



CONDUCTING AN EFFECTIVE JOB SEARCH

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

You may find it helpful to formulate your career goals once you have read the OCP handout *Where the Jobs Are: An Overview of the Legal Employment Market* which summarizes the various types of legal employment available. Feel free to pick up an OCP Self-Assessment handout to assist you in the process. Once you have clarified your career goals, you can begin to develop a strategy to locate the type of employment that interests you. OCP is also happy to assist you in formulating your “Job Search Action Plan.” A general action plan worksheet is included in your Handbook.

**Your job search is an on-going process.
Keep in mind the following points during all stages of the process:**

- ◆ Few people *ever* find their dream job right out of law school.
- ◆ Be realistic in your search. Many students waste time, money, and effort contacting employers who are not likely to hire them.
- ◆ Be persistent and do not get discouraged. Rejection is a part of the process; however, with perseverance and follow-up, you can be successful. After all, it only takes one positive response.

To plan your search strategy, focus your efforts in a way that contributes to your career goals. The most common focus points for students are the following:

- Employer type
- Employer size
- Practice area
- Geographic location

While each of the above factors will limit the available opportunities, be careful to not overly restrict your efforts (i.e. searching only for private criminal defense firms in San Mateo County). The OCP handout *Interview Skills* has a list of questions you should consider when evaluating employers to determine whether it has characteristics important to you. Later in this section is a list of resources and strategies to assist you in planning your search.

TIMING YOUR JOB SEARCH

The timing of a job search and the correlating job search activities will depend on the type of employer you are considering and your year in school. The following guidelines are based on typical student experiences from past years. Make an appointment with an OCP Director and/or contact the potential employer directly for specifics and current information.

FIRST YEAR:

- **LARGE FIRMS.** Pursuant to guidelines from the National Association for Legal Professionals (NALP), most larger firms do not, and should not, begin to consider 1Ls until after December 1. Therefore, time your applications so that they arrive on December 1. Some firms may wait to make decisions until students receive their first semester grades in January or February. Additionally, 1L hiring is dependent upon the economy and whether the firm has filled all their 2L summer associate slots.
- **SMALL/MID-SIZED FIRMS.** Some smaller firms may begin to look in the fall, but most smaller firms will look in the spring semester for summer clerks and even continue to do so into the summer.
- **CORPORATIONS.** Similarly, corporations who hire students to work in their legal departments over the summer generally do not hire students until the spring semester or summer.
- **COURTS.** Most judges, especially federal court judges, hire students for summer externships from late fall to December and early January. Federal judges in the Bay Area have agreed to wait for first semester grades.
- **PUBLIC INTEREST/PUBLIC SECTOR.** While some public interest organizations and government agencies may begin to look in the fall, most will hire early in the spring semester for summer positions, some as early as January.

SECOND YEAR:

- **LARGE FIRMS.** Generally, large private firms recruit summer associates in late summer and early fall of the second year and recruitment usually concludes by early December. Much of this recruitment occurs during the Fall On-Campus Interview season which takes place at USF in late August to September.
- **SMALL/MID-SIZED FIRMS.** Small firms hire as needed. Some firms may begin to look in the fall, but most small firms start hiring spring semester for summer clerks and may even continue hiring into the summer.
- **LEGAL/JUDICIAL EXTERNSHIP.** Students who are interested in pursuing an academic year externship with a judge, non-profit organization, or government agency during their third, fourth or fifth semesters in law school should contact the Externship

Coordinator in the Externship Office early in the semester *prior* to the externship at externships@usfca.edu.

- **PUBLIC INTEREST/PUBLIC SECTOR.** While some public interest organizations and government agencies, including federal government honors programs, may begin to hire throughout the fall semester, many will hire early in the spring semester for summer positions.

THIRD YEAR:

- **LARGE FIRMS.** As in the second year, large private firms generally recruit new associates in late summer and early fall of the third year; again, the large firms tend to recruit through the Fall On-Campus Interview program. However, there are fewer employers that recruit 3Ls, as there are fewer positions available.
- **SMALL/MID-SIZED FIRMS.** Some smaller firms may begin to look in the fall, but most smaller firms will look in the spring, summer, and sometimes after the bar exam is taken or results are in for entry-level positions.
- **JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS.** Applications for Judicial clerkships for after graduation vary greatly among federal judges and from state to state, starting in the fall of your third year. Students who are interested in pursuing a judicial clerkship should contact OCP in their second year.
- **GOVERNMENT.** Some government agencies hire post-graduate positions through “honors programs,” which generally have application deadlines in the fall of the third year. Most other agencies, however, hire for permanent positions in the spring or later (after budgets are passed and/or bar results).
- **PUBLIC INTEREST FELLOWSHIPS.** Many public interest-minded students pursue postgraduate fellowships as an entryway to permanent public interest positions. Fellowship deadlines fall throughout the academic year, although a number of prominent fellowship programs have early fall application deadlines. The majority of direct hiring by public interest organizations occurs in response to need, with a spring hiring season.

