STRATEGICALLY BUILDING YOUR REPUTATION

Presented by the
ABA Career Center,
Division for Public Services and
Center for Professional Development
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This publication accompanies the audio program entitled “Strategically Building Your Reputation” broadcast on June 12, 2015 (Event code: CE1506CAS).
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   Karen J. Summerville
Strategically Building
Your Reputation

June 12, 2015 | 1:00 pm Eastern

Moderator Bio

Kathy Morris is the moderator of the American Bar Association's monthly Career Advice Series. A former criminal defense attorney, she has taught law, pioneered professional development initiatives in law firms, and in 2000, launched the original Career Resource Center of the ABA. She counsels law students, lawyers, law schools, and law firms through her longstanding practice Under Advisement, Ltd., www.underadvisement.com.

Kathy was recently named the Board Chair of the new ABA initiative called Legal Career Central, through which the ABA will be the go-to resource for legal career information and inspiration.

She received her JD from Northeastern in Boston in 1975 and her BA in 1971 from the University of Michigan.
Visit the ABA Career Center Website to:

- **Search and apply** for more than 450 high-quality legal jobs nationwide
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www.ambar.org/careers

**Faculty Bios**

**John Mitchell** is a long-time Executive Coach and an active leader in the ABA. After practicing law as a litigation associate in Chicago, John served as the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity International and remains involved in nonprofit work. He is a frequent public speaker and a sought-after workshop leader. John has an MBA, a JD, and a BS in Communication Studies from Northwestern.

**Karen Summerville** is an experienced legal career counselor and the founder of Legal Career Management in Seattle. She had previously been both a litigation partner and a VP of Client Relations for an outplacement and consulting firm, Lee Hecht Harrison. Karen has a JD from the University of Washington School of Law and a BS summa cum laude from the University of Nebraska.
Program Agenda

• Top Issues
• Tips on the Topic
• Participant Questions
• Agree/Disagree
• More Participant Questions
• Takeaways
• ABA Resources

Definition

Reputation:
commonly held opinion of a person’s character and competence, merit and achievement; the good name one has in the eyes of others.
**Tips on the Topic**

When building your reputation:

- Stay current as to professional best practices.
- Periodically reassess, reaffirm, or redefine your goals.
- Network and know whom to talk to for advice.
- Follow up when you meet people who could be of help.

**Audience Questions?**

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**Strategically Building Your Reputation**
Agree/Disagree

Using social media to help build your reputation is always a good idea.

Lawyers need a profile on LinkedIn to boost their reputation.
Takeaways

➢ Review LinkedIn profiles in your current or desired practice area(s).
➢ Conduct a 360 degree review of your reputation.
➢ Stay open to who you may become.
➢ Have fun…and go beyond the obvious.

Upcoming Career Advice Series Programs

Switching Sectors for A Better Fit
Friday, July 10, 1 p.m. ET

Negotiating Work Perks that Matter
Friday, August 14, 1 p.m. ET

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I. INTRODUCTION

The chronology of a successful career search is essentially the same whether you are looking for a traditional legal position or seeking opportunities outside profession.

The steps in the process include:

1. Assessing your career options
2. Preparing your resume(s)
3. Networking -- intelligence gathering
4. Preparing for interviews
5. Negotiating your salary and benefits
6. Successfully transitioning into your new position

The time necessary to complete this process varies greatly. The
timeframe is dependent upon a number of factors, some of which you can control and others which you cannot. Generally, a move from one firm to another as a mid-level associate in a strong economy can be accomplished in several months. Searches in a weaker economy and searches by more or less-experienced attorneys typically take longer. For those attorneys who are making a career move outside the legal profession or making a move geographically, the timeframe can be even more protracted. The time from beginning to end also depends in large part on how much time you are able and willing to devote to the process.

II. ASSESSING YOUR CAREER OPTIONS—THE STARTING POINT FOR ANY SUCCESSFUL CAREER SEARCH

The starting point for any successful career search is self-assessment. You may be tempted to skip this important first step. Resist the temptation. You may think you don’t have the time for self-assessment. You simply want to make a change -- and you want to make it now. But career searches that are launched without adequate self-assessment are rarely successful in the long run. This is as true for lawyers seeking a traditional, legal position as it is for those contemplating an alternative career choice.

In this competitive job market, you must be able to convince a prospective employer that you are the best candidate for the job. Unless you know what you want and why, it will be difficult to convince anyone else. Without adequate self-assessment your resume will contain a random list of past accomplishments. It will not adequately convey how your unique talents and skills will benefit a potential employer.

One reason self-assessment is difficult for many attorneys is that we have never thought about what we want to do. Many of us received good grades in high school and were propelled into college, where we also received good grades. Without a clear direction or professional goal at graduation, many of us entered law school by default. Having assiduously avoided self-assessment, we now find it difficult to undertake this important task.
A. What are your skills, talents, motivations and values?

Thoughtful self-assessment will reveal not only your skills and talents, but also your motivations and values. Because as lawyers we are well educated and highly capable, we often find that we have become adept at tasks we do not particularly enjoy. We may also find that over time we have developed expertise in specialty areas from which we derive little satisfaction. Ideally, our life’s work will provide an opportunity to perform tasks that we do well, enjoy, and of which we can be proud.

For many attorneys, uncovering our talents is difficult because we have relied for so long on our skills. Even recognizing the distinction between skills and talents may sometimes be difficult. Because we have spent so many years in higher education building and refining our skills as lawyers, we may have ignored or even suppressed our natural talents. Often we discredit those things we do well naturally, because we assume that if it is so easy, everyone must be able to do it well. In fact, many of us have unique talents or gifts that are underutilized.

For others, discovering our motivations and values is often the most difficult part of self-assessment. We are motivated when we are able to do those things we enjoy most. Our values are reflected in the pride that comes from accomplishing those tasks. Because, as attorneys, our identities are often intertwined with our profession to a greater extent than is true for most people, it is especially important that our career choices mirror our motivations and values. The dissatisfaction that is so prevalent within the legal profession is evidence that most attorneys have not made career choices that are consistent with their motivations and values.

B. What are your most significant accomplishments?

Reviewing your most significant accomplishments is often a good way to begin self-assessment. If done honestly and thoughtfully, it will reveal those times in your life that you did something particularly well, truly enjoyed doing it, and experienced a sense of pride in its
accomplishment. Reviewing these accomplishments also reveals your personal definition of success and the environments and situations in which you have achieved your greatest success. You will be able to see the patterns of your own accomplishments. You will see whether working in a group or on your own is preferred. You will see what kinds of people you worked with when you were most successful. You will see whether you were the one performing the detailed analysis or the one presenting the results. You will be able to see more clearly whether external recognition by your peers or those in positions of authority are necessary for you to feel a sense of accomplishment. You will also see the role that monetary rewards play in valuing your life’s work.

If you are not working with a career counselor, you may wish to work with a friend who is also engaged in a career search and share your list of accomplishments. Oftentimes it is difficult to see the patterns in your own successes. Because you have always seen the world through the same pair of eyes, you may be unable to see that your accomplishments are truly unique. Once you begin to understand your talents, motivations, and values, you can start to look for a position in which you will ultimately be successful and satisfied.

C. How do you want to use your skills and talents?

Too often in self-assessment we focus on what we want to be rather than what we want to do. Your goal should be to articulate the kind of work you want to do—not necessarily the title for the position you want to fill. Titles and labels are restrictive and do not allow you to explore the widest possible range of career choices.

It may be helpful to draft an ideal job description that outlines how you would prefer to spend your time over a weeklong period. This is not a job description in the traditional sense but instead an abstract view of how you would like to allocate your time. Do you need time for quiet reflection? Do you want to spend time working in a group toward a common goal? Do you want to spend a part of each day meeting with people individually? Until you can answer these questions, it will be difficult for you to look for the ideal position or even recognize it when it does become available.
Perhaps self-assessment is a misnomer, because no one can actually make a wise career choice without adequate research. The first step in self-assessment requires time for quiet reflection. Translating your individual talents, motivations and values into a career search, however, requires interactive research. It is almost impossible to determine how your talents can best be applied without input from a number of other people, including those who are employed in areas of potential interest to you.

This information gathering is accomplished through networking, which is also used in your search for work once you know the kind of position you are seeking. It is important to understand this dual role that networking plays in the career search process. See “Networking” below.

D.  Do you want to practice law?

Attorneys who typically thrive in the traditional practice of law tend to share some common traits. They tend to be conventional and practical. In terms of their work style, they tend to be detail oriented, logical and systematic. Individuals who are sometimes less satisfied in a traditional law firm environment tend to be nonconformist, creative and intuitive. Of course, these are generalizations. There are many successful and satisfied attorneys who do not fit the traditional image. Once you understand your own talents, motivations and values, you will want to ask questions of attorneys you meet to see how closely your profile matches theirs. You will want to pay particular attention to differences among attorneys in a variety of practice areas and different places of employment to determine the best fit for you.

If you are exploring career options outside the traditional practice of law, you will want to ensure that you have conducted a careful self-assessment, encompassing both reflection and research. Ideally, volunteering in a new area of interest will provide the most valuable insights. If you wish to explore a wide range of options, you should view your J.D. as an asset—not a limitation. Attorneys often make the mistake of approaching alternative career options by asking, “What can lawyers do?” rather than “What can I do?”
E. If you want to practice law, what type of practice do you want to develop?

Unless you have practiced for a number of years and have found a practice niche that is right for you, you may have difficulty answering this question. Even if you have engaged in self-assessment and understand your talents, motivations and values, you may not be able to translate that into a choice of practice areas.

If you are seeking to make a transition to a new area of practice you will want to gather as much information as possible from attorneys who practice in the area of interest to you.

F. What can you do if you don’t want to practice law?

If an assessment of your talents and values points in a direction other than law, don’t panic. Many attorneys have made successful transitions into areas outside the law. If you are considering a career outside of law, assessing your options will become even more important. But don’t ask, “What do lawyers do if they don’t practice law?” ask, “What do I want to do.” Some lawyers who wish to leave the profession want to find a list of careers that are appropriate for former lawyers. There are no magic lists. Attorneys who transition successfully into new careers have taken the time to understand their own unique talents and gifts. Oftentimes they have returned to a career that they abandoned before going to law school. A good resource for exploring alternative careers is “What Can You Do With a Law Degree,” by Deborah Arron (Decision Books).

G. Do you want to do more than one job? Is a “portfolio” career for you?

A portfolio career allows you to combine the practice of law with other activities that generate additional sources of income. Obviously, this is not for everyone. The ability to juggle multiple tasks and priorities is essential. But for many attorneys, a portfolio career affords the
opportunity to lead multiple lives and use more of their skills and talents than they could by restricting their career to the practice of law.

H. Where do you want to work?

The environment in which you work is at least as important—if not more important—than the type of substantive work you will be doing. The environment includes not only the location and the physical space but also the people and the politics. Each firm, company, and organization has its own culture, and you will want to know as much about the culture as possible before you accept an offer.

Before you can assess the environment of a firm or company, you must understand yourself and your needs. If through self assessment you discover that you are most successful when you are furthering a social cause, you would probably not be satisfied working for a large, corporate law firm that stresses billable hours and thinks of pro bono time as the equivalent of a vacation.

III. PREPARING YOUR RESUME(S)

A. What style resume is right for you?

The goal of self-assessment is to narrow your preliminary choices to a manageable two or three options. Think of these choices not as limitations, but rather as hypotheses. Having looked inward to make these choices, you will now test them in the outside world. Are they right for you? Are they realistic? Often we discover that a preliminary choice is not at all what we expected, and we need to make an alternative selection.

Before you can put any of your hypotheses to the test, however, you must have an appropriate resume. For most individuals, it is desirable to create two or three separate resumes, each highlighting the experience that is relevant to a chosen option. Legal resumes tend to be quite different in form and content from those used in other businesses and organizations. There is no single resume format that
works for all occasions. You will want to look at a variety of different styles and determine which ones are right for you.

B. Will your resume get read?

The true test of any resume is whether it gets read. You will probably be dismayed to learn that the average length of time spent reading a resume is just fifteen seconds. In those fifteen seconds, a secretary can determine whether your resume goes into the “Yes,” “No,” or “Maybe” stack. Only those in the “Yes” stack (and possibly those in the “Maybe” pile) will ever be reviewed by someone with the authority to invite you for an interview.

It may seem unfair that after you spend hours toiling over each word and phrase that your resume could possibly be set aside without careful review. But no one is obligated to read your resume, and a cramped resume with small type suggests that you can’t decide what you want to do with your life or your JD. This “shotgun” approach to resumes is one of the most frequent mistakes attorneys make. Often this approach suggests that the individual has not given enough thought to the positions she is targeting. If you can’t figure out what it is that you want to do next—or if you can figure it out but can’t articulate it—it is not fair to expect someone else to do it for you. You can create a powerful resume that will not only draw the reader in, but will also land in the “Yes” stack.

In creating a legal resume, you will probably want to include sections such as, “Summary of Qualifications,” “Professional Experience,” “Education,” “Professional Activities and Affiliations,” and “Bar Admissions.” In setting forth your qualifications and experience, you do not want a bland litany of types of cases and matters handled. Instead you want bullet points that showcase not only your expertise but also your successes. Instead of, “Prepare motions for summary judgment,” you might state: “Successfully prepared and argued motion for summary judgment resulting in dismissal of $2 million harassment claim.” Your inventory of accomplishments should provide you with ideas for bullet points to include in your “Experience” section. If you are responding to an ad be sure that your resume highlights the qualifications listed in the ad.
If you have chosen a career option that is outside the traditional practice of law, you may need to create a “transitional” resume. In applying for a position that does not require the direct use of your acquired legal skills, you must “translate” those skills for a prospective employer. For example, if you are targeting a non-legal position, they will probably not be interested in your ability to prepare and argue a motion for summary judgment, but they may be interested in your oral and written presentation skills and your analytical abilities. One method of uncovering the qualifications for a particular kind of position is to locate similar positions on websites for various businesses and organizations. The positions you review for ideas do not have to be positions for which you are applying. They can be positions in other parts of the country, as long as they are closely related to the type of work you are seeking. What you want to develop is a list of five or six key qualifications for the position you are targeting. Then you will want to “translate” your legal experience to show that you meet those qualifications. Once you have created a convincing resume, you may be tempted to send it out with a form cover letter to as many potential employers as you can fit in your database. Resist the temptation! This approach is almost never successful and can be very discouraging. Do your research first, so you can begin your cover letter with the seven magic words and tap into the “hidden job market.”

IV. NETWORKING---RESEARCHING AND SEARCHING

A. Where do you start looking?

Now that you know what you are looking for and have a resume that highlights your qualifications, you are ready to begin your search. Only a small percentage of available positions in the private sector are publicized. But that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t read local newspapers and bar association publications. You will not want to overlook any source that may alert you to an attractive opportunity.

Unfortunately, most jobseekers immediately look to the classified ads and overlook many potential employment opportunities in the print
media. In reading the local newspapers or bar journals, look for articles about attorneys who practice in areas of interest to you. For example, if you are interested in personal injury litigation, and you read an interesting article about a recent jury verdict, you may wish to contact the attorneys who tried the case. If the attorneys have spent all of their time for the past several months preparing for trial, they may have a backlog of work and might welcome assistance.

Newspapers and bar association publications are often a good place to begin your search. No job search, however, is complete without networking.

**B. What exactly is networking? And do you really have to do it?**

Networking is expanding your circle of acquaintances to build mutually supportive relationships and to exchange information, advice and referrals. Unfortunately, networking is often misunderstood. Networking is not a contest to see who can amass the most impressive pile of business cards.

1. **Why should you network?**

Fewer than 25% of all available positions are ever advertised. Networking is not only the most effective way—it is the only way—to access the “hidden job market.” Networking enables you to search for a position that suits you, as opposed to making yourself suit an advertised position.

2. **When should you begin networking?**

Only after you have realistically assessed your skills, motivations, and values should you begin networking. You cannot network effectively until you can explain what type of positions interests you and why.

3. **How do you begin networking?**

*Identify the people you already know*—
The first step in developing an effective networking strategy is to talk to the people you already know. They include:

- Family members
- Friends and neighbors
- Partner’s/spouse’s colleagues and acquaintances
- Former supervisors/coworkers
- Members of professional/civic organizations
- Church/synagogue/mosque/tribe members
- Classmates/professors

You will want to talk to the people you already know and ask them to help you identify individuals who may be able to assist you in your search. Often attorneys make the mistake of limiting their networking to other attorneys. Other professionals can provide valuable leads.

Several years ago, a client, who had moved here from the Midwest, complained that she couldn’t network because she didn’t know any attorneys. After contemplating her situation, she began telling others what she was looking for—an opportunity in tax with either a law firm or an accounting firm. When she shared this with her dermatologist, he immediately offered to call three of his golfing buddies, all prominent tax practitioners. As a result of her networking, she landed a job with a major accounting firm. The position had never been advertised.

Identify and contact individuals who can provide assistance--

In addition to asking people you already know, you can obtain the names of people who can provide assistance from newspapers, trade publications, and numerous other sources. Once you have identified these individuals, you will want to call or write them and ask them if you could meet with them for fifteen or twenty minutes. You will want to make it clear from the outset that you do not expect them to offer you a job. You are looking to them for information, advice and referrals.

In writing a letter of introduction, you will want to use the “magic
words” whenever possible:

My law school classmate, John Smith, recommended that I contact you about my interest in financial planning. John told me that you provide a wide range of services to your corporate and individual clients. He thought that you might be able to provide me with information about potential opportunities in financial planning.

[Explain your background and interests, including relevant work experience, academic history and current situation.]

I will call you next week to see if there is a mutually convenient time for us to meet. Thank you.

What were the magic words in this introduction? “John Smith recommended that I contact you.” What is magic about these words? Whenever you can begin an introduction by referencing a mutual acquaintance, your chances of hearing back are greatly enhanced. How do you learn the magic words? Through networking, of course.

Prepare for the informational interview--

If someone agrees to meet with you, you should prepare for the informational interview by getting as much information about the individual and his or her organization in advance of the meeting as possible. You should also be able to articulate the purpose of the meeting and how this person can assist you in your career search.

During the informational interview, you may want to inquire about:

· His/her career--background, education, work experience
· The company/organization--clientele, recent successes
· Qualifications for someone entering this field
· Opportunities in the field
· Advice on revising your resume and preparing for interviews
· Referrals to others with additional information or advice
In the past, many informational interviews were done over lunch. Now it appears that most people are too busy to enjoy lunch with a new acquaintance. A better alternative might be to offer to bring a cup of her favorite coffee to the person’s office. Meeting in someone’s office is not only more convenient, it can also be more productive. If, during this meeting, he wants to refer to his address book to provide you with names and contact information, he has it at his fingertips.

*Follow up with an appropriate thank you*--

Be sure to express your gratitude at the end of the meeting and follow up with an appropriate thank you note or e-mail.

*Keep accurate records*--

Develop an organized system for recording the dates and times of your networking activities. You will want to keep these people apprised as your career search progresses. Remember, many of the people you meet during your search will become your professional colleagues once you have entered your chosen field.

*And, yes, you should network even if your resume is strong and you find an advertised position that looks very attractive.*

Still not convinced that you should network? Recently a client responded to an ad for a very desirable corporate counsel position. Having seen the ad on the company’s website, she submitted her resume by e-mail as instructed. Several days later, she met with an acquaintance who worked in the company’s legal department. The acquaintance offered to present the resume to an attorney in the department. Still, my client did not hear back, even though she appeared to have all the qualifications for the position. Finally, an attorney who had worked closely with the company’s general counsel heard that my client was applying for the position and agreed to make a call on her behalf. Before making the call, he e-mailed a copy of my client’s resume. Shortly thereafter my client received a call asking her to interview for the position.

Rarely is it advisable to submit multiple copies of your resume to
apply for a position. But in this case, it was the third resume (and they were identical) that got her the interview. The difference was the well-placed call to the company’s general counsel.

Even if you are responding to an ad, you will want to network to bring your resume to the top of the pile!

V. PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

A. What questions do you hope they won’t ask?

You will want to start your preparation by creating three lists. The first is a list of the questions you hope they won’t ask. For most of my clients there are two or three questions on this list. If you are currently employed, you may be uncomfortable explaining why you are considering leaving. If you are not working, you probably would rather not explain why you are unemployed. Other questions you may not want to answer include: “What were your grades in law school?” or, “Did you pass the bar the first time?”

Once you have prepared this list, outline your responses. Then practice delivering your responses—either in front of a mirror or by role-playing with a friend. In responding to these “dreaded” questions, it is important to be honest but brief. As a general rule, you should not spend more than thirty seconds answering any question. Most questions can be answered in even less time.

B. What questions do you want to ask?

Second, prepare a list of the questions you want to ask. If you are interviewing for a position with a law firm, you will want to ask thoughtful questions that display your interest in the firm, and you will want to do research beyond Martindale-Hubbell. Get a copy of the firm’s brochure or visit its website. These can be great sources of information about how the firm or company views itself and wants to be known. Has the firm or company been featured in the media? What are some of its recent successes? Who are its major
clients/customers? Get the answers to as many of these questions as possible before the interview. During the interview you should ask only questions that could not be easily answered by referring to sources already at your disposal.

The purpose of a preliminary interview is to get a second interview or an offer. It is not the time to ask about salary, bonuses, or vacation time. If you are asked about your salary requirements, be prepared to discuss a range that would be acceptable to you. But don’t bring up the subject of money unless you are asked. The time to discuss salary is after you have an offer and before you accept. Similarly, save any sensitive questions you may have about the firm until after you have received an offer.

C. Why should they hire you?

The third list you should prepare is an outline of the talents, skills and qualifications that make you the preferred candidate. Of course, this requires that you do your homework and know what they are looking for. If you want to make a lateral move to another law firm, you should also be prepared to provide information about the number of hours you have billed in the past, fees received, and your assessment of which clients you expect would follow you to a new firm.

Additional resources you may wish to consult include: “Interview Power: Selling Yourself Face to Face,” by Tom Washington (Mount Vernon Press) or “Sweaty Palms--the Neglected Art of Being Interviewed” by N. Anthony Medley (Ten Speed Press).

If you are well prepared for the interview you will be relaxed and make a favorable impression.

VI. NEGOTIATING YOUR SALARY AND BENEFITS

A. The time to negotiate is after you receive an offer and before you accept it.

Generally, you do not want to broach the subject of salary with a
prospective employer. Allow them to raise the issue and, whenever possible, allow them to go first in giving a number. If you do receive an offer, do not accept it immediately. Instead, express your enthusiasm and ask for a few days to consider it. This will give you time to assess the situation and decide whether to negotiate a higher salary.

The time after you have received an offer and before you have accepted is the “window of opportunity” for negotiating any increased salary or benefits. But in the course of interviewing you may not be able to follow these general guidelines. Unexpectedly, you may be asked to give your salary requirements even before you are given an offer. Many attorneys price themselves out of an offer if their demands are unrealistically high.

Some firms and corporations expect an offer to be accepted immediately and are offended by a delay or any attempt at negotiation by a prospective employee. In the most extreme cases, attempts at salary negotiation may be taken as a counteroffer and the original offer withdrawn. Fortunately, this situation is rare.

B. Should you negotiate a higher salary?

Before you decide whether to negotiate a higher salary, or simply accept what you have been offered, you should carefully assess the situation. In many law firms, the salaries paid to associates are based on the number of years in practice, and attempting to negotiate a higher salary may not be possible or appropriate.

If there is no precise formula that precludes salary negotiations, you will want to consider a number of factors before you decide whether to ask for more money. Is your specialty in demand? Are you looking for an employer who will provide you with additional training? How stable is the firm or company where you are now working? Your answers to these questions will determine in large part how you respond to an offer that might be lower than you had expected.

It may also be that your salary expectations are not realistic. Many newer attorneys have unrealistic salary expectations. Although many firms and corporations have enjoyed financial success in the past,
attorney compensation may not be as high as expected, especially in the current economic climate. Many of my clients are surprised to learn that overhead costs at a downtown Seattle law firm are between $150,000 and $300,000 per attorney. And that figure does not include the attorney’s salary!

How do you know if your salary expectations are realistic? Even among your closest friends, it may not be appropriate to ask what they make. A better approach is to ask friends and colleagues what the range is for attorneys in a particular specialty and with similar experience. If you do your homework, you will probably find that there is great disparity in the ranges quoted.

C. How much do you need to live? vs. How much would you like to make?

Finally, in addition to considering your current employment situation and the prevailing job market, you must also assess your personal financial situation. This may seem obvious, but in fact many job seekers overlook this critical element. You should know your minimum salary requirements. How much do you need to keep a roof over your head and food on the table? How much do you need to live comfortably? And finally, what is your dream salary? Ideally, in negotiating your salary, you will be able to ask for a range that is somewhere between a comfortable salary and your dream salary. In the real world, however, that may not be possible.

Sometimes your dream job does not come with a dream salary. What do you do? Assuming that the offered salary covers your minimum requirements, look at the non-salary benefits. Does the position offer an opportunity for advancement? Self-fulfillment? Will you receive valuable on-the-job training? There may be considerations that are more important than salary when deciding whether to accept an offer. This is especially true if you are beginning your legal career or making a major career transition.

One client found that her monetary requirements were actually less after she started in a position that she truly enjoyed. As she explained, “I used to reward myself with expensive clothes and
VII. CREATING AND EXPANDING YOUR IDEAL PRACTICE

Once you discover your “ideal” practice, you will be motivated to learn as much as possible about the law and your client’s matter. You will seek not only competence—but excellence — in your representation. You will want to communicate with your client. You will approach each new matter with diligence. And just as importantly, you will consider whether you should decline a matter when you realize that it is not within your “ideal” practice.

When you discover a new area that you would like to add to your practice, you will want to ensure that you are providing competent representation—even for your very first client. How do you represent a client ethically in a new practice area?

The first step in developing competency in any new area of practice is reading and studying—not just the legal treatises but also the periodicals and other materials that are written by and for practitioners in the field. Attending CLEs will also increase your understanding of the practice. Once you have gained a reasonable level of comfort and conviction that this is a practice area that is of interest to you, you will want seek the guidance of experts in the chosen field. If you are concerned that local practitioners would view you as potential “competition,” you might seek out experts from other legal markets first.

When you believe you are ready to take on your first matter in the new area, you may want to consider a number of options while you gain additional expertise. Ethical requirements of competency will require more caution in certain complex areas.

One approach to providing competent representation while you learn is to associate another attorney who is more experienced. This would be particularly appropriate in a practice area that
involves novel or complex rules or regulations.

Another approach is to provide representation to a client while being mentored by a more experienced attorney. The King County Bar Association’s Family Law Mentor Program is a good example of this approach.

Finally, one of the most interesting approaches is to provide Pro Bono services to a non-profit organization and seek assistance in your representation from an experienced practitioner. Not only do you and your mentoring attorney fulfill your Pro Bono Publico Service requirement, while you learn and gain expertise in a new practice area, but the non-profit benefits as well. This is a particularly effective way to gain expertise in representing organizations and business entities. The needs of a non-profit are not that different from those of a pro profit company. These needs may include employment law, entity selection and formation, articles and bylaws, corporate minutes, and taxation—just to name a few.

Another avenue for enhancing skills and building relationships that can lead to new clients and referrals is serving on the Board of Directors for a non-profit. If you do sit on a Board, you will want to do more than attend the meetings. You will want to contribute to the organization and follow through on every assignment you accept.

In seeking out an appropriate non-profit, you can look to organizations you are already familiar with—your daughter’s soccer league, a political organization, or neighborhood activist group. If you would like to consider a broader spectrum of organizations before making a choice, you can look for postings at VolunteerMatch.org. United Way of King County provides a matching service, as does SeattleWorks.org. The WSBA also has a Public Service Program designed to encourage public service by its members.

VIII. SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITIONING INTO YOUR NEW POSITION

Congratulations, you have landed your new job! Now you will want to make a smooth transition in your new firm or organization to ensure
your continued success. You may be tempted to suggest changes
during your first several months. Resist the temptation! You will
probably need a minimum of three to six months to adjust to the
culture and for other people in the organization to get to know you.
Do not suggest any changes until you are comfortable in your new
environment.

While you are building your low-profile success and sorting out the
nuances of the job, take time to assess your own strengths and
weakness. You may discover that despite your previous experience
and background, there are aspects of your new job that you have not
yet mastered. This does not mean you aren’t qualified, it simply
means you will have to acquire new skills and ask for assistance at
least initially.

During this time you will also want to establish your relationship with
those above you and below you in the organization. You should
probably expect to put in some long hours during this initial phase.
Your performance is being monitored. You will want others to know
that you have a strong work ethic and are willing to be a strong player
on your new team!
“Find the place where your deep gladness meets the world’s deep need.”

Frederick Buechner

First, look within to find “your deep gladness.”

Then, search for the “world’s deep need.”

In articulating your ideal practice, think of whom you would like to help and what you would like to help them accomplish.
Identify Your Strengths

I went to law school because I thought I would be good at _______________________.
I always did well in classes about ________________________________.
My friends are amazed by my ability to ________________________________.
I receive compliments frequently on ________________________________.
My professors often told me I was good at ________________________________.
My colleagues often rely on me to _________________________________.
The first thing I turn to when I pick up a magazine or newspaper is ________________________________.

______________________________________________________
I feel most relaxed when I ________________________________.
I am anxious when I am expected to ________________________________.
The subjects I have little interest in and have the most trouble learning include ________

______________________________________________________
I feel I am at my best when ________________________________.
When I go into a bookstore, the section I go to first is ________________________________.
If I had $200 to spend at the bookstore, I would buy ________________________________ so that I could learn about _________________________________.

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Review Your Accomplishments

Describe three of your most significant professional accomplishments. An accomplishment is something you

- Did well
- Enjoyed while doing it
- Were proud of when completed

1.

2.

3.

Add additional pages to include 10-25 of your accomplishments.
What are the common elements in these accomplishments?

What descriptive words or phrases have you used?

Does the pattern of your accomplishments suggest a practice area or career direction that would be a good fit for you?
Design Your Ideal Work Week

If you could design your ideal work week, how much time would you spend

- Researching and writing?
- In the courtroom?
- In conference with an individual client?
- On the telephone?
- Drafting agreements?
- Negotiating?
- In hearings?
- In your office?
- Traveling for work?
Design a “Portfolio” Career

*If you could design a career that incorporated the practice of law with other activities that provided a source of income, what would it include?*

- Teaching?
- Mediation/arbitration?
- Contract legal work?
- Consulting?
- Judging *pro tem*?
- Pursuing a hobby (writing, music, art)?
- Running a business?
Uncover Your Talents and Skills

achieving acting adapting addressing administering
advising analyzing anticipating arbitrating arranging
ascertaining assembling assessing attaining auditing
budgeting building calculating charting checking
classifying coaching collecting communicating completing
composing computing conceptualizing conducting conserving
convincing coping counseling creating deciding
developing devising diagnosing directing discovering
disproving drafting dramatizing editing eliminating
empathizing enforcing establishing estimating evaluating
examining expanding experimenting explaining expressing
extracting filing financing fixing formulating
founding generating getting giving guiding
handling heading helping hypothesizing identifying
illustrating imagining implementing improving improvising
influencing informing initiating innovating inspecting
interpreting interviewing intuiting inventing inventorying
investigating  judging leading learning lecturing
listening maintaining making managing manipulating
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motivating navigating negotiating observing obtaining
offering operating organizing originating overseeing
perceiving performing persuading planning playing
predicting preparing prescribing presenting problem
processing protecting providing publicizing questioning
reading realizing reasoning receiving recommending
reconciling recording recruiting referring rehabilitating
relating remembering rendering repairing reporting
representing researching resolving responding restoring
reviewing risking scheduling selectingselling
sensing serving setting up shaping sharing
showing solving sorting speaking studying
summarizing supervising supplying symbolizing synergizing
synthesizing systematizing talking teaching team-building
telling tending testing training transcribing
translating traveling treating trouble-shooting unifying
uniting upgrading utilizing verbalizing winning writing
Add your own:

|   |   |   |   |   |

**Talent:** Natural endowment or innate ability of a superior quality.

**Skill:** Proficiency or facility acquired or developed through education or experience.

**Step one:** Place an X beside each word that describes one of your natural talents.

**Step two:** Underline each word that describes a skill you have acquired.

**Step three:** Circle the words that you have Xed and underlined.

Enter them below.

|   |   |   |   |   |

**Step four:**

Highlight five words from the above list that best describe what you
would like to do as part of your life’s work.

**Step five:** List them in descending order of preference.

1. _______________

2. _______________

3. _______________

4. _______________

5. _______________
Uncover Your Career Values

Rate your answers as follows:

“0” if the statement is never true

“1” if it is sometimes true

“2” if it is often true

“3” if it is always true

___ 1. I feel most successful when other attorneys and professionals seek my expert advice.

___ 2. I feel most engaged at work when I am able to manage other individuals and their work.

___ 3. I am happiest at work when I am able to complete an assignment in my own way and on my own schedule.

___ 4. Job security is more important to me than being able to do things my own way.

___ 5. I dream of starting my own firm or company.

___ 6. I feel successful only if I am able to make a contribution to society or justice.

___ 7. I am most engaged at work when I am faced with an
intellectually challenging problem.

8. If I had to compromise my ability to pursue personal and family interests, I would consider leaving my firm or company.

9. Career success for me is defined by being able to develop a very high degree of specialization in my practice area.

10. I would prefer being in a position that allowed me to be in charge of an organization and make the management decisions.

11. I am most engaged at work when I am free to organize my workday without being told what to do and when to do it.

12. If faced with an assignment that might put my job security at risk, I would not accept it.

13. Building my own firm is more important to me than becoming a partner in a larger firm.

14. I am most engaged when I know that my legal skills are being used in service of others.

15. I feel most successful when I am able to overcome difficult obstacles.

16. My ideal work situation permits me to integrate work and family and personal needs.

17. Becoming an expert in one area of practice is more
important to me than becoming competent in number of different areas of practice.

_____ 18. The ideal position for me would involve managing a firm or organization.

_____ 19. Achieving autonomy and flexibility in my work are my main goals.

_____ 20. Job security and stability are most important to me.

_____ 21. I feel most satisfied when my own individual efforts accomplish an important goal.

_____ 22. It is more important to me that I be able to use my legal skills to make this world a better place than commanding a high salary or making partner in a law firm.

_____ 23. I enjoy being responsible for a matter that involves complex factual issues and where the odds of winning are low.

_____ 24. Balancing life, family, and work are of paramount importance to me.

_____ 25. I would rather leave my firm or company than be assigned to cases/matters that are outside my area of expertise.

_____ 26. Overseeing a variety of cases in diverse areas of expertise is attractive to me.
27. Being able to handle matters/cases in my own way and on my own schedule is more important to me than having job security.

28. Knowing that I have financial and job security is necessary for me to feel satisfied at work.

29. Creating something that is the result of my own ideas and efforts is essential for my well being.

30. Making a significant contribution to society or justice is what I seek most in my legal career.

31. I seek out assignments and cases that are intellectually challenging and involve strong challenges or formidable opposing counsel.

32. Successfully balancing personal, family, and career demands is more important to me than being promoted.

33. Using my intellectual abilities and legal expertise are the key to feeling satisfied in my career.

34. I would be frustrated if I were not able to work in a number of different practice areas.

35. I would leave a firm or organization if I had to answer to a “boss” and did not have autonomy or flexibility.

36. Finding job security and stability are the essence of my
career success.

37. Starting my own firm or business would be my idea of career success.

38. If I was not able to make a contribution to society or justice, I would leave my place of employment.

39. Solving impossible legal issues is more important to me than being promoted to managing a firm or department.

40. A position would only work for me if it did not interfere with my personal and family needs.

Inspired by Career Anchors, Discovering Your Real Values, by Edgar H. Schein, Ph.D.
Scoring

Enter your scores for each number below. Review your answers and note those you gave the highest scores. **Select the three (3) items** that are most true for you, and give them an additional five (5) points.

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Career Values Key

SP  Specialization--

You prefer to concentrate your efforts on a discrete practice area and be recognized as an expert.

M  Management

Managing a firm or department might be a good fit. Seeking an organization or company that values management skills in its attorneys is another option.

FL  Flexibility / Autonomy

Generally, a smaller firm or organization can accommodate an individual’s need for autonomy and flexibility better than a large one.

ST  Stability / Job Security

Absolute job security does not exist in today’s economy. Some public sector positions offer a semblance of security.

SO  Solo/ Entrepreneur

You would probably thrive in a firm, business, or organization that you created.

SJ  Society and Justice

An organization that exists to make the world a better place,
rather than one that strives to make a profit, would be a good choice.

CH  Challenge

You will thrive if you are given assignments that are intellectually stimulating (impossible?). Representing the underdog may also be appealing.

L  Lifestyle / Work Life Balance

An alternative to full-time practice of law in a not-for-profit organization may be a better fit for you.
Suggested Reading

Changes and Challenges—

- *Transitions—Making Sense of Life’s Changes* (Strategies for coping with the difficult, painful, and confusing times in your life), by William Bridges (Da Capo Press).


Self Assessment—

- *Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, by Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger (Little, Brown).

Networking—

- *A Lawyer’s Guide to Networking* (ABA Young Lawyer’s Division and the ABA-CLE Career Resource Center).

- *Never Eat Alone—and Other Secrets to Success, One Relationship at a Time*, by Keith Ferrazzi (Doubleday 2005).


Interviewing—


- *101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions*, by Ron Fry (Career Press).


Karen J. Summerville

Legal Career Management
1420 5th Avenue, Suite 2200
Seattle, WA 98101
206.224.7608
www.legalcareermanagement.com

"Helping Lawyers Find Success and Satisfaction"

The Puget Sound Business Journal featured Karen Summerville: “She now has a reputation in Seattle as the career counselor for counselors. And the years she spent practicing law now help her empathize with the attorneys who seek her advice.” She was also featured in the September 2010 King County Bar Bulletin (Profile).


Karen has extensive experience in the Seattle legal community, including over fifteen years providing career counseling to attorneys. She was a partner in a midsize Seattle law firm, where her practice emphasized commercial litigation and where she was also active in associate hiring and training.

Ms. Summerville is a graduate of the University of Washington School of Law, where she was Managing Editor of the Washington Law Review. She also served as the Interim Director, Career Services in 1995.

She presents frequent workshops on career management for lawyers and law students. Her column, “Managing Your Legal Career,” is featured in the King County Bar Bulletin.