The Emergence of Nontraditional-Track Lawyer Career Paths:

A Resource Guide for Law Firms and Law Schools

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Preface

Client demands for efficiency and added value, as well as the changing legal landscape, dictate that law firms can no longer compete effectively in the marketplace with teams of lawyers made up solely of partnership-track associates and partners. Alternate staffing models, including the use of nontraditional lawyer tracks, is one significant way in which legal employers are responding to these challenges. The 2014 Citi Private Bank/Hildebrandt Client Advisory notes:

In order to lower the cost of doing the work, we have seen the composition of leverage at law firms shift to a greater proportion of lower cost lawyers. Many law firms have mimicked the model of the alternative providers to some degree and are themselves hiring lower cost lawyers to handle their lesser quality work at reduced rates. Others are partnering with those alternative providers to outsource their low-end work, thus maintaining the overarching relationship with the client.

We have observed a range of approaches to the use of lower cost lawyers at firms. In the Law Firm Leaders Survey, 82% of respondents answered that they are using temporary or contract lawyers. Additionally, 70% responded that they are using permanent, lower cost, non-partner track lawyers. We view this as a permanent shift in the legal staffing model.

This resource guide provides an essential and comprehensive tool for law firms that are just in the early stages of implementing a nontraditional lawyer track, and also for firms looking to enhance existing programs by focusing on career progression or the implementation of a competency framework for their nonequity-track lawyers.

The guide is a critical resource for law schools as they seek nontraditional employment for graduates. In particular, the attorney profiles section at the end of the resource guide provides concrete examples of the types of jobs that recent law school graduates are finding in the post-recessionary reset.

The material that has been gathered in the appendices alone provides an extraordinary resource, collecting sample job descriptions, job postings, core competencies, and evaluation forms from a variety of firms and for a variety of nontraditional-track positions. This is a resource that will be of enormous value to every law firm that is working to find the right mix of lawyers for moving forward strategically and competitively as the business model and market for the delivery of legal services continue to change.

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Introduction

NALP’s New Career Models Task Force was created in 2012 and charged with the task of researching the proliferation of nontraditional career opportunities for lawyers in law firms. The Task Force was asked to examine how firms are using nontraditional-track positions and to provide information to the membership about the different programs that firms have created. The Task Force conducted extensive research and interviewed interested parties including NALP members from law firms and law schools, as well as industry consultants and experts. In March 2013, the Task Force issued a report (www.nalp.org/uploads/NCMTF_Report_0313.pdf) providing the membership with an overview of its research, followed by an initial version of this resource guide. The Task Force’s work continued during the 2013-2014 NALP year, during which the Task Force continued to research this important topic. The result of the Task Force’s work in the second year is a revised version of this resource guide that contains practical information to help law firms and law schools navigate this important area. This resource guide is intended to provide law firms with detailed information that will help them make informed decisions about nontraditional-track programs. A firm may use this guide to assess the value of and to design and create a new program, or to refine and improve an existing program. This guide can also be used by law schools as a way to educate those involved in career services and the students and alumni they serve about nontraditional-track positions.

A. 1. Getting Started

A Word About Definitions

Firms use a variety of titles to describe the nontraditional-track roles that they have created. For the purposes of this resource guide, we use the term “nontraditional track” to describe a wide variety of different roles. Each firm should decide the title(s) that best suit its program and culture.

Immerse Yourself

The use of nontraditional-track attorneys is still relatively new to law firms, and many of those involved in staffing and hiring decisions are only just becoming aware of options outside traditional-track attorney positions. Talent and recruitment professionals, as well as professional development professionals are uniquely situated to assess firm needs and consider whether adding a nontraditional-track program makes sense for the firm. If talent professionals do not have seats at the table currently in these discussions, they should work toward becoming more involved by discussing staffing opportunities more broadly.
with firm leaders including partners, the firm’s administrative heads, and marketing and finance colleagues.

But first they must educate themselves about the options available. Steps to do so may include one or more of the following:

- Learn about nontraditional-track models that may be in place currently. Keep in mind that these programs come in many shapes and sizes and have many different labels (e.g., document review specialists, e-discovery specialists, practice associates who are not on the traditional track, and other specialist attorney roles in the organization).
- Read extensively about industry developments in this evolving area.
- Learn more about the firm’s economics and look for ways nontraditional-track models could enhance profitability. With increasing fee pressure from clients, clients’ refusal in some instances to pay for inexperienced junior associates to work on their matters, and the rise of alternative pricing strategies, firms are being more thoughtful about how best to perform the various tasks of a matter to maximize quality, efficiency, client results, and profitability.
- Become involved in performance management discussions. Nontraditional-track models can provide attorneys with a more customized way of engaging with the firm. Not all lawyers want to commit to the expectations of traditional-track associates. Nontraditional custom roles can offer more work/life balance and allow for more flexible compensation and may enable the firm to retain engaged, highly-valued attorneys.

Talent professionals may also need to be prepared to debunk the myth that work performed by nontraditional-track attorneys is likely to be sub-par. Some partners, and even some clients, may perceive that these individuals interested in working in nontraditional-track roles have been unsuccessful in traditional-track attorney positions. They may need help understanding that the demands and expectations of a traditional-track attorney position are not for everyone and that nontraditional attorneys possess myriad positive strengths and skills.

Assess Firm Needs

As mentioned earlier, these new staffing models come in all shapes and sizes. It is important to understand the firm’s needs and design a program that is appropriate.

The Task Force has found that, typically, nontraditional-track attorneys are billed at a lower rate than traditional-track attorneys. Also, using attorneys who are employed by the firm and trained by the firm helps ensure quality control and consistency.
Below we outline three models that firms can consider when embarking on the potential creation of a program. They can be used alone or in conjunction with one another.

1. Litigation Document Review

This model focuses primarily on document review, document production, and e-discovery. With this model, what remains most critical at the outset is consideration by a firm of whether to open a separate off-site document review and e-discovery center or to keep the operations in-house.

2. Price-Sensitive Commodity Work

This model focuses on using nontraditional-track attorneys to handle junior-level routine and price-sensitive work for particular practice groups or client teams.

Types of price-sensitive commodity work may include the following, depending upon how a firm structures and staffs this work:

- Research, document collection, document review, witness preparation, witness interviews, and preliminary deposition preparation.
- Due diligence, drafting of incorporation documents, preparation of standard real estate leases and agreements, regulatory compliance work, and patent prosecution.
- Non-billable work: industry research, drafting articles, and drafting client alerts.

3. Sophisticated and Specialized Work

Practice groups within firms can benefit from nontraditional-track attorneys who specialize in a particular area. These “specialists” create efficiencies because the firm is able to lower, or maintain, the rates for the sophisticated work they perform. Typically, these individuals are not progressing toward partnership, do not aspire to partnership, and/or may be seeking a more reasonable work/life balance than is expected of traditional-track attorneys. Examples of specialized work include:

- Brief writing.
- Insurance policy analysis, coverage litigation, and policy archaeology.
- Damages analyses.
- Privacy, personal information, and data transfer.
- Data analytics, including security breaches and cyber-crime.

See Appendix A for sample nontraditional-track models.
Sample Practice Group Lawyer Self-Evaluation Form, continued

Practice Development Goals

Identify three goals to be accomplished in the next year to continue to develop your practice and build your profile inside and outside the firm (e.g., specialized skills you will develop; writing or speaking opportunities you will pursue; client/potential client relationships you will cultivate; client development efforts in which you will participate).

Please list any partners or counsel with whom you discussed your practice development goals listed above.

Other Information

List any information regarding any other matters that you think might be relevant to the evaluation discussion.
Appendix G. Attorney Profiles

On the following pages are profiles of eleven law graduates in nontraditional-track positions. These profiles provide an idea of the type of work being performed by attorneys in these roles as well as information on how they happened to pursue this track for their careers, how they landed their jobs, how they see their career progression, what they consider the pros and cons of their work, and what advice they would give to new law graduates.
Rural New England 2013 Graduate Working for a Litigation Support Company in the Mid-Atlantic Region

How did you happen on this track for your career?
She was an older law student, having worked for ten years in a wide range of areas including the Peace Corps, teaching, social work, administrative roles, copy editing, and in the Office of Administrative Hearings. She entered law school with an open mind; she expected she would practice but was not wedded to that expectation. The catalyst for pursuing a technology-related law job came from pursuing soft IP courses, mentorships with professors, and attending the Legal Tech Fair in NYC.

How did you land the job?
She met her current employer at the Legal Tech Fair and secured a summer position with them doing e-discovery and predictive coding. They valued her not just for her law studies but also for her previous work experience, particularly in copy editing and marketing. The summer job led to a post-graduate offer in a new area, the trial consulting division.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
She is breaking new ground as a recent hire in the trial consulting division and expects much room for growth and additional responsibility. The company is growing and she expects to assume a director role with increased client contact and supervisory responsibilities in the future.

Type of work, expectations?
She helps design arguments and exhibits that meet evidence requirements for patent litigation and antitrust cases. She employs various techniques and technologies from flash animation to PowerPoint. She directs tutorials on how disputed technologies work to present to a judge and/or jury. Further, she is assisting with building the company’s website, does business development, and trains interns. She considers her work/life balance good; she works 40 hours a week with some peaks during project crunch times, and she is on call every other weekend. She is well compensated, earns overtime, and has good benefits.

Pros and cons of job and level of satisfaction
She is having fun and enjoys her work. She has flexibility and is able to work remotely. She sees lots of potential for growth and advancement. Her company is owned by a non-U.S. entity. It is important to be culturally sensitive and adaptive. Communication skills and high emotional intelligence are essential. As a lawyer, she represents one of several categories of professional, including engineers, designers, and IT professionals. The “we know more” mindset of some attorneys needs to be tempered in this setting.

Advice to new grads
Have an open mind about what you are willing to do with your law degree, advises this graduate. She sees a growing need for international privacy and data protection law experts. Try to get an internship in one of these companies; get a toe hold. Demonstrate your ability to learn new things and to be willing to learn new technologies. Help the company to understand the value-added of your legal training. “This field has huge potential,” she says.
Northern California 2011 Graduate Working for the California Office of an Alternatively Structured Law firm

How did you happen on this track for your career?

He was an older law student with 20 years in corporate America. He set his sights on an in-house job but this did not come to pass. He wanted work/life balance and a friend encouraged him to apply to his current employer.

How did you land the job?

He brought to the table his JD and also a good skill set from his previous work life, including technology skills and a background in licensing. His employer usually doesn't hire new law graduates but his profile made him an exception.

What is your (perceived) career progression?

At his firm he is "paid if he plays." He receives assignments that can last from three months to as much as a year. He can stay in this practitioner mode or could move into a practice management role that involves servicing client relationships. He works for the firm, not the individual client firms or companies that provide the work assignments.

Type of work, expectations?

He has performed a variety of work, from reviewing contracts and working in commercial transactions for a financial services organization to reviewing offshore supplier contracts for a healthcare conglomerate. Sometimes he works in the client's office, other times remotely. He negotiates his salary with his parent firm and has regular, reasonable hours and other benefits including a 401K and health insurance. He can work steadily or take a break as he chooses. His parent firm provides him with an annual review and periodic feedback through his practice manager. He also receives feedback directly from the client-employer.

Pros and cons of job and level of satisfaction

Pros to the job include that he is always learning something new and is afforded a good variety of practice experiences. He wants to secure a long-term full-time in-house engagement at a company. In the meantime he is building experiences and skills. His parent firm offers a "temp to perm buy-out" option should a client seek to hire him full-time. Additional pluses include work/life flexibility.

On the negative side, he does not always have a dependable paycheck as he moves between assignments. However, if he wanted to advance within his parent firm to become a practice manager and have enhanced work stability, he could do that.

Advice to new grads

Law students should know that the financial model of law practice is not working, this graduate notes. He urges law graduates to be open to growing, vibrant organizations like his employer that can afford one career flexibility. He feels like he is "accidentally/intentionally on the right side of the fence" for both growth and opportunity in his career.
Urban New England 2013 Graduate Working for a Big Four Public Accounting Firm in the Northeast

How did you happen on this track for your career?

He was a political science major and business minor as an undergrad. He knew he wanted to go to law school and secure a dual JD/MBA. During college he saw the inside workings of a major international law firm while working in an administrative position. From that experience he knew he’d prefer to do something in a business setting. As a 2L he took tax and says “things clicked.”

How did you land the job?

With his sights on a career in tax he started looking for opportunities in the area. He secured a job in the tax department of a defense contractor and continued to take advanced tax courses. During OCI he was granted an interview with a Big Four accounting firm and was hired as a summer intern. His commitment to tax, dual degrees, and related work experience all enhanced his marketability. He also benefited from the advocacy of graduates of his law school already working for the firm. Similar to BigLaw, the Big Four have summer programs that serve as feeders to full-time positions after graduation. He received a post-graduate offer after the summer, worked part-time during his last year of law school, graduated, took the bar, and now is a tax consultant.

What is your (perceived) career progression?

The career progression in a major accounting firm is very structured. He has the potential to grow and advance through a series of levels. They are: tax consultant, senior tax consultant, manager, senior manager, director, and principal (or equity partner). The firm expects its professionals to advance through these ranks. They offer much structured training and professional development centrally and he also receives extensive support and training within his group.

Type of work, expectations?

He performs a mix of work that falls into two categories: compliance (tax returns and review) and consulting (advising clients about tax liability and strategies). All tax consultants must perform the compliance duties — many peers at this level are not attorneys but are accountants and business grads. The JD advantage comes into play on the consulting side of his job. Billable hour expectations are 1,750. He is supervised by a manager in his group and receives a lot of support. No one looks over his shoulder; he is afforded a good deal of responsibility. He receives twice-annual evaluations which include a self-rating evaluation mechanism. Salary and benefits are good (although not as high as in BigLaw).

Pros and cons of job and level of satisfaction

Seven months into the job, he said he is happy. He enjoys the autonomy and responsibility afforded by the group in which he works. Fifteen of the eighteen colleagues in the group have JDS, so his law degree is valued. He has lots of opportunity to learn new things and is using his legal skills, especially researching and writing, and he is already doing more consulting projects. His work/life balance is better than his peers in private firms (although he has experienced long hours during peak tax filing times). He has not experienced any major negatives except a lower starting salary that he nevertheless considers “fair.”

Advice for new grads

He encourages students to pursue this career path. However, they need to know that the job requires more accounting skills than most JDS may want to acquire. Facility with numbers and spreadsheets is necessary. To market themselves for this career path, students should take as many tax courses as possible and get relevant tax and business-related work experiences. These credentials will help differentiate candidates with public accounting employers.
Mid-Atlantic 2013 Graduate Working for an Energy Company in the Mid-Atlantic Region

How did you happen on this track for your career?
He had interned in DC between undergrad and law school for several Senators and a Congressman, working in the energy agency arena. Once in law school, he pursued the school’s energy law program and secured a summer job with a major electric company. A mentor at that company suggested that he look at his current employer, and he got additional encouragement and references from a professor and alum who worked there. He interviewed for law firm jobs (and got an offer) but his marketability with employers was strongest in the energy field.

How did you land the job?
His employer values his relevant work and academic qualifications, especially in property and in oil and gas law. During the interview, his employer closely evaluated his personal traits, including diligence, focus, attention to detail, analytical skills, collegiality, and team work.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
At this early stage he is not exactly sure where his career will lead. However, he sees opportunity for advancement with his current employer. His immediate supervisor is a 2010 law grad, and his boss, the Director of Title, graduated from law school less than 10 years ago. His salary is very good (higher than most of his peers in private practice). Also, he does not have to bill his time. His hours are regular and reasonable. He is expected to review a set number of leases per month and the benchmarks are attainable and fair. His progress is monitored monthly and he is given a year-end review. They offer CLE and he is encouraged to be involved in the community.

Type of work, expectations?
He performs lease reviews of drilling units, resolves title and survey issues and conflicts, makes due diligence checks, and offers curative recommendations or waivers for defective land titles.

Pros and cons of job and level of satisfaction
He has an understanding and young boss who is forthcoming with feedback and offers a lot of support, direction, and insights. He works with great colleagues at all levels. Everyone is a team player and it is a good work culture. The main negative: he has an hour-long commute.

Advice to new grads
Use your career services office! Think in terms of the ways that your JD will apply and add value to your future employer. Develop internships and job experiences aligned with your interests and background. Target employers strategically. Until you get a job, pursue several career paths simultaneously and network!
2011 Graduate from a Mid-Atlantic Law School
Working for an LPO in India

How did you happen upon this track for your career?
He had read an article about LPOs while in law school.

How did you find the job opportunity? Were you targeting this type of position in your job search?
He saw a posting on his law school’s Symplicity site for the job.

How did you land the job? How did you sell yourself in the interview?
He had an IT/business background which the company found attractive. He had also lived abroad for some time and was looking for an international experience and was accustomed to living far away from the U.S.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
There is some career progression from associate litigation manager to litigation manager to senior litigation manager but this progression is limited. The expectation is that new hires will stay for three years. His goal down the road is perhaps to come back to the States and work for a tech company or for a third-party entity like EPIC that organizes documents from clients before they go overseas. He might also manage e-discovery for a large firm. He could also work in non-legal outsourcing.

What type of work does this position entail? Do you have skills that set you apart?
He can have anywhere from 35- to 100-hour weeks. In some ways, the office has a college feel because seven to eight out of ten managers are under 28. There are about 500 attorneys in all. The LPO has much the feel of a startup — which it essentially is, having only been around for ten years. The focus of the work is document review using technology. When he started, he had no background in e-discovery and was actually doing the document review alongside the Indian-trained attorneys whom he now supervises. He works directly with associates from client firms and in-house attorneys to manage their document review needs. He is an Associate Litigation Manager and now he manages project managers. The LPO is broken up into various teams such as the privilege team and the confidentiality team. There is a lot of pressure and long hours because they are servicing many clients in many countries. He essentially translates the memo from the firm to the document reviewers. He must understand the risks that the company is dealing with as well as the deadlines. For some companies he is almost incorporated into the firm; others treat him as a vendor; and others are clueless about the process.

Security is very tight. No one can take work home; no cellphones are allowed at work; one must be fingerprinted to enter a room; and you are not allowed to enter rooms without prior authorization. Employees cannot use personal email. Email can only be sent internally and to clients.

How are you supervised, evaluated, compensated?
There is no formal review process. Reviews are informal conversations. A new hire must be a self-starter. If one wants to get ahead, one has to ask for feedback. The salary is $35,000 base with bonuses, and housing and transportation are included. Costs of services are low, but buying things in India can be very expensive. Bonuses can be 0-50% and it is often hard to tell how well you are doing. Each U.S. attorney is working under an individual contract and must renew his visa annually and prove that a knowledge of the American legal system is crucial to his job.
What are the pros and cons of the position?

There are several family-oriented company events. However, one must be a bit of a wanderer: Nearly everyone who takes these jobs is single because the main "con" is dealing with family and friends who are 12 time zones away. Working in a different culture can also be challenging. One must cultivate cultural sensitivity in a country where tent cities butt up against glass skyscrapers.

How would you describe your level of job satisfaction and why?

He likes the job. He enjoys being on the cutting edge of something new.

Did your law school career services office play any role in your getting the job?

He learned about this job through a school job posting.
Midwest 2010 Law School Graduate Working in Compliance at a Bank in the Midwest

How did you happen upon this track for your career?
He returned to his home state in the Midwest where his family is located and got a job as a bank teller through his mother. He obtained his current job by applying to an internal posting in mid-2011.

How did you find the job opportunity? Were you targeting this type of position in your job search?
This was not the job he wanted. He had planned on working for a county state's attorney's office but was not hired.

How did you land the job? How did you sell yourself in the interview?
He was hired for the compliance position due to his law degree. He also cites the fact that he was an internal hire and that he had previously had some compliance experience.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
There is no direct route for advancement. He would have to change business lines and most likely relocate in order to advance. After three years, he is eligible to apply for a position as a Commercial Regulatory Corporate Manager.

What type of work does this position entail? Do you have skills that set you apart?
Overall, he is tasked with ensuring that the consumer lending arm of the bank is in compliance with lending regulations. His job has four facets. He responds to internal audits and tells the auditors how any issues found will be resolved; he drafts responses to complaints that his arm of the business receives from federal regulators; he participates in bank-wide compliance initiatives; finally, he performs self-audits on randomly selected loan agreements. He checks to see how well his bank is doing in comparison with peer institutions.

How are you supervised, evaluated, compensated?
He is evaluated semi-annually. His starting salary was $47,000 — four grades below attorney salaries.

To what extent are you integrated into the company?
He receives a mixed reaction from the in-house attorneys. Some treat him with respect as an attorney and others do not like the fact that he is an attorney and often remind him that he can't hold himself out as an attorney. He has to be careful about not giving legal advice. He can't interpret statutes. He can't set policies or procedures. The GC is great on this issue, however, and treats him well.

What are the pros and cons of the position?
He likes the flexible hours allowing him to share child-care duties (he can work 10-6 or 11-7). He very much enjoys the people he works with — there is no feeling of competition. He finds that his JD is very helpful with issue-spotting and problem-solving. The job pays better than other jobs. It is fairly stress-free. He feels that he will have job security due to new regulations in financial security. There are several "cons," however. The work is not very challenging. He has tried to apply for legal positions but is finding that working in compliance is a stigma for him for these jobs — i.e., "if you are good enough to be an attorney, why couldn't you get a real job?"

How would you describe your level of job satisfaction and why?
Overall he says that it is "not a bad job."

Did your law school career services office play any role in your getting the job?
No.
2008 Graduate from a Law School in the Southeast Working as an E-Discovery Attorney for a Large Law Firm in the Southeast

How did you happen upon this track for your career?
He graduated from college in 1999 and worked for six years at IBM before becoming an evening law student (graduating in December 2008). He started at his firm in early 2010 and has been there for four years.

How did you find the job opportunity? Were you targeting this type of position in your job search?
He got his job through a classmate who referred him. He wanted to use his tech background but was not targeting this type of position.

How did you land the job? How did you sell yourself in the interview?
His tech background was a huge plus.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
He began as an e-discovery project attorney and after 18 months was promoted to Staff Attorney. The majority of the 60-80 current attorneys in e-discovery are project attorneys. Some contract attorneys treat the job as a stopgap until they can move on to small private firms or government jobs. Some also open their own shops. Six or seven contract attorneys get promoted to Staff Attorney each year. The firm has recently implemented a Staff Attorney II position (a 15% bump in salary). Senior Staff Attorneys have ten years of experience and make in the $75,000-$80,000 range.

What type of work does this position entail? Is the work similar to on-track associates? Do you have skills that set you apart?
Staff Attorneys do project management and supervise the contract attorneys. His point of contact with the firm is the associate on the case assigned to discovery. Some cases have lasted four years or more. He gets to use his tech background skills in writing code for the e-discovery programs; he also manages databases. Finally, he works with vendors who collect and organize the huge amounts of data from the clients. This job is a particularly good fit for him given his background at IBM.

What are the billable and non-billable expectations?
Billable hours are 1,900 for contract attorneys and 1,950 for Staff Attorneys. Staff Attorneys are eligible for bonuses for exceeding their hour minimums.

How are you supervised, evaluated, compensated?
E-discovery project attorneys start at $50K with no benefits; staff attorneys start at $57,500 with the same benefits as partner-track attorneys. There is no formalized review process though the firm has recently started doing self-assessments.

To what extent are you integrated into the firm? Training, CLE, pro bono work, other?
The e-discovery attorneys are located in the discovery center, a separate facility from the law firm’s offices. The center has been operating for 15 years. Staff Attorneys can use 50 pro bono hours toward the 1,950 minimum.

What are the pros and cons to the position?
The pros of his job currently outweigh the cons — even though this was not the job he was seeking when he went to law school. He gets good benefits (and can wear business casual all the time). There is a good work/life balance. He enjoys new technology and seeing how a large firm works. The firm pays for online
training courses. The cons are the tedium of the job and the salary (he was making more at IBM). Also, the job can be either too fast-paced or deathly slow. For the first time, project attorneys were laid off in 2013.

**How would you describe your level of job satisfaction and why?**

Pretty satisfied — for the reasons above. He is planning to move on at some point to become a firm’s technology director or perhaps work for a vendor. Overall, he is optimistic about his future.

**Did your law school career services office play any role in your getting the job?**

No.

**Advice to new grads**

As litigation ebbs and technology becomes more dominant, the size of the e-discovery team has shrunk drastically (from 200 attorneys in its heyday to 60-80 currently). New hires will need to be increasingly tech savvy.
Midwest 2012 Law Graduate Working as a Health Law Fellow at a Large Firm in the Midwest

How did you happen upon this track for your career?
She was looking for a job in health law as a third-year law student. This particular opportunity is practice area based.

How did you find the job opportunity? Were you targeting this type of position in your job search?
She was contacted by her career services office because of her interest in health law.

How did you land the job? How did you sell yourself in the interview?
She submitted a resume and had a phone interview and an in-person interview with health law attorneys.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
The fellowship is for one year and there is the potential of being hired as a partner-track associate. The program is intended to provide the fellow with networking contacts in health law and practice with business development. The goal is to give the fellow the skills to work in-house or at another law firm.

What type of work does this position entail? Is the work similar to on-track associates? Do you have skills that set you apart?
She does the same work as the partner-track associates. Each month she works for a different partner in a rotation system. The work is mostly research and writing.

What are the billable and non-billable expectations?
She works harder than the partner-track associates. She has 1,400 billable hours and 1,400 non-billable hours including preparing presentations for partners, blog posting, business development, market analysis, pitching to clients, and drafting client alerts.

How are you supervised, evaluated, compensated?
She works for all of the partners in the health law group and is supervised on a project-by-project basis. She has monthly updates with the practice head and will have a mid-year review. Her salary is $60,000 compared to the $120,000 salary for partner-track lawyers.

To what extent are you integrated into the firm? Training, CLE, pro bono work, other?
She is completely integrated into the work of the health law group. The first 100 hours of pro bono is billable. The firm pays for CLEs.

What are the pros and cons to the position?
Pros: exposure to health law; client interaction, such as being included on calls; in-house exposure; focus on learning; gets to work in many different areas of health law; partners are good mentors; learns how to interact with the clients; same perks as partner-track associates — e.g., football and basketball tickets; treated better than partner-track associates. The only con is job insecurity.

How would you describe your level of job satisfaction and why?
Fantastic experience — only issue is whether and how much to look for a permanent job.

Advice to new grads and the role of her career services office
Look for these types of positions in larger firms with practice areas that are highly regulated. Her career office knew of her interest in health law and so contacted her about this position.
Midwest 2010 Law School Graduate Working in a Staff Attorney Position at a Large Law Firm in Chicago

How did you happen on this track for your career?
She worked at a small firm right after law school. When she decided to look for another position she used LinkedIn Jobs Blasts and saw this opportunity. She thought it would be a good way to get her foot in the door to a prestigious firm since she didn’t attend a top law school or work at a big firm.

How did you land the job?
The firm wanted to hire someone who was a “fit” with the group. She had the experience they needed and understood what they needed. To prepare, she planned out what questions she thought would be asked and wrote out her answers to all possible questions. She researched how to segue answers into positives about herself. She came across as very prepared.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
The staff attorney program is still new and so opportunities for career progression are unclear. There may be a possibility of becoming senior counsel but it is not a partnership-track position. She is included in all associate training and CLEs.

Type of work, expectations?
She does mostly routine work in the corporate finance department but also is given new types of work as well. Her hours are generally 9-5 and her billables are between 1,400 and 1,700 — very reasonable. She could take on pro bono work if she wanted to. Her salary is $85,000 annually, which is more than she made at her previous firm despite working fewer hours.

Pros and cons of job and level of satisfaction
She is very satisfied at her firm and job. She is working at a highly regarded firm with people she likes and she does routine work but also learns new areas and always feels comfortable asking questions in this regard.

Her salary is lower than on-track associates but she doesn’t have the hours requirements or the need to do client development or other non-billable work.

Advice to new grads
Don’t use just one medium for finding a job. Do things on your own like joining bar associations, networking, and doing Internet searches. Be open to everything. She took a low-paying job with a small firm and got good experience and huge raises every year.

Because she had been working for a small firm before she graduated, she didn’t use the career services office for additional help. She did use Symplicity and used links provided on how to interview.
Southeast 2012 Law Graduate Working as a Contract Analyst at a Business in Michigan

How did you happen on this track for your career?

He was a finance major in undergraduate school and was always interested in working in-house. He heard about the position because he told everyone he knew he was looking for an in-house position and someone forwarded his resume to the company hiring for this position. He had an offer from the company where he had worked the previous summer but chose his current employer.

How did you land the job?

In order to get the interview for the job, there has to be evidence of being smart enough to do the job successfully. To get the job, he researched the company thoroughly, researched the people with whom he interviewed, and was eager and enthusiastic about the position and company. He demonstrated that he would be the kind of person who would be a good member of the team.

What is your (perceived) career progression?

The career progression is excellent. Because they are "low-cost" attorneys, they get a lot of excellent work experience and training. They have their own accounts to work on in many areas and eventually can choose to move to other locations including New York, San Francisco, and Chicago. They have two to three hours a week of training and he has had additional training on specific topics. He has also shadowed senior attorneys.

Type of work, expectations?

The work he has done includes reviewing 80- to 100-page contracts in IP and limited liability, and reviewing restrictive covenants. He spent a month in New York working on strategic outsourcing and contracts negotiations. The attorneys are given their own work to do, so not much supervision is involved. They are evaluated annually based on the goals they submit, and their boss gives them a rating based on performance. The base salary is $55,000 (in Michigan); the raises are good and they get a cost of living raise when they move to other offices.

Pros and cons of job and level of satisfaction

He is very happy at the company. The work is interesting, even "fantastic." He is able to use his business background (working on $100 million contracts). The training is great and the prestige is great. And the quality of life is excellent.

Did your law school career services office play any role in your getting the job?

His career services office was not helpful in getting him this job. (Note that the program was designed for the Big Ten law schools and some other Midwest schools only.)
Midwest 2013 Law Graduate Working as a Career Associate (and Previously as a Summer Career Associate) at the Midwest Office of an International Firm

How did you land the job? How did you sell yourself in the interview?
She got the job through 2L OCI. She did a lot of research on the firm, and attended an info session at her law school. She thinks they were impressed by the research she did and what she knew about the firm.

What is your (perceived) career progression?
She is not quite sure yet. At the time of the interview she had just started. At this initial point it seems to her as if there’s a lot to learn and a lot of experience to gain. She thinks eventually the career progression may start to level out, but right now the process of getting started on real legal projects is giving her a lot to keep busy with and to learn from.

What type of work does this position entail? Is the work similar to on-track associates? Do you have skills that set you apart?
The work is similar to on-track associates. The only difference is that career associates are expected to do less of it, in terms of hours. She is getting involved in some pretty big class action suits, so she will be working on things such as conducting interviews and writing briefs — the same as what the on-track associates are doing.

What are the billable and non-billable expectations?
The expectation is 1,600 hours a year. The requirement is for billable and creditable hours (things like training, pro bono work, office events, professional development). She gets to count both types of hours. The on-track associates can only count billable hours but they also have to do the same trainings and professional development activities. That’s a big perk for career associates.

How are you supervised, evaluated, compensated?
Career associates have assigning partners who give them work, supervise their work, and evaluate them. There are annual reviews. Career associates have informal mentors who also check up on them and answer their questions. The starting salary for career associates is $65,000.

To what extent are you integrated into the firm? Training, CLE, pro bono work, other?
She says that career associates are pretty well integrated at her firm. They are included in all of the trainings (including flying them out to the East Coast and West Coast retreats). They are also included in the live meetings on the web (i.e., ones that are broadcast from one office to all of the others). They get a chance to participate in the same pro bono work as well.

What are the pros and cons of the job?
Right now, the pros of the jobs are definitely the lower billable hours. The requirement works out to be about 40 hours a week — which is definitely conducive to a work/life balance. She finds the work environment to be really great too — everyone is very friendly and willing to help out.

How would you describe your level of job satisfaction and why?
So far, she likes it! The work she is doing is really sophisticated and interesting. And the work/life balance so far is great too. She will know more once she gets more involved with assignments, but for right now she is happy with her job.
Did your law school career services office play any role in your getting the job?

Her career services office posted all of the OCI jobs on Symplicity and coordinated OCI. The postings were descriptive enough to allow her to do research on the firm. OCI played a huge role in her getting the job. She interviewed first on campus, and then went over fall break for a call-back interview. She also found the advice she got from her career office about how to follow up after interviews (thank you cards) and how to accept an offer (i.e., call them and then follow up with email) was very helpful.

Advice to new grads

Career services was pretty realistic when it came to discussing the job with her, which she appreciated. For instance, the lower salary was maybe not the most attractive thing about the job, but her career services advisor was helpful in pointing out the perks that made up for it — better work/life balance, a more relaxed working environment, less pressure, etc.
20 ALTERNATIVE JOBS FOR LAW SCHOOL GRADS

Law school is a grind, and surviving it can take every last ounce of your energy. What's more, upon graduation, even if you still want to be a lawyer, the job market has more JD holders than open positions, thus causing a tooth-and-nail fight for the few positions that are open. The days of a JD ensuring financial security in the legal field are over due to law firms, judges and the government downsizing to adjust to the economic climate. Fortunately, a law degree can bring forth many additional opportunities beyond just becoming a lawyer. If you're open to a new career path you previously may not have considered, then peruse the list of the following jobs and see if one piques your interest. Note: median salaries (all but one are ranges) are from PayScale and apply to workers with 10-19 years of experience, so this is what you can achieve with a few years under your belt.

01 Senior Risk Manager [$98,829 – $137,632]

In order to become a risk manager, you should first accumulate experience in the legal or insurance industry working with claims. Once you secure a risk management position, you'll be responsible for assessing the risk associated with legal liability, risk and property loss. With additional experience and the demonstration of proficiency at the position, you can achieve a senior-level position and thus earn more money.

02 Lobbyist [$80,369 – $119,795]

Needless to say, the best lobbyist jobs are highly sought after given their power and, of course, compensation. Employed by public interest groups, trade organizations and PR firms, they utilize their contacts with lawmakers to persuade them to push certain policies. Lobbyists must be well-versed on the issues and possess excellent communication skills, neither of which are problems for most aspiring lawyers.

The United States of Drug Addicts

In a country of increasing drug addiction, more than half of all Americans aged 12 and older drink alcohol, with more than 25% of that figure binge drinking. Another 30 million use or abuse recreational drugs or prescription medications.

The Gangs in Oz

Nicknamed Oz, the namesake of the HBO series, the fictional Oswald State Correctional Facility is considered to be "no place like home".

03 Legal Publishing ($79,354 – $117,916)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Senior_Publisher/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
Former aspiring lawyers can utilize their legal knowledge by entering the field of legal publishing, where they can contribute to newsletters, brochures, blogs, legal journals and other publications related to law. Graduates from law school are already proficient writers and researchers, so entering the field of publishing should come naturally.

04 Political Campaign Manager ($73,698 – $111,910)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Campaign_Manager/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
The fields of law and politics go hand-in-hand, so it shouldn’t come as a surprise that many JD holders have pursued careers in politics, including as campaign managers, who coordinate the campaign and ensure its goals are reached. Despite having completed three rigorous years of law school, you’ll have to pay your dues before reaching the position, possibly by starting out as an entry-level coordinator.

05 Senior Compliance Officer ($65,800 – $105,338)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Sr_Compliance_Officer/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
With state and federal regulations constantly changing, it can be a difficult task to ensure a business is operating within established standards. That’s why compliance officers are so valuable, especially given the fate of institutions such as Enron. Of course, each new field you enter requires its own unique knowledge and skills, which can be gained by researching the concerns of regulators and enrolling in courses in data processing.

06 Executive Recruiter ($64,514 – $94,718)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Executive_Recruiter/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
The duties of an executive recruiter include composing job descriptions, screening candidates, meeting with them and extending an offer to the one who’s most qualified. The entire process is overseen by the executive recruiter, who has accumulated experience in recruiting prior to landing the position.

07 Procurement Manager ($64,114 – $96,241)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Procurement_Manager/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
A procurement manager purchases commodities, goods and services on behalf of the organization for which they work, enabling it to continue to operate efficiently. They must work within the limitations of a budget and determine the best quality and quantity of the objects they wish to purchase. Research and negotiation skills are a must, as finding a good deal often requires time and effort.

08 Landman or Land Woman ($64,094 – $117,916)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Landman/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
The best explanation of the duties of landman and land women, who work in the oil and gas exploration industry, is provided by the American Association of Professional Landmen (AAPL) (http://www.landmen.org/WCM/AAPL/Home/asap/default.aspx): “Company landmen negotiate deals and trades with other companies and individuals, draft contracts (and administer their compliance), acquire leases and ensure compliance with governmental regulations.”

09 Labor Relations Specialist ($55,955 – $78,611)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Labor_Relations_Specialist/Salary/by_Years_Experience]
Serving as a liaison between employees and management, labor relations specialists focus on labor negotiations, contract interpretation and grievance procedures. More specifically, they’re required to research, draft and prepare for negotiations for collective bargaining agreements. Travel is frequently involved with this occupation, as specialists often work with different branches of their company.
10 **Public Policy Analyst** ($54,100 – $75,344)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Public_Policy_Analyst/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

Public policy analysts research and find solutions for the political issues about which they're most passionate. Working for research firms, think tanks, and interest groups, their objective is to craft viable policy solutions that'll facilitate change in their area of interest. Typically, individuals with graduate level degrees, such as a JD, meet the qualifications for entering the field.

11 **Labor Union Business Representative** ($53,386 – $79,363)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Union_Business_Representative/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

Those committed to the union cause may become labor union business reps so they can promote membership, coordinate functions and deal with employers and the press. They negotiate with management on work-related matters such as wages and hours. Ultimately, they ensure the work environment is suitable for employees.

12 **Human Resources Manager** ($52,828 – $77,987)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Human_Resources_Manager/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

The evolution of human resources departments have brought forth the demand for even more individuals capable of hiring employees and implementing policies and procedures that enhance work environments. Excellent negotiation and communication skills are required for this position, which often can be achieved after experience is gained as a human resources generalist.

13 **Career Services Director** ($51,956 – $72,696)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Director%2c_Career_Services/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

A career in career services shouldn't be a last resort, but a goal for someone who genuinely wants to help students find the jobs for which they've been striving. A director of career services has several years of experience in the department, and has cultivated relationships with employers and recruiters. They oversee the operation of the department, including programs that help students with resume composition and job interviews.

14 **Contract Administrator** ($50,547 – $77,040)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Contract_Administrator/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

The duties of a contract administrator or manager are pretty self-explanatory. They conduct contract negotiations, ensuring the terms and conditions are acceptable to both parties and compliant to regulations. Their ultimate goal is to reduce risk and enhance operational performance. The areas of contract management include authoring and negotiation, baseline management, commitment management, communication management, contract visibility and awareness, documents management, and growth.