Remember, an essential step in your job search is to speak with an OCP Director to discuss personalized search strategies.

RESOURCES

1. THE OFFICE OF CAREER PLANNING:

The first and easiest step in planning your search strategy is to make an appointment to see an OCP Director. Letting OCP know what area of law and/or what setting you’re interested in will allow OCP to assist you in developing a strategy. While the office maintains an open-door policy, students are encouraged to make appointments.

2. JOB LISTINGS:

OCP receives many listings from various types of employers soliciting candidates to fill positions either during the school year, summer or upon graduation. Students can view these listings on www.USFLawLink.com. You will need to enter your login name and password which will be provided by OCP.

Other resources in OCP also may contain job listings. A few additional online job-listing resources are:

- **StudentJobsOnline** available on-line through Westlaw which contains government and other positions nationwide. If you have a Westlaw account, you access it by going to <http://lawschool.westlaw.com>.
- **PSLawnet**, containing public interest and public sector jobs nationwide, located at www.pslawnet.org.
- **The Recorder and the Daily Journal** are the main legal newspapers in the Bay Area and in California and they contain listings mainly for graduate positions. Job listings are in print and also on www.dailyjournal.com and www.lawjobs.com. Copies of both newspapers are available in OCP and the Law Library.

3. TAPPING INTO THE HIDDEN JOB MARKET:

The hidden job market refers to positions that may exist but are not advertised. Students must make affirmative efforts to tap into this market and promote themselves to the relevant employers. An effective way to do this is by networking and conducting informational interviews. Each year, many students get their summer positions and even their permanent positions through their own outreach and networking efforts. See the OCP handouts on *Networking* and *Informational Interviewing* for more detailed information on how to engage in your outreach efforts.

Employer outreach strategies should include:

- Identifying employers in which you are interested.
- Identifying an individual to whom correspondence should be directed.
- Creating a cover letter and resume tailored (as much as possible) to the anticipated needs of the employer or specific position sought.
- Making a follow-up call in 2-3 weeks to stimulate a review of your application and verify your interest in the employer.
- Identifying alumni who practice in an area of law in which you are interested and requesting informational interviews.
- Joining bar association specialty sections or other organizations in the areas of law in which you are interested to increase your contact with practitioners.

SOME RESOURCES FOR CONDUCTING EMPLOYER OUTREACH:

- ◆ The NALP Employer Directory online at www.nalpdirectory.com and in print in OCP.
- ◆ The Martindale-Hubbell Law directory available online at www.martindale.com and through Westlaw.
- ◆ Employer resumes of private law firms, corporations, government agencies and public interest organizations that provide descriptions of the practice areas and application procedures. Some employer resumes are available in OCP.
- ◆ The Internet, including www.findlaw.com, www.hg.org (a worldwide legal directory), www.craigslist.com, and www.indeed.com.
- ◆ The Recorder, Daily Journal, The American Lawyer, www.law.com, www.pslawnet.org and other publications that provide information on the legal market, firms and other employers.
- ◆ Networking (see section below on resources and tips to network.)

OCP updates its resources periodically, so stop by the office to check out new resources available to assist you in your search.

TAKING ACTION

The single most important step in your search is moving forward and taking action. You can do this in many ways. Below are some of the most effective ways.

1. SELF-DIRECTED SEARCH:

You alone are responsible for deciding what your ideal job is and in taking action to obtain it. Of course, we are here to assist you in any way we can, but ultimately the task lies with you. Consequently, the self-directed search method is by far the most effective job search strategy for most students. Self-directed search simply means that you target employment opportunities suited to your lifestyle and long-term goals.

Your self-directed search should begin with:

- discussing your goals with an OCP Director and developing a personalized strategy;
- responding to current job listings and available positions;
- participating in some of the other activities listed below; and, most importantly,
- pursuing opportunities which exist in the hidden job market.

2. OFF-CAMPUS INTERVIEWS -- JOB FAIRS AND CONFERENCES:

OCP receives information regarding off-campus interviews, typically conducted at job fairs or conferences held in various cities. Students are encouraged to attend these events and should contact OCP for more information about participating employers, the application procedures, and possible funding opportunities.

3. ON-CAMPUS INTERVIEW PROGRAM (OCI):

Law firms, corporations, government agencies, and public interest organizations recruit at the law school each year for full-time, summer, and permanent positions with their organizations. These employers interview on campus for their offices throughout California and other major legal centers.

