

Senior Associate With Small Book of Business Seeks Work – Suggestions?

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Some attorneys believe if they lower their salary expectations and [apply to jobs for junior level attorneys](#) they will have more success. This is not true. Firms who want to hire an associate in the 2-5 year range are not willing to consider someone who is significantly more senior - even if the attorney's experience is exactly what the firm is looking for. (In a few rare cases it can be done, but the general norm is that it cannot).

While a firm may technically get a "deal" by hiring a more experienced attorney for the price of a less experienced one, firms target a certain class year for many reasons besides experience level. There may already be a number of senior attorneys at the firm who are on partnership track and adding another person at their level (even to come at a junior level) would disrupt the politics within the firm. Firms also hire within a certain range because they simply do not want someone who has too much experience. Firms like to train their associates to do things their way. A senior level attorney will likely have learned to do things in a way that is not conducive to the firm's practice.

Many of these senior level attorneys have the necessary skills to start their own law practice. Sometimes a bad situation, such as getting laