



Your Legal Career: Employment Strategies, Choices and Alternatives

Written on June 2, 2010 by Donna Seyle

More attorneys than ever before have been affected by the need to develop marketing and rainmaking skills, whether they are sole practitioners or large firm associates. The same skill set applies when looking for employment or opening your own firm: learning to network, online and in-person, and becoming involved in activities that will reflect your interests and abilities.

I recently moderated the Lexis Hub/Connected Twitter conversation for new attorneys addressing career and employment choices and alternatives. It evolved into a discussion with more than 130 tweets and dozens of participants sharing career advice and experiences. Here are some of the highlights of the conversation, encompassing career strategies, networking, social media, job hunting, career alternatives, entrepreneurial spirit and solo practice.

The Twitter event kicked off with Donna Seyle asking new attorneys, “**What have your job hunting strategies been?**”

Donna: Has anyone tried social media marketing strategies to gain law firm employments—results?

Newzee22 asked if anyone tried temporary legal jobs—do they hurt or help a new grad's chances of securing "real" positions?

MH Tweets added: Temp Jobs can help a new grad's chances—better than sitting around waiting for a call.

Donna: Temp jobs provide experience for your resume and show initiative, and often lead to full time positions.

ViceArt suggested pro bono as a way for new law grads to get their foot in the door to a new career.

MH Tweets agreed, claiming pro bono is probably even better than temp work for gaining experience.

ViceArt then mentioned that he tried pro bono and it worked its way into a secondary income stream.

Social Media:

Donna-asked lawyer using social media for their job hunting strategies.

MH Tweets commented: Build your network organically without being annoying—have a reason to connect with someone, a context before reaching out.

Similarly, Newzee22 noted: ask questions about skills and get advice to build rapport as opposed to asking for a job right away.

For Law Students on the Job Hunt:

Donna: Job search advice for university students is to build your online profile/portfolio before you graduate. (blog, join networks. etc).

MH Tweets went on to use the example of @Rex7, who built "The Social Media Law Student" before graduating and positioned himself well in the social media world.

Donna noted that www.lawstreetjournal.com is a student-created web site.

Ron Fox added: suggest you first decide on a practice area (use findlaw) then find practitioners doing it (lawyers.com) and market yourself to them.

ViceArt recommended the following for new grads and job seekers: "Remember, talent isn't everything in getting a job – read Malcom Gladwell's "The Talent Myth."

About Networking:

Donna: go to live networking events at the ABA and other conferences, and do the "coffee interview." Adding a reminder that networking continues throughout your career. Conferences are a good value, and Donna advises that they are a tremendous place because networking opportunities are all around you.

MH Tweets adds that the "coffee interview" gives new lawyers a chance to network as well as learn more about that person and what they do.

Donna also encourages participation in discussion on M-H Connected and Lexis Hub (www.lexishub.com), having a profile on lawyer networking sites and answering questions on Avvo will increase your exposure.

On Alternatives such as Solo Practice:

Donna asked if starting a solo practice feels overwhelming and what the biggest hurdles would be.

Ron Fox added that a fundamental value of our profession: a lawyer's commitment to select a position consistent with his/her professional goals and personal values.

MH Tweets asked why so many new lawyers seem to chase the \$\$\$ cash?

Ron Fox explained that one reason new lawyers go for the \$\$\$ cash is the pressure and advice from law schools to go to biglaw to pay loans based on outrageous tuition.

Donna asked how a new attorney can learn the entrepreneurial skills needed to start a successful solo practice?

MH Tweets remarked that fear is probably the biggest hurdle to going solo.

The Online Bar added that security by salary is like addiction. If you've tasted it over a period of time, you never totally get over it, then went on to ask, "can you spend a year or more failing on little income before you succeed?"

Donna pointed out resources for those who fear solo practice through www.myshingle.com.

MH Tweets added that the Lexis Hub (www.lexishub.com)

is also a great resource, as well as the Legal Business Community.

Donna acknowledged that it is one thing to be taught entrepreneur skills, but being one requires action and persistence.

Creating a Client Base:

Donna: Writing and getting published is one of the best ways to create a client base—it can work for employment search, too.

On Gen Y and Work/Life Balance:

Donna asked if Gen Y has a different attitude about life and work, seeing life as too fleeting to work that hard.

MH Tweets noted that there are ambitious Gen Y folks who work all day and attend law school at night. MH Tweets joked that being Gen Y might be a prerequisite for social media careers, to which...

adriandayton suggested one needs to be able to think like Gen Y.

JonLin agreed that non Gen Y people use social media with great success.

Final notes:

Donna: Take ownership of your career!

Ron Fox: Self-promote because very few openings are actually advertised or result in on campus interviews.

Please share with your friends!