, if not hundreds, of unsolicited resumes every month. If you want to hear back, follow Kimm Alayne Walton's advice in her book, *Guerrilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams* (Thomas - West). The strongest, most powerful letter to any prospective employer begins with "Jane Smith [mutual acquaintance] recommended that I contact you." By using these seven magic words, Ms. Walton assures you of a response.

How do you find these mutual acquaintances? You make contacts with friends, family members, law school classmates, former colleagues, and anyone else who may be able to provide information, advice or referrals. You may be reluctant to ask your friends and acquaintances for help. Don't be! Asking someone for advice is a compliment. Just be careful not to ask for a job. Ask instead if they know of a good firm that might be looking for someone with your skills and talents.

Of course, this requires that you think about what you have to offer a prospective employer and what type of position you are seeking. Just asking someone if they know of any openings will not be productive. You must be able to articulate what you are looking for.

In order to ensure that your resume is one of a handful that receives a call for an interview, you will want to craft a thoughtful cover letter that begins with the seven magic words. In these times, you cannot afford to send a resume without a powerful cover letter. In the cover letter, you can tell your story and explain your qualifications for the position. It is the only way for you to connect the dots between the requirements for a position and your experience. You don't want to miss this opportunity.

What if you are already doing all the right things, and you still don't land a job? Several attorneys have shared with me that they are "following all the rules" and have not landed a position. This can be very discouraging. Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties of searching for a new position is keeping it all in perspective.

How do you know if you just need to work harder or if you need to change your approach? First, ask yourself where you are in the process. Do you know what you are looking for, and can you articulate it? Does your resume show your successes? A boring litany of degrees and dates will not attract the attention you need to be called for an interview. In doing your networking, have you uncovered some good leads? Have you had several interviews for desirable positions but not been invited for a callback? Or, do you find that you have come in second on several occasions?

These are all different problems and require different solutions. Generally, you can tell where in the process you are getting stuck and go back a few steps and take corrective action.

In this market, you may have to do much more than just follow the rules - you may even need to rewrite the rules. In addition to networking, answering ads and following leads, you may need to do some volunteering, as well. Several clients have uncovered wonderful opportunities and made important connections through their volunteer activities.

Think of your career search as a treasure hunt. Especially in a down economy, the treasures are hidden – but they are out there!

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