15 **Legal Office Administrator** ($50,296 – $76,571)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Legal_Office_Administrator/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

Although there are limited associate opportunities, you may be able to join a firm in another important position. After securing an entry level job as a recruiting assistant, for example, you can work your way up into a manager's position, serving an essential role in the composition of the firm for which you work. Remember, a law firm is a business, and it requires several key components to make it operate.

16 **Law Librarian** ($49,910 – $74,808)  
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Law_Librarian/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

Law school grads who enjoyed the information gathering process of school can become law librarians. Their job is to maintain the library's collection of legal-related texts and materials, assisting lawyers and law students with their research. The position requires a graduate degree, and none is more fitting than a JD.
17 K-12 Teacher ($49,570)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/All_K-12_Teachers/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

Some may cringe at the idea of becoming a teacher after completing three years of law school, but compared to the stressful work performed by lawyers, with their long, arduous hours, the environment can be refreshing. Teachers who actually enjoy interacting with kids find the job fulfilling, especially if they teach a subject in which they’re interested, such as government or economics. Private schools allow more flexibility with the classes they offer, so you could even teach a class on law.

18 Trust Administrator ($44,219 - $63,710)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Trust_Administrator/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

After a trust is created, a trust administrator manages the assets, protecting that person’s property until they’re old enough to do it on their own. They act only according to the instruction provided in the trust document, and carry out duties such as paying taxes, record keeping and composing reports for the beneficiaries. Trust administrators must have integrity, as they serve someone else for an extended period of time.

19 Political Fundraiser ($43,543 - $78,613)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Fundraiser/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

Money is the lifeblood of a successful political campaign, as evidenced by President Obama’s record-shattering numbers in 2008 when he raised almost $750 million [http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97843849]. A capable political fundraiser knows how to network, establishing connections with potential donors. Using their excellent social skills and charisma, they must convince those donors that the cause is deserving of their support, a task that can present quite a challenge.

20 Court Administrator ($43,158 - $66,129)
[http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Court_Administrator/Salary/by_Years_Experience]

An understanding of how the judicial process works is helpful for court administrators. Additionally, management skills are needed as they oversee the budget, hiring of staff and general day-to-day operations of the court. It’s another great way to become involved in the process of law without enduring the stress as a lawyer.

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[Also post on Facebook Posting as Cassie Weltman (Not you?)]

Andrew Ostler (signed in using Hotmail)
This article is very interesting and shows that there are a variety of options for law grads that can’t find a suitable job at a firm or government organization. Future lawyers need to pay attention, as there are many more law graduates than there are jobs in law. According to the BLS, from August 2012 to September 2012, there were 1,000 more jobs total in the Legal Services Industry. Although it is good that this number is growing, it is still not growing very quickly. Lawyers looking for law jobs (or alternatives like those mentioned here) can find these kinds of jobs at www.gramed.com.

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In Tough Job Market, Law Grads Use J.D.s for Nonlegal Work

When big firm jobs are scarce, law school graduates get creative about their careers.

By Menachen Wecker  Sept. 30, 2011 | 10:00 a.m. EDT

Among the alumni ranks of the University of Texas—Austin’s School of Law are cartoonists, service dog trainers, and wind farm employees, which might explain why it has a Non-Practicing Advisory Council within its alumni association.

“We have a significant percentage (some think maybe up to one third) of alumni in nontraditional careers,” says Tim Kubatzky, the school’s executive director of development. “There is no single path that takes them there, and many have spent at least some part of their careers in law firms or practicing solo or serving as corporate counsel.”

According to Kubatzky, the movement amongst J.D.s toward nontraditional jobs is not a new development. “The current economic situation has prompted more law school graduates to be creative in using their legal educations,” he says.

[See U.S. News’s rankings of top law schools.]

But according to a recent post by Staci Zaretsky, an editor of Above the Law, morale in law school career services offices is at an “all-time low.” The post cites an Alternative Careers Handbook published by the University of Arizona’s James E. Rogers College of Law, which mentions “Fidel Castro, dictator” as an example of a prominent J.D. working in a nonlegal profession.

“I was being a little snarky in my piece considering the fact that, according to NALP [the Association for Legal Career Professionals], only 58.4 percent of 2010 grads were able to land jobs requiring bar passage,” Zaretsky says. “I can only assume that law school career services offices are feeling the effects of the employment rates.”

[Read about U.S. News urging law school deans to improve employment data.]

Many law school career services departments address alternative or nontraditional careers on their websites, and a Google search for “career” and “outside of the legal profession” restricted to .edu websites yields nearly 65,000 hits. Some of those departments, like that of the Virginia Beach-based School of Law at Regent University, connect alternative careers for attorneys to the economy.

“As the legal profession has become increasingly more demanding and entry-level hiring more competitive, many law students are considering other alternatives,” according to the Regent website.

Typically, 10 percent of Yale Law School alumni work in a business setting five years after graduating, according to a 64-page Lawyers in Business guide the school publishes. And, jobs in management consulting, investment banking, and venture capital can earn young associates annuals salaries of $100,000 to $300,000, the guide states.

According to employment statistics on Drake University’s School of Law website, 16 percent of the Des Moines, Iowa, school’s alumni work in business fields nine months after graduation, and the website of the Boston University School of Law says 17 percent of its 2009 graduates working in law and business began their careers in academia and while 6 percent worked in business.
[Learn about alternative careers for burned-out lawyers.]

Sometimes, a school's relationship with a nonlegal employer can create opportunities for students, according to Sandra Mans, assistant dean of the career center at Albany Law School. A large financial services firm started by an alumnus hires one to four Albany graduates each year, she says, and 68 alumni currently work at the company.

"Other recent graduates are pursuing accounting firms, legislative positions, investor services, publishing houses, compliance and claims jobs, and court analyst roles," Mans says. "Salaries at these positions range from $45,000 to $105,000."

Milan Dalal, who holds a J.D. from Boston College Law School, landed a job at a prominent Boston law firm, where he says starting annual salaries are $160,000—well above the high end of Mans's range. But he left the firm after a year to accept a job as legislative director ($76,000 annual salary) in the office of Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-N.Y.).

Many Capitol Hill staffers are J.D.s, according to Dalal, who says his position fulfills his passion for public service and offers him the perspective of "literally writing the laws that others will then apply." Though annual salaries for jobs such as his could start at $60,000 for J.D.s, Dalal encourages aspiring public servants to earn a J.D., because he says it can help people rise more quickly through the ranks of seniority.

TAGS: law school, careers, education, law, graduate schools, University of Texas at Austin, Yale University, Boston College

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Alternative Careers for Lawyers

Using the Law Degree in Non-Practicing Careers:

• Alternative uses of the JD degree are as varied and individualistic as the students and lawyers who pursue the careers
• There are valuable and transferable skill sets from law school for many careers - and law students and lawyers can make the case to potential employers about the value of the skills
• The first step in using your JD in a creative way is undergoing self-assessment - formally or informally - to determine your goals and how best to bring together your experience, the law degree and your career desires
• Networking is an essential part of utilizing the JD in a non-traditional career path
• Be ready to explain what you learn in law school, what goes on in class, and how this can be useful outside the legal employment setting - never take for granted that non-lawyers will understand the law school environment
• Network before the job becomes available, so that the potential employer is already open to considering someone with a JD degree in a position that does not require one

Explore Alternative Career ideas:

• Pursuing a Values-Driven Job Search for Alternative Legal Careers
• The Before & After Resume: Effective Resumes for the Alternative Career Job Search
• Most Typical Alternative Careers for Lawyers Nationwide
• Handling Tough Interview Issues
• From Lawyer to Administrator
Nine Jobs You Can Do With A Law Degree

A law degree doesn’t guarantee that you’ll have a career in law. It does guarantee you will have a degree and most likely a student loan.

In North America, there seems to be a glut of lawyers. Earlier this year, New York Supreme Court judge Melvin J. Schweitzer ruled that lawyers couldn’t sue their schools for marketing the field as a viable source of employment.

In Canada, the Globe and Mail looked at the issue of too many law students and not enough articling positions in the big firms.

Law schools and working lawyers are paying attention. Ilana Raynai, of Brauti Thorning Zibbarras in Toronto, is part of the student committee at the firm. She speaks with high school students, articulating students and young associates. Raynai says, “Obviously, there is a concern about jobs.” She pointed out that there are the top law firms that everyone wants to work at which has 10 to 15 spots. Mya Bulwa, Assistant Dean, Students at Osgoode Hall Law School, says, “Students are coming in with broader view of what they can do their law degree.” She explains that Osgoode Hall’s legal education is trying to be responsive and give students a wide breadth of subjects so they can apply their law degree.

But what can you do with a law degree that doesn’t include working in the hottest law firms in the country? Surprisingly, quite a bit:

Professional counseling
Bulwa says a new staff member at the school has a law degree and a counseling degree. This combination allows the counselor to understand the stresses of law students because she went through the same process.

**Negotiation and Conflict Resolution**

While you don't need a law degree to work as a mediator, legal knowledge can help during the mediation process.

**Development Agencies**

Your degree can help if you plan on working with a Nongovernmental organization. After all, a lot of them work in countries where knowledge of the law is crucial to their mandate.

**Government and politics**

This one is a gimme but consider how many politicians have a law degree. There's Bill Clinton and Barack Obama — just to name two presidents — and United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. While law and politics remain entangled, there is a decline of lawyers entering politics.

**Banking and finance**

So if you don't go into politics, why not try finance? There are certain fields where a law degree certainly couldn't hurt such as estates, tax and small business. Even if you don't want to practice law in the finance sector and prefer to deal with the money, having one can help since finance does require legal knowledge.

**Entrepreneur**

Of course you don't need a degree to be an entrepreneur but Jacqueline Dinsmore went from working as a corporate lawyer for one of the largest firms in Canada and then as the Assistant General Counsel for the Toronto Star to founding Luvali Convertibles. Dinsmore credits her degree for helping her understand and negotiate contracts related to her business.

**Academia**

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II. Business
III. Court Administration
IV. Government
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VI. Legal Education and Law-Related Careers
VII. Media

I. General Job Search

http://www.attorneyjobs.com/
While the best resources on alternative jobs found on this site require a monthly fee, the rates are quite reasonable and may well be worth the investment for a few months.

www.bls.gov
U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, maintains this extraordinarily detailed web site. Of particular interest to the alternative career seeker are descriptions of major industries and compensation data for hundreds of occupations.

www.careerjournal.com
This site, sponsored by the Wall Street Journal, features job search news, tips, discussion groups, and a database of job listings searchable by job title or description.

www.hg.org/empchange.html
Hieros Gamos Career Center maintains a special section on changing jobs and career change generally.

www.job-hunt.org
This comprehensive site contains job search tips, recent news articles, and links to tons of other resources. Search for job resources by location or industry/profession. The site has links to great general job search information. Be sure to check out The Online Job Search Guide.

www.jobhuntersbible.com
This is Dick Bolles’ job search web site that is intended to serve as a companion to this book “What Color is Your Parachute?” It’s a great resource – full of articles, links, tips, tools, and even fun lists (e.g., Ten Best Jobs for People who…).

http://www.jobsearchprivacy.org/jobsearch.htm
The Online Job Search Companion section has a list of employment-related web sites. Of particular interest is the list of the “Big Ten” sites and the regional job database lists.

http://www.lexisnexis.com
On the LexisNexis homepage, click on “Company Information” at the top, then “Employment” on the left side, then click on “Alternative Careers” in the box on the right to find positions with Lexis Nexis.
http://online.onetcenter.org/
This is an interactive database of occupational information. Conduct a skills search to find jobs that match your skills or find information (nationally and by state) on particular occupations.

www.opportunityknocks.org
Look for nonprofit jobs and career opportunities on this site. Registration to receive email alerts of open positions matching your interests is free.

www.rileyguide.com
This is a well-known guide to online job search articles and resources.

www.thomsoncareers.com
The Thomson Corporation, which owns Westlaw, among its many holdings, lists careers with the company through its web site.

www.vault.com
This is a comprehensive job search site, which provides job listings, as well as company-specific message boards. Vault produces various career guides for law students and other professionals.

www.wetfeet.com
This is a great general job search resource providing career research information as well as job search resources. Check out company, career, or industry profiles to learn more about the job options that are available.
II. Business

www.aimr.com
The Association for Investment Management and Research provides education for investment managers and analysts, as well as promotes high professional standards. The Association also oversees examination and awarding of the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation.

www.amanet.org
Maintained by the American Management Association, this site offers a full range of management development and educational services for business professionals.

www.amcf.org
The Association of Management Consulting Firms is an international association of firms engaged in the practice of consulting to management.

www.apics.org
The American Production and Inventory Control Society is the source of expertise in resource management for manufacturing and service industries. Registration is required for job bank access.

www.astd.org
The American Society for Training & Development is a leading professional organization and resource for workplace training and performance issues. A job bank is included on the web site.

www.imcusa.org
The Institute of Management Consultants USA is a national professional association representing management consultants. It awards the CMC (Certified Management Consultant) certification mark.

www.managementconsultingnews.com
This web site provides subscribers a free newsletter via e-mail covering the management consulting industry.

www.marketingpower.com
One of the largest organizations for marketers, the American Marketing Association maintains this site, which provides career and salary information, as well as job bank listings.

www.shrm.org
The Society for Human Resource Management is the world’s largest organization devoted to human resource management. The site provides links to resources, local chapters and job banks.

www.sia.com
The Securities Industry Association is an organization of 600+ securities firms, including investment banks, broker-dealers and mutual fund companies, active in all phases of corporate and public finance.
III. Court administration

http://www.cour tin fo.ca.gov/jobs/
The Judicial Council of California provides information pertaining to court administration in California.

www.courttv.com
This site contains information regarding careers and open positions at Court TV.

www.judges.org
The National Judicial College (NJC) is the nation’s leading judicial training and education institution.

www.statejustice.org
The State Justice Institute (SJI) was established by Federal law in 1984 to award grants to improve the quality of justice in State courts, facilitate better coordination between State and Federal courts, and foster innovative, efficient solutions to common problems faced by all courts.

http://www.uscourts.gov/
Click on “Employment,” then “Employment Opportunities in the Federal Judiciary,” then on the “Search for Court Positions” to find open positions within the Federal Judiciary.

www.whohascourtjobs.com
The National Center for State Courts created this site as a gathering place for job seekers to browse open court positions.

[Consult the Administrative Office of Courts in your preferred state for a list of available job openings and their requirements.]
IV. Government

A. Federal Government

http://www.archives.gov/careers

The National Archives employment website.

http://www.attorneyjobs.com

Federal Reports maintains the Legal Career Center. This site contains an extensive
database of attorney and law-related positions in a variety of settings, including federal, state and
local government. Attorney Jobs also includes JD Preferred – Alternative Legal Careers for
Lawyers, which is a useful resource for any student considering non-traditional legal careers.
Students will also find a number of helpful pages on the site including resume and interviewing
tips and federal and state government application forms, which can be downloaded.

http://www.calltoserve.org

The Partnership for Public Service has joined with the U.S. Office of Personnel
Management to develop a national initiative, A Call to Serve: Leaders in Education Allied for
Public Service. This initiative is designed to educate a new generation about the importance of a
strong civil service, help re-establish links between federal agencies and campuses, and provide
students with information about federal jobs. This site includes information regarding applying
for federal employment, contains profiles of various opportunities with federal agencies
(throughout the country), and links to each agency’s main and job listing web pages. It profiles
specific federal opportunities by interest areas such as Economics, Education, Health, Human
Resources, Law Enforcement, and Public Relations.

http://www.fedjobs.com/

The Federal Research Service is a private organization which maintains a searchable
database of federal government jobs. Choose an occupation and narrow your search by location,
agency, and other criteria.

http://www.fedworld.gov

This site provides general career related information in the federal government and
databases containing law-related positions in various federal agencies.

http://www.firstgov.gov

This is the official U.S. gateway to all government information on the Internet. This
comprehensive site provides links to all federal entities in the three branches of government.

http://www.infoctr.edu/fwl/

The Center for Information Law and Policy maintains this collection of links to federal
government home pages.

http://www.pmi.opm.gov

This site details the Presidential Management Intern Program, a federal program designed
to groom graduate students for upper-level management positions in the federal government.
The site provides lists of agencies and their departments and offices that hire PMIs.
http://publicservice.monsiter.com/

This is a new section on the Monster.com mega site. The entire section is devoted to employment opportunities in the federal government. Students can search for positions throughout the nation in a number of job categories.

http://www.usajobs.opm.gov

The Federal Government’s Office of Personnel Management announces all of its jobs across the country on this newly revamped site. This site allows you to search for government positions by agency, location, and series. Series include traditional legal positions such as Attorney and Law Clerk in addition to numerous law-related positions including Criminal Investigator, Equal Employment Opportunity, and General Investigator. The site also includes a Career Interest Guide section which allows you to select an occupation based on your interests or based upon a career area.

B. State Government

http://www.bls.gov/oco/eg/cgs042.htm

The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides information on state and local government describing the nature of the industry, related occupations, working conditions, earnings and outlook for the industry.

http://www.firstgov.gov

This site includes several links to state and local government home pages and related web sites, such as state administrative agencies, categorized by topic (e.g., Drug, Education, Health, Housing, Labor, etc.)

http://www.hg.org/usstates.html

This page on the Heiros Gamos web site contains links to state government resources for all the US states, as well as to associations dealing with state and government municipalities and other related sites. It provides a very comprehensive list of links and is a wonderful starting place for conducting research.


The University of Michigan Law School Career Services maintains this page of links to state government websites.

http://www.naag.org/

The website of the National Association of Attorneys General provides access to research, news, and links to the Attorney Generals Office for each state.

http://www.statejobs.com

View job listings by industry, including state and local government opportunities, and post a resume on-line. This site contains state and federal government job listings as well as Fortune 500 listings.

http://www.statelocalgov.net

This site provides state government links for all 50 states. Click on the state that interests you and find links to the state home page, Statewide Offices, Legislative branch, Judicial branch,
Executive branch, Boards & Commissions, Cities, Counties, Towns, and Libraries for each state. Additional resources are also available on national organizations for state government employees, regional governments, and other related topics. This is a wonderful starting point for locating state government information!

**Political/Legislative**

http://dnc.capitolworks.com
The Democrat National Committee lists positions within the organization at this section of its main site (www_democrats.org)

www.gop.org/
The Republican National Committee does not list positions with the organization on its site, but provides helpful information for those interested in conservative politics and causes.

www.house.gov/cao-hr/
This page of the site maintained by the U.S. House of Representatives contains a discussion of employment opportunities at the House.

www.hillzoo.com
This “inside the beltway” site lists positions on and off Capitol Hill for those interested in working on either the Right or the Left.

http://www.opajobs.com
This site contains job listings in government affairs, public relations, legislation, print and broadcast journalism on the Hill, and in non-profits, corporations, and federal agencies in the Washington, DC area. Subscription required.

http://www.rcjobs.com/
The Roll Call, one of Capitol Hill’s political newspapers, lists jobs through these pages on its website.

www.senate.gov
While the U.S. Senate web site does not contain a specific page on employment opportunities there, this general overview may prove useful to job seekers looking for a comprehensive overview of the entity.

**Think Tanks**

www.nira.go.jp/linke/tt-link/
National Institute for Research Advancement is a Japanese organization established to conduct independent research that will contribute to the resolution of various complex issues facing contemporary society. The Institute's research focuses on current and emerging issues in many areas, including politics, economics, international affairs, society, new technologies, and administration. This page of NIRA’s site lists international think tanks, a brief description of their purposes and links to their webpages.

http://www.politinfo.com/
PolitInfo.com is an independent and non-partisan portal for political resources, news, and information.

www.politixgroup.com/ttjobs.htm
www.politixgroup.com/dcintern/tt.htm

The Politixgroup is an independently run private organization whose purpose is to increase knowledge and understanding of the political process with the purpose of inspiring early involvement and activism at the local, state and federal levels of government. These two pages provide links to full time employment and internship opportunities with think tanks and partisan organizations.
V. Health Care

www.ache.org
The American College of Healthcare Executives is the international organization for healthcare executives. Click on the Career Services tab to search the ACHE job bank and to find a list of healthcare career-related resources. Also check out the Publications section and view the books available on career development. This is a great starting place for information on healthcare management.

http://adams.mgh.harvard.edu/hospitalwebusa.html
This directory of hospitals in the United States provides direct links to hospital web sites.

http://www.asbh.org/index.htm
The American Society for Bioethics and Humanities hosts this site, providing news articles, resource links, and employment listings.

http://www.healthcarejobstore.com/
This web site is an enormous database of all types of healthcare jobs. Search for jobs by job title, get assistance with preparing a healthcare resume, or post your resume in the employer access database.

http://www.healthcarelawnet.com/
This web site is a comprehensive resource for corporate counsel and healthcare professionals. The Daily Newsfeed provides up-to-date health law news. The Desk Reference section provides an enormous list of links covering everything from legal and business research to healthcare organizations to travel and weather. The Online Forum offers opportunities to participate in online interviews and seminars. Use the site to find out about upcoming healthcare conferences and events.

http://www.healthlawyers.org/
This is the web site of the American Health Lawyers Association. It contains information about relevant news and publications, listserves, related resources, and a national job bank.

http://www.healthleaders.com/index.php
This multimedia company provides information to healthcare professionals through its HealthLeaders Magazine, online news, and relevant research.

http://www.healthmanagementcareers.com/
This site from the American College of Healthcare Executives provides information on what a healthcare executive is and the types of opportunities available within the profession.

http://www.hfma.org/
The Healthcare Financial Management Association is a national professional membership organization. Its web site offers a Job Bank, lists of executive search firms, and resume-referral services (available to members only).

http://www.hhs.gov/
This is the web site for the United States Department of Health and Human Services. It provides information on the various HHS programs and operating divisions. Follow the links to learn more about employment opportunities both for students and graduates.
www.mgma.org

This site, from the Medical Group Management Association, offers information on physician practice management. The Job section contains a job bank and other career resources, including salary and internship information.

http://www.modernhealthcare.com/

This is the on-line version of Modern Healthcare magazine. It is a great source for current healthcare news and hot topics articles. There is a members-only career center and a page of resources with archived articles, surveys, and lists.

http://www.nih.gov/sigs/bioethics/

This comprehensive site, maintained by the National Institutes of Health, provides links to “Bioethics Resources on the Web.” There are links to specific topics, general and federal resources, and organizations of interest. The section on Careers in Bioethics provides job postings and information on post-baccalaureate opportunities.
VI. Legal Education and Law-Related Careers

http://www.aals.org/frs/index.html
The Association of American Law Schools maintains these pages to facilitate the Faculty Recruiting Conference, at which entry-level candidates meet with law school appointments committees each fall. An older, but still relevant, article providing advice on legal teaching is also included.

http://law.gonzaga.edu/IL_ST/ilst.htm
The Institute for Law School Teaching is a center at Gonzaga University School of Law that focuses on the teaching, as opposed to scholarship, aspect of legal education. While there are no "nuts and bolts" tips on getting a faculty position, this is an interesting site as it highlights the classroom side of legal education.

http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/faculty-pages/wendel/teaching.htm
Professor Brad Wendel at Washington and Lee University School of Law covers the nuts and bolts of pursuing tenure-track positions and discusses clinical, adjunct and legal writing positions as well.

http://jurist.law.pitt.edu
These pages on the Jurist web site, maintained by the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, contain many helpful links for the would-be law professor.

http://www.utexas.edu/law/faculty/bleiter/GUIDE.HTM
This is an article by Brian Leiter, a professor at the University of Texas Law School. It provides a good overview of the traditional pathway to tenure-track positions at law schools.

http://www.aallnet.org/committee/rllc/re-links.asp
Resources suggested by the American Association of Law Libraries on law librarianship as a career.
VII. Media

www.aaaa.org
American Association of Advertising Agencies is a national trade association representing the advertising agency business in the United States. Its membership produces approximately 75 percent of the total advertising volume placed by agencies nationwide.

http://www.aejmc.org/
The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is a non-profit, educational association of journalism and mass communication faculty, administrators, students and media professionals.

www.ajr.org.
The American Journalism Review lists news sources and journalism organizations. Also contains a section called “Reporters’ Tools” that lists “reportorial aids from guidelines for searching the Internet to lists of quotable experts, from tips on using public opinion polls to video feeds for television newscasts.”

http://www.allstarjobs.com/
This site contains links to many media-related job boards.

http://www.attorneyjobs.com
Attorneyjobs.com has a large section discussing alternative careers in general. Media and entertainment is a subset of the proposed alternative careers. The page provides a sampling of representative job titles within media and entertainment fields.

The media and entertainment pages of business.com provide information on corporations in the field.

http://career.berkeley.edu/Communications/Communications.shtml#journalism.
The website of the Career Center of University of California, Berkeley contains a section on communications careers which lists professional organizations and contains articles about careers in advertising, public relations, broadcasting, journalism, publishing, and writing.

http://careers.cua.edu/explore/mediastudiesresources.htm
The Catholic University of America Career Services Office provides articles about media careers in general and links to job search sites.

http://www.careereexplorer.net/curriculum/advertising.asp
This section of careereexplorer.com focuses on advertising and marketing. The site discusses growth in the field, average salaries, typical jobs in the field, and links to job descriptions.

http://www.collegegrad.com/careers/
On the main career page, click on “browse by career category,” then click on “Business, Management and Executive Careers.” In this section you can review information on careers in advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations and sales. It contains hiring projections, descriptions of the nature of the work, work environments, necessary training and skills, and statistics.
www.ipra.org.

The International Public Relations Association constitutes an international group of public relations practitioners worldwide, active in promoting the exchange of information and co-operation within the profession, and building a program of professional development opportunities and other initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of public relations in management and international affairs.

http://www.iwantmedia.com/jobs/

This site contains links to media and entertainment job boards and career resources, broken down by industry. For example, the site has separate areas for careers in entertainment, internet, television and radio, etc.

http://www.khake.com/page43.html

The Vocational Information Center maintains this page which serves as a “Broadcast Media and Journalism Career Guide.” It contains links by job descriptions. Each link generally includes information about job duties, job requirements and training needed, and salary. The site also includes links to media and journalism related sites such as union sites, news sites, and other information.

http://www.law.com/service/site_map.shtml

This part of law.com’s site lists American Lawyer Media Publication sites and properties.

http://www.nationjob.com/media/

This job-searching tool provides a laundry list of media positions with a focus on publishing.

http://www.nd.edu/~ndlaw/career/strategies/business.html

The University of Notre Dame Law School’s Career Services Office’s web site contains a discussion of alternative careers including a short section on legal publishing houses.

http://www.prsa.org/

The Public Relations Society of America is the world’s largest organization for public relations professionals. Its nearly 20,000 members, organized into 116 chapters, represent business and industry, technology, counseling firms, government, associations, hospitals, schools, professional services firms and nonprofit organizations.

http://web.grinnell.edu/careerdevelopment/Library/communications&media.html

Grinnell College’s Career Development Office provides a list of books about media careers and a summary of each.
Pursuing a Values-Driven Job Search for Alternative Legal Careers

by Marantha Beatty-Brown

Most people recognize that they perform better when truly engaged by a task. Savvy employers thus look for a combination of competency and passion in prospective employees. Employers understand that a sincere desire to do a job will generally translate into a more focused and effective employee. This simple truth becomes especially important for law graduates who are pursuing non-traditional careers in fields that are very competitive. Given the challenges of a competitive market and the fact that a non-traditional field may seem less related to previous experience, the successful applicant will be the one who convinces the interviewer that he or she not only can do the job but also wants to do the job.

When a lawyer is moving from a traditional legal practice into an “alternative” career, interviewers will certainly ask why the lawyer no longer wants to practice. What can quickly sink an applicant’s chances of getting an offer is an unexplained assertion that he or she seeks a change of pace or a more supportive working environment. Such statements can lead to assumptions that the applicant is lazy or would need constant guidance.

Instead of framing the issue in the negative and talking about what they don’t want to do, job hunters should consider their true motivations for seeking a non-traditional career. An interviewer wants to know how an applicant will benefit the employer, not why she or he is fleeing her or his current position.

Matching a Career with Personal Values

Lawyers seeking a new career path should first do the necessary self-assessment. But an alternative career seeker also needs to ask why he or she wants to leave (or avoid) the traditional practice of law. It is then crucial to ensure that prospective employers hear the positive, yet honest, reasons a change is desired. It could be that the applicant didn’t know enough about his own interests when entering law school, or that she didn’t adequately understand what it meant to be a lawyer. Perhaps the job seeker is not the advocate type, but is more of a collaborator, counselor, or coordinator.

In order to discover these traits and motivations, job seekers should think about their legal jobs, hobbies, and past academic or volunteer experiences:

- What activities have been exciting and motivating?
- What activities lead to procrastination and stress?
- What are the best and worst aspects of current and past jobs?

