

Alternative Careers for JDs

Occasionally, lawyers find themselves at a crossroads in their careers. They reach the conclusion that the practice of law no longer interests them, which raises the question about what they can do with their law degrees besides practicing law. Law school graduates and new attorneys may also face the same dilemma. I made it through law school and passed the bar exam, now what? There are numerous people who have successfully switched careers and found happiness down a different career path. This brief article will examine some options that are available to people who wish to research alternative legal careers.

Career Choices and Self-Assessment

The career options for a person with a Juris Doctorate degree are only limited by his or her imagination. Developing a career plan is an important step when considering a change of career. When developing a career plan it will be crucial to identify personal interests. It is also important when designing a career plan to take a self-inventory of any skills currently possessed, such as previous management or accounting experience through previous employment. It will be easier to identify which jobs might be a "good fit" after a person has completed a self-inventory. This process can also identify areas that may need reinforcement through the learning of new skills and possibly further schooling. There are numerous resources available on the Internet that have career assessment and personality tests such as the Keirseley Temperament Sorter II, (http://www.advisorteam.com/temperament_sorter/register.asp?partid=1). These sites may assist with the self-assessment process. When considering an alternative to legal practice it is vital to make educated decisions regarding what direction one should take to ensure the best fit. One

way to accomplish this is through research. It might be useful to people employed in a field that is of interest to gain additional insight about the prospective field. Another consideration is to find a mentor to assist with the learning process that is integral to any new employment setting. Setting long-term goals can also be a useful tool when considering a change of careers. It might be helpful to set five-year goals and even ten-year career goals within a prospective field. This process can help lend direction to a person's efforts. The process of considering a new career can be daunting. Fortunately, there are a number of texts and other resources that can provide guidance to JDs engaged in the endeavor of trying to find a new career.

There are several texts that are excellent resources for someone considering a new career. One text that I have found particularly insightful is *What Can You Do With a Law Degree? A Lawyer's Guide to Career Alternatives Inside, Outside, & Around the Law* by Deborah Arron. This book features a cornucopia of useful information on alternative careers. Some of the areas covered are successful career development, dealing with changes, self-assessment techniques, conducting research about alternative careers, coping with transition, putting plans into action, and there are also extensive appendices containing a myriad of practical resources and research tools. There are a number of other useful texts. They include: *Judgment Reversed: Alternative Careers for Lawyers* by Jeffrey Strausser, *The Lawyer's Career Change Handbook: More than 300 Things You Can Do With a Law Degree* by Hindi Greenberg, *JD Preferred: 400+ Things You Can do With*

a Law Degree (Other Than Practice Law), published by Federal Reports, Inc., and *Alternative Careers for Lawyers*, by Hillary Mantis. It should be noted that these texts are only a few that are available.

There are a number of electronic resources that are also available and of great use to anyone wishing to research and identify potential alternative legal careers. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, produced by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, located at <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>, is a tremendous research tool for anyone seeking insight into different careers. The resource outlines various facets of different careers including information about the nature of the work, working conditions, and also what requirements may be needed to begin a career in the selected field. This resource would be a good place to begin researching alternative legal careers. There are a number of other electronic resources that can also be of assistance to people who are researching potential careers. Some other useful resources are: Occupational Information Network, O*net OnLine, <http://online.onetcenter.org/>, JobStar, Career Journal.com from the Wall Street Journal, <http://www.jobstar.org/tools/career/spec-car.cfm>, and Michigan Occupational Reports for Exploration, http://www.michigan.gov/careers/0,1607,7-170-22526_23422-64989--,00.html. These websites only represent a fraction of the information that is available on the World Wide Web.

Searching for Potential Employers

The next step after deciding on a career path will be to find a job. Searching for

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potential jobs has become much easier because of the Internet. There is a multitude of websites that are exclusively dedicated to job hunting. Among the resources that are available are two well known sites, Monster.com, <http://www.monster.com/>, and Yahoo's HotJobs, <http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/>. Both of these sites have extensive job listings that are searchable by both geographic area and field. Both of these sites also permit users to submit a résumé and apply for jobs online. The best news about these resources is that they are for the most part free, unless additional paid services are sought such as résumé and cover letter writing assistance. There are a number of other employment sites available as well. A few sites that have a multitude of job listings are: America's Job Bank, <http://www.ajb.dni.us/>, USAJobs, for federal employment opportunities, <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>, and Executiveopenings.com, <http://www.executiveopenings.com/>.

Conclusion

The prospect of starting a new career can be intimidating, but it also can be exhilarating and rewarding. The sources that have been covered in this article represent a fraction of what is available. Initially, it may be useful to engage in wide scope searches for information. One electronic tool that is particularly useful in this respect is the Google search engine, <http://www.google.com/>. It will be of the utmost benefit for people seeking a change of career to arm themselves with as much information as possible to enable them to be knowledgeable consumers in today's job market. ◆

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