

# Finding Career Opportunities When the Job Market is Overwhelming: Strategies From BCGSearch.com

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office Managing Director

**Summary** The job market is a competitive one and many of us find ourselves in the midst of a flood of applicants vying for the same jobs. In order to get noticed by employers and stand out from the crowd, it's important to be proactive. This article outlines the key steps to take to make yourself more attractive to employers and position yourself for success.

Firstly, know your market. You need to understand the needs of employers and the kinds of qualities and experiences they look for when hiring. Make sure you are up to date on the latest industry trends and familiarize yourself with the job postings and job descriptions.

Secondly, market yourself. Reach out to professionals in your chosen field and expand your network. This could be done through networking events, professional associations, or even LinkedIn. Once you have connected with industry professionals and have established yourself within the industry, you can start to showcase your achievements, skills, and experiences.

Thirdly, stay active. Keep yourself engaged through events, seminars, and other professional opportunities. Not only is this a great way to stay connected and learn, but it's also an effective way to show employers that you're ambitious and actively trying to grow and further your career.

Finally, don't get discouraged. The job market is highly competitive and it is easy to become overwhelmed by all of the competition. However, with the right attitude and perseverance, you can succeed. Try to focus on the positives and use this as an opportunity to refine your skills and build your professional profile.

By following these steps, job seekers will be better equipped to stand out from the competition and make their mark in the job market. With the right attitude and set of skills, you will be well on your way to finding the perfect job.

## Social Changes in the Job Market

The job market is constantly changing and adapting, creating both challenges and opportunities for those seeking employment. In recent years, the job market has seen a dramatic shift in the way that technology is used to enhance the hiring process and achieve the desired results. With so many changes in the industry, it is important to stay on top of the latest trends and developments to ensure that you remain competitive in the job market.

## Opportunities in the Job Market

In a rapidly changing job market, there is an increased need for adaptability and flexibility. Companies are increasingly looking for individuals who possess the skills to quickly and easily adapt to changes in the industry. While job seekers must take the initiative to stay apprised of the latest developments, many companies are also becoming more proactive in their approach to seeking out individuals who can bring the skills needed to make a difference.

## Maximizing Your Career Potential

With the current state of the job market, it is essential for job seekers to maximize their career potential in order to be successful. Developing a comprehensive skillset, being open to new ideas, and being creative are all important aspects of becoming a successful job seeker. Additionally, job seekers should take the time to research the companies they are interested in, in order to gain an understanding of their core values and

goals.

## Staying Ahead of the Curve

With the ever-changing job market, it is important for job seekers to remain ahead of the curve. Keeping up with the latest trends and developments, exploring new opportunities, and continuously updating your skills and qualifications to stay competitive are all important aspects of staying ahead of the competition.

Additionally, developing strong relationships with key employers, industry experts, and potential employers can help you stay a step ahead of the competition.

So what does this mean for your career? What should you as an associate be doing to ensure you have a future as a lawyer?

If the past few weeks are any indication, the legal community is in for some big changes. The stock market is jumping up and down like a ping pong ball. Enormous financial institutions are being acquired, facing bankruptcy, or relying on the government for a bailout.

There will be some big winners in all of this. For example, [Weil, Gotshal & Manges](#) is representing Lehman Brothers in the largest bankruptcy case ever filed in the United States; Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy is representing the creditors' committee. These firms stand to generate millions in additional legal fees and enough work for a small army of eager associates.

The situation may be different at firms that, until now, have relied heavily on Lehman, American International Group, or Merrill Lynch for a steady stream of transactional legal work. And there may be a negative trickle-down effect. Companies that turned to these institutions for investment capital may be left scrambling while law firms that serve those companies may find their work being put on ice.

But we could be [entering a litigation boom](#). There is nothing like financial turmoil to get plaintiffs lawyers in gear. Investors will no doubt file more shareholder suits claiming they were misled, and companies will be more apt to fight to keep their remaining assets. In this climate, businesses may also fight harder to preserve and establish assets, such as patent rights, when other holdings such as overbuilt real estate lose value.

It's hard to predict the future, of course, particularly given the possibility of economic changes as significant as seem possible right now. Nevertheless, whatever happens, all associates, regardless of their particular firm, can and should consider a number of specific things to help their careers right now.

### Don't Panic

I have heard a number of financial planners suggest that in these times, it is important not to panic and jump out of the stock market. Take the time to reflect, and do not make rash decisions.

The advice applies in the workplace. If you are starting to worry about losing your job, take the time to think more critically about your own particular situation. But do not feel that you have to make a move simply because things are slow at your firm.

Although your firm may be facing a slowdown, are you slow? If you have no trouble finding billable work, that's a good sign. If you have a full plate even if your department is slow, it probably doesn't make sense to pursue other opportunities (at least not now). Your full workload is a sign that you are a keeper and that partners are feeding you the work that does remain.

Another comforting sign might be if you're in a specialty likely to see a lot of work in the future. Is your work compliance oriented? After the dust settles, we probably will be entering a period of heightened financial

regulation that can only mean more work for lawyers who do Securities and Exchange Commission compliance and other financial regulatory work.

Or are you a litigator? A [bankruptcy lawyer](#)? Both practice areas are likely to see a large increase in work in the coming months.

## A Real Slowdown?

But what if you are experiencing a real slowdown, and you don't know that more work will be coming soon? How should you focus your energies? What should you do if you are beginning to feel as if your job is in jeopardy? Here are some practical suggestions:

*Be proactive and positive, and continue to do high-quality legal work.* The best defense is a good offense. The best legal talent will always be in demand, and in an uncertain legal market, the need to become such desired talent for your firm (or any subsequent employer) is all the more important.

At your firm, don't sit around waiting for partners and clients to call. Find out if anything needs to be done, and do it. Find out which partners have work, and show interest in what they are doing.

Most important, do not become a whiner or someone helping to foment bad rumors about the demise of the firm. Resist the temptation to articulate any negative feelings. Save those for friends, family, and mental health professionals.

*Carpe diem.* If you are a driven lawyer who thrives on deadlines, looking for ways to fill your day is scary. But try to look at the opportunities presented by your new free time. If you really take the time to list all of those important but not urgent activities that you "should" be doing, it won't be long before your plate is once again full.

Take the time to organize your office and schedule lunches with potential sources that could refer work from within the firm.

Take a few minutes to assess your weaknesses. Consider your substantive weaknesses, but also look at how you are using technology in your practice and if you can improve your efficiency.

You can also sign up for continuing legal education programs. If you have time on your hands, get caught up on CLE and catch up with your professional reading.

Remember that article you wanted to write? Getting published is a good way to increase your visibility. Perhaps you can co-write an article with a partner. (Ask around, and you will surely find a partner who has not had time to get started on something. Suggest that you co-author the article. Of course, you will do most of the work, but you will also gain recognition by appearing in print beside the partner.)

Get active in an industry group. Marketing professional services is all about building relationships. The sooner you begin to cultivate relationships with potential sources of business, the sooner you will begin to reap the rewards of bringing in your own business. Volunteer to speak on a legal topic for an industry group that interests you. See if you can be helpful to an association.

Do not expect overnight results. It can take several years to turn these relationships into business. The important thing is to get started, and if you have time on your hands, why not start now?

## Shifting Areas

*Consider shifting your practice area.* If bankruptcy or litigation gets busy at your firm, see if you can start to pick up some projects in either of those departments. Look for ways to show that you can add value in

another practice area. Perhaps you have done other work for the same clients. Perhaps there is litigation involving a type of transaction that you understand. You also can use CLE courses to gain substantive background in a new area.

*Network with clients and with law school classmates at other firms.* Do it before you actually need their help. If you focus on professional relationships now, you will have more opportunities to connect with other professionals if you do find yourself in a [job hunt](#). You will already have relationships with people who know you and like you.

*Take some vacation time or come in a little later.* The reward for hard work should not be more work. If you spent a lot of late nights in the office last year, now is the time to take that trip you have been meaning to schedule. Spoil yourself. Take care of some house projects before you leave for work in the morning. Spend more time on some of your outside interests or hobbies. Go to more of your children's sporting or school events. The soul needs to be recharged periodically, and you'll be more focused when you are at work.

If you entered practice within the past five years, all of this uncertainty may be very anxiety-producing. But you might as well get used to it and learn to make the most of the downturn. This likely is only the first of several downturns you'll experience during your professional life. It will never be easy to get through these periods, but if you apply some of these techniques, it can become a little easier.

Stephen Seckler is managing director of the Boston office of BCG Attorney Search. He writes the blog *Counsel to Counsel* and can be reached at [seckler@bcgsearch.com](mailto:seckler@bcgsearch.com). Reprinted with permission from Legal Times. 2008 ALM Properties, Inc. All rights reserved. Further duplication without permission is prohibited. For information, call (800) 933-4317 or [ltreprints@incisivemedia.com](mailto:ltreprints@incisivemedia.com). ALM is now Incisive Media, [www.incisivemedia.com](http://www.incisivemedia.com).