FALL OCI

Fall OCI is for second, third, and fourth year students. OCI is a 100% prescreen system; employers select students for interviews. Hiring criteria and employer descriptions are made available to you for research. It is extremely important for students to be familiar with the employer hiring criteria requirements before submitting resumes. Because academic performance is generally one of the most important factors for success with some of the employers in this program, particularly the large firms, be realistic when preparing your submissions. However, public sector employers and small to mid-sized firms have different hiring criteria and tend to look at the whole person, taking into account interest, drive, passion and previous accomplishments. OCP may be able to assist you with respect to historical hiring information about some employers. Please remember that, although OCI is highly visible, given the competitive nature of the program, most students do not obtain their jobs through this process.

4. VOLUNTEERING:

Volunteering can be an extremely effective way to get a permanent paying position. Volunteering can give you vital legal experience necessary to compete in today's legal market. It is also a great way to meet potential employers and other contacts. There are several ways to volunteer at various agencies. The following are places or people you can contact for volunteer opportunities:

- **The Law Student Pro Bono Project.** For more information, see www.lawstudentprobono.org.
- **Public Interest Agencies.** These agencies generally do not have the funds to pay students to work, but offer extremely valuable legal experience.

- **Government Agencies.** Many government agencies do not have the budgets to hire students and welcome qualified volunteers. It is also becoming more and more prevalent for government offices to hire for permanent positions through their previous interns and clerks. Some agencies rarely hire entry-level attorneys, but, when hiring, consider past clerking experience with them or other government entities to be an extremely valuable experience.
- **Local Bar Associations.** By attending local bar or specialty bar association events, you are exposed to attorneys in practice areas of your interest. Consider volunteering to assist at such events – not only will you get to attend for free, but by having a specific role, attorneys will notice you, appreciate your commitment, and remember you in the future.
- **Summer Judicial Externships.** For opportunities with judges, see an OCP Director for more information.

5. NETWORKING THROUGH INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING:

In a tight employment market or during a difficult time to find a job such as the first year summer, it is even more important to use your network to supplement other job search strategies. Networking, essentially, is an educational process. It provides you access to information, advice, direction and opportunities. In addition, networking may help you circumvent the human resources department or recruiting office whose job it is to screen out hundreds of applicants.

A viable network does not require lawyers in the family or as friends; it simply requires a creative analysis of the circles of people in and around your life, past and present, and then bringing them on board to assist in your job search. The key is to make anyone and everyone you know aware of what you are looking for in employment. You never know who people know and how they might be able to help you find a job.

- **NETWORK CANDIDATES.** General considerations for network candidates include people, present and past, in your academic, employment and personal spheres of experience. Think about contacting alumni from your law, graduate, undergraduate or high schools, professors, teachers, former employers, and other professionals who may know lawyers.
- **HOW TO CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS.** An informational interview is not a formal interview for a job, but an educational encounter where you obtain internal information about a particular employer or area of law to develop a specifically tailored plan for job search success. The initial contact can be made by email, letter, or phone. Most lawyers do not mind providing information, but they want to work with a person with some focus. Thus, if you request an informational interview, be prepared with exactly what you would like to know and why.

You can begin by asking any of the above sources whether they can identify people who may know someone who are doing what you want to do. The next step is to

contact that person for an informational interview. See the OCP handout *Informational Interviewing* for additional information.

Typical Informational Interview Questions:

- ◆ What are your responsibilities?
- ◆ What is involved in a typical day?
- ◆ How did you come to this position?
- ◆ What do new people to this field typically do?
- ◆ What lead you to this particular field?
- ◆ What do you know now that would have been helpful earlier in your career?
- ◆ What do you like/dislike about your job?
- ◆ What kind of advice can you give me about starting my career in this field?
- ◆ Can you refer to anyone who may talk to me about this field?

Remember, you are interviewing to gain valuable insight. The point of informational interviewing is to gain additional contacts to expand your understanding of the field and to build your network. Only use the contact's name, however, if you have received permission to do so.

For guidance on drafting correspondence requesting informational interviews see the *Job Search Correspondence* handout included in your Handbook. For more detailed information on networking and information interviewing please see the *How to Network* and *Informational Interviewing* handouts in your Handbook, which are also available in OCP.

CONCLUSION

A job search is a job in itself and needs to be conducted through a multi-faceted approach. Depending on the market, your personal preferences and skills in marketing yourself, some approaches will work better than others and it is important you utilize all job search techniques available to you.

Remember that the Office of Career Planning is here to help you. Take advantage of the knowledge and expertise available in our office and stop by to make an appointment to create your personalized "Job Search Action Plan."