Once candidates have answered these questions and understand their career-related values and personality traits, they can focus their job searches on careers that will better align personal motivations with job responsibilities and goals. It is smart to talk with persons who hold similar positions and find out what skills they use to accomplish their job goals. This information can then be used to compare aspects of a prospective position with personal values and abilities. Candidates should also consider which values are most important to them and how well those key values align with a potential job. It may be necessary to compromise on less important values in order to meet the most vital goals, depending on financial and security needs and the job market in the applicant’s area. In addition to helping a job seeker pursue the right position, a solid understanding of personal values can lead to an honest discussion with an interviewer about why the applicant would be good at the job. Having a passion for an employer’s goals is a strong selling point when an employer is awash in a sea of good candidates.

After this self-discovery process, a job hunter will be better equipped to articulate how his or her personal skills and values will support the employer’s goals. And, in the long run, a position that was sought because it was suited to one’s personality and values will make for a much happier and more productive employee than would a job taken because it was in the right place at the right time.

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Exploring the Alternative Career Search

by Sara Schramm

Legal career professionals are not mind readers, but sometimes I find myself wishing for this quality when advising on alternative career searches. I used to catch my breath when job searches were presented to me in the form of that familiar confession and question, “I really don’t want to practice law, so what else can I do?” Should I ask why, talk about my own decision to step away from practice, or start spouting my favorite alternative career ideas? It was clear to me from the beginning that going in any of these directions would likely result in an overwhelmingly broad or off-base discussion. Just listening seemed the safest bet, but that didn’t lead to an action plan.

When talking with students who don’t have a strong sense of what they might like to do, I’ve found it easy to use the careers of non-practicing lawyers in our law school as a concrete example to start educating students on how to research and apply for any number of alternative career positions. We all know how to find information on career services and recruiting positions through NALP. I always make the point that for any career there is likely a great organization and plenty of online resources to learn what training or skills are required to become employed. For example, those in admissions turn to the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) for information. If there is not an organization to learn from, I work to introduce or identify someone with whom the student can conduct an informational interview.

My colleagues in admissions, development, and other alumni services have always been a great resource for students in the job search process. Your law school may have opportunities for students to help in these departments, which is one way for students to get some real experience that shows their career intentions on their résumé. These administrators may also be willing to help your students understand where to find entry-level position postings or how to make contacts. Alumni service administrators are a natural starting point to find alumni contacts in any number of professions students are interested in exploring. If a student is interested in an administrative career, good places to check for these postings online are through The Chronicle of Higher Education (http://chronicle.com/section/jobs/61/) or at the Higher Ed Jobs website (http://www.higheredjobs.com/).

If your law school is part of a larger university campus, the resources for alternative job searching may seem endless. Check to see if the main college campus career center is willing to give your students access to their services. For example, they may offer Knowledge Skills & Abilities (KSA) essay review for those complex government applications, allow access to job postings, or grant admission to job fairs of interest to your students. Often there is career programming that may overlap with your students’ interests. Every year our campus has a great informational program about the Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF), which is a policy fellowship. PMF is open to all graduate students and is often a great fit for candidates with legal training. Learn too who might nominate your school’s students for the PMF and consider how to best educate and promote this type of opportunity through your office or in conjunction with your university.

If you get as many requests for assistance with alternative careers as I have this year, you will...
likely have great student turnout for a panel or speaker on this topic. I was pleased to be able to vote to bring in Susan Gainen, with Pass the Baton, LLC, this spring to our school. For those of you who have not yet had the privilege of meeting Susan, she was a long time NALPer and is an amazing resource and inspiration on this topic. Check out the Pass the Baton website for contact information and resource ideas to help you educate your students:

There will always be challenges in any job search, but the alternative job search requires more specific adjustments along the way to make sure that a student’s job search strategy and documents are a fit for the position sought. I am confident that moving a student from a discussion of “I don’t want to practice law, but what else can I do?” to a more prepared place of “I have decided not to practice law because I want to do X and here’s why” is really important. Once cover letters and job search documents back up that positive and plausible message, your candidate is well on the way to a successful alternative career search.

Sara Schramm is Assistant Director and Judicial Clerkship Advisor in the Office of Legal Career Services at The University of Georgia School of Law. This article was submitted on behalf of the NALP Newer Professionals Section.
So Many Directions to Go! Counseling Alumni on Alternative Career Options

by Julie Anna Alvarez

Counseling alumni is never easy, especially when they express interest in an “alternative career.” Preparing for such a counseling appointment, I wish I could hand each alum a copy of one of my favorite sources of career wisdom: Dr. Seuss’s *Oh, the Places You’ll Go!* (Random House, 1990). This book is a common gift for new graduates, but it should be essential reading for anyone embarking on a career transition, no matter how seasoned. Each counselee would start the process confident that:

You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself
Any direction you choose.
You’re on your own. And you know
what you know.
And YOU are the guy who’ll decide
where to go.
— Dr. Seuss

This would mitigate the common misperception that somehow I will decide where they should go and what they should do in their next career! Dr. Seuss would also have warned them that:

I’m sorry to say so
but, sadly, it’s true
that Bang-ups
and Hang-ups
can happen to you...
And when you’re in a Slump,
you’re not in for much fun.
Un-slumping yourself
is not easily done.
— Dr. Seuss

“Un-slumping” is among the things we counselors do. Alas, law school budgets (and raised eyebrows) make it impractical to distribute this book as preparatory alumni reading. Our alumni have so many directions to go! And we have just as many techniques, tools, and maps we can offer our seekers as guidance.

Defining terms is key. Has the counselee clarified the definition of what s/he seeks: Is it just an alternative legal practice area or setting (a different “traditional” career) they want? Or do they prefer not practicing law directly, but utilizing their legal skills in a “JD advantage” or “alternative” legal career? Or do they perhaps want to pursue a non-traditional alternative career having nothing to do with the law at all? Following are two real-life counseling examples I’ll call “Thing #1” and “Thing #2.”

**Thing #1:** In January 2013, I had a delightful gray-haired alumus, “JL,” visit me to get alternative career advice. After creating a rapport, I asked why he wanted to switch gears. He admitted to winding down his law practice in recent years but was not ready to fully retire. He wanted to do something more personally fulfilling. He had, as he put it, “the crazy notion of making a living by going back to my first love — playing clarinet.” This may have left some counselors nonplussed, but I was thrilled he expressed a passion — a direction to go!

The most crucial question I always ask is: “Are you ready to stop practicing law and not have any regrets, either financially or because you would miss lawyering?” He convinced me he would not
miss practicing in the least (but could tolerate some project work to supplement his finances while this new chapter became viable). We determined he had entrepreneurial chops. We chatted about his options and settled on his (1) expanding ways to play music with local musicians (turned out he was already playing with a local metropolitan orchestra in his area) and (2) hanging out his shingle as a clarinet instructor.

I provided advice and resources for creating a business plan, networking, creating his LinkedIn profile, and creating a website to add credibility to his services. Shortly thereafter, I received an email thanking me: “When I told my wife about our discussion she said, ‘Yes, going to these experts is always worthwhile if they manage to win your respect themselves.’ You did. Thank you. I will keep you posted, if you’ll permit me to do so.” Permit him to do so? Absolutely! I encouraged him to keep in touch on a regular basis to ensure he kept on track.

By July he informed me he had wrapped up his last case and had begun receiving musicians’ testimonials. After a year he reports: “I can claim only a continual sense of renewed life, energy, and hope. As a lawyer, however, I am prepared to argue valuation of those things at eight figures.” He’d also found that many of his former students had now become local school band directors—a pipeline for obtaining potential paying students.

**Thing #2**: In December, I conducted a phone appointment with “RG,” an out-of-state alumna who graduated in the late 1980s. With many years in the prosecutorial arena (handling some grisly cases), she desperately needed a change. At least three times during our conversation she said (with slight variations) that “working at McDonald’s might be the only option for someone my age.” Some serious un-slumping needed here!

To improve her defeated attitude, I focused on how her skills were highly transferrable, regardless of whether she continued practicing law, and on the fact she had many options that did not involve golden arches. She started with no idea what she wanted to do. Lucky for me (and fellow members of theNALP Law School Alumni Career Services Section), in August 2013, Susan Gainen (now of Pass the Baton LLC and formerly Director of Career and Professional Development at the University of Minnesota Law School) provided us with a mini-primer on alternative career counseling during our section’s quarterly call and she graciously allowed us to post eight of her resources on our NALPconnect page. (One more reason to join our LSACS Section!) These resources helped me tackle this appointment and will help in tackling future ones.

I needed to know if RG was “really ready to stop being ‘the lawyer’” as Gainen puts it in her *Six Questions for Alternative Career Candidates* (and I learned the answers to the other five questions too). I intuited from the conversation that RG was not ready to stop being a lawyer. But while RG continued to see herself flipping hamburgers, she wanted to hear about alternative career options. I discussed options for continuing to practice law in another setting or field, as well as sharing Gainen’s *Non-Traditional Jobs for Law-Trained Professionals* and Cardozo’s *A Brief Guide to Alternative Careers*, both of which list a variety of common careers JDs pursue. I also used other resources available on the NALP website (www.nalp.org/jdadvantage and www.nalp.org/resources), including the “Alternative Careers for Lawyers: Web Sites of Interest” list. Exposing RG to this information helped her realize that she had options. We were then able to create a short list of areas that interested her (some practicing law and some “alternative” legal careers).

RG’s homework? — (1) schedule informational interviews and (2) compile a file of job postings that appealed to her, highlighting any gaps in knowledge/skill, so she could work to fill these gaps through CLE or other means. Based on past experiences, I am confident that, in continuing to counsel RG—and with self-assessment, encouragement, and the sharing of resources on options and how to explore them—this alumna will become un-slumped, and remember she has brains in...
her head and feet in her shoes. Together we will
make the journey in the direction she chooses to
go!

_For I am a counselor.  
A counselor I am.  
An Un-slumper for sure,  
many a Bang-up or Hang-up I cure.  
If you have brains and you have feet,  
to discuss your career we will meet.  
I'll help you steer in any direction you  
choose.  
You can't lose.  
So many directions to go!  
Your next career awaits, let's go!  
— JAA

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