

How Does an Attorney Know Whether it is Time to Leave Their Current Law Firm and Find a New Attorney Job?

Question: *I am a mid-level litigation associate at a large national law firm. In my last review, I was very highly ranked in my peer group. Though I am doing very well and generally like where I work, I am afraid I am on a sinking ship.*

The firm has had several very public layoffs and I know there are more coming. Things are so tight that office supplies aren't being restocked and the firm is no longer supplying water for the water coolers. There are rumors that serious rainmakers are moving elsewhere.

See the following articles for more information:

- [Should I Stay or Should I Go?: A Recruiter Reflects on an Age-Old Question](#)
- [When is the Right Time to Make a Lateral Move?](#)

Is it this bad everywhere? Should I even bother to try to switch firms?

Answer:

Are you serious? Are you really questioning whether or not you should be out there interviewing? Your current firm sounds like a disaster.

Instead of sitting on what appears to be the deck chairs of the Titanic, [get your resume together and start your interviewing process as soon as possible](#). You really don't want to still be thinking about whether or not you are on a sinking ship long after you are at the bottom of the ocean.

No, it is not that bad everywhere. In fact, it seems as if things are really picking up. There is even hiring going on in the corporate sector. Perhaps the worst really is behind us. That is, just about everywhere except at your firm. And even if the world of law firms is not as prosperous as it was several years ago, the litigation departments are thriving and are [always in need of top litigation associates](#).

I understand that you like your firm and that you have been receiving outstanding reviews. However, if the firm closes the doors and ceases to do business, what good will those reviews or your enjoyment of the firm do for you? You need to start believing what you see happening around you.

The firm has already had several "very public" layoffs and you somehow know that more are about to take place. Even with excellent reviews, if your department is not busy, you might be in the next wave of layoffs.

What really concerns me is the fact that supplies are not being replenished. Doesn't this tell you something about the future of the firm? I would feel comfortable in predicting that the powers that be are not finding it necessary to bring in any more toner for the copy machines because they suspect that those machines will be silent any day now.

No more water for the water cooler? Either your firm is the cheapest firm ever or you are simply not reading the writing on the wall. How about the rumor that the major rainmakers are about to jump ship? Wouldn't you

expect to hear the death knell at that point?

Here are some things that you must take into consideration. First of all, since there have already been [several waves of layoffs](#), as soon as you enter the job market you will be asked if you were part of those layoffs. You want to be able to let any recruiter and/or future employer know that you are still gainfully employed and that your reviews have been very good. Don't wait until you are asked to leave the firm - get out into the interviewing world while you are still a well-respected associate with the firm.

Secondly, are any of those supposedly moving rainmakers in your department? If so, you might very well be a welcome addition to their move since your reviews have been positive. If you have any kind of relationship with these partners, you might want to drop a very tactful hint that you enjoy working with them and would love to continue working with them in the future.

By the way, and not that this should make a difference as to whether or not you should start a job search at this time, but it may not be your entire firm that is about to go under. It might very well just be your branch office that is falling apart. Or perhaps a merger is about to be announced and you all are about to be moved to another law firm's office building. I don't think that is the case, but there is a very slight chance that you are overreacting and not correctly reading the situation. No matter what, you need to [make a move to another firm](#).

If things are as bad at this firm as you have described, I can assure you that the word is out on the street that the firm is about to implode. It won't take much explaining as to why you are out looking for a new firm, but again, you want your search to take place while the firm is still in business and you are still employed there. Don't be defensive when you are asked - and you will be - by recruiters or potential employers if you were part of the layoffs. It is a natural assumption and you can be proud to say that you are still gainfully employed.

One of the hardest parts about starting a job search is actually doing it. I have been rather harsh with you here because I think it is important for you to face reality and face it now, not later. Get your resume together and call your favorite recruiter right now. You sound as if you are a very marketable and viable candidate and I would imagine that any recruiter would be delighted to hear from you. Please don't delay - it sounds as if your firm is on its last legs and you need to move as soon as possible. Best of luck to you in your move.

Please see this article to find out if litigation is right for you: *Why*
Most Attorneys Have No Business
Being Litigators: Fifteen Reasons
Why You Should Not Be a Litigator

- See [Guide to Making a Lateral Move as a Legal Associate](#) for more information.

See the following articles for more information:

[When Is the Best Time to Make a Move](#)

[15 Reasons You Should Leave Your Law Firm and Look for a New Job](#)

[Lateral Movement - Time to Go](#)

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