

## **Dude, Where's My Job?**

### **How Affiliates Can Help Members Locate and Obtain New Employment on the Economic Upswing**

*By Justin L. Heather*

According to several economists, leading economic indicators suggest that the U.S. economy is poised to improve during 2010. The U.S. Labor Department reported that 190,000 jobs were created in March—the most in any month for the past three years. This helped drop the unemployment rate from 10 percent to just under 9.7 percent. The effects of this improvement on new jobs, whether generally or specifically for the legal community, remain unknown. There is, however, at least anecdotal evidence of improving employment prospects in the legal world, with more lawyers able to obtain new jobs.

Any optimism about future employment and a robust economy must be tempered by the simple fact that any economic recovery will be slow. Economic recovery in the present or near future is hotly debated. Indeed, there is widespread agreement on one simple fact: many jobs lost in the United States over the past two years will not be coming back.

In light of this situation, what can affiliates do to help their members obtain employment (whether a better job or simply any job)? Here are several ideas regarding the resources and advice affiliates can provide their members to take full advantage of any upturn in the economy.

#### **Career and Employment Resources**

For lawyers seeking immediate employment, whether to improve their current position or to find a paying legal position, one of the most important services an affiliate can provide is some form of access to available jobs. The ABA and many of its affiliates have developed career resources as a member benefit. For example, several ABA YLD affiliates host career centers with job posting boards that allow companies and firms to post employment opportunities and members to search through these postings.

The Chicago Bar Association, the Florida Bar, South Carolina Bar, and the State Bar of Texas are just a few of the state and local bar associations that host some form of career center to benefit members. Links to these career centers and others can be found on the ABA website at <http://new.abanet.org/economicrecovery/nonaba.aspx>.

#### **Continuing Legal Education**

Lawyers can also improve their employment prospects by improving their knowledge of the law and learning additional skill sets. Many ABA YLD affiliates already provide continuing legal education (CLE) programs and can improve the services they provide their members by focusing these CLE programs on methods to improve the chances of a successful job search.

One especially helpful CLE method previously hosted by the ABA YLD and other bar associations includes inviting recruiters and career counselors to present at bar-hosted CLEs. These CLEs allow young lawyers to learn specific tools and methods for improving their employment prospects from those who are active in the employment field. It also helps to put these lawyers in contact with professionals who may be able to help them obtain a new job.

#### **Pro Bono Work**

ABA YLD affiliates should consider implementing programs directed at engaging unemployed attorneys in pro bono programs. Affiliate Assistance Team member Sarah Theophilus noted the importance of pro bono work in helping young lawyers obtain new jobs.

“Affiliates could organize a state or local pro bono project that would allow member to keep their skills honed. Such work can allow young lawyers to meet other lawyers who are doing pro bono work and create a networking system should they have a specialized practice,” Sarah said. The combined member and public service benefits of such programs are obvious.

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**Networking Programs and Publications**

Affiliates can also help their members obtain new employment by hosting networking-related programming. Although many affiliates already host networking events, their members would be better served by programming directed at teaching these young lawyers how to network. Sheila Nielsen, a lawyer and career counselor, has worked with approximately 3,000 attorneys as a counselor, explains that many of these lawyers simply do not know how to network properly in terms of conducting a successful job search.

To help lawyers better understand how to conduct a successful job search, Nielsen is currently working on a book entitled *Job Search: The Quest*, which she anticipates will be published soon in partnership with the ABA YLD. She emphasized that every young lawyer should “become a recruiter for yourself. Figure out how your skill sets translate . . . and create some ads.” Nielsen explained the importance of understanding how burdensome your requests may be in contacting people when looking for new work. Her new book is full of helpful tips designed to help lawyers improve their job search efforts.

The above are just a few examples of how ABA YLD affiliates can help their members search for new employment. State and local bar associations focused on member service should consider implementing one or more of the above ideas to serve as an important resource to help young lawyers obtain new employment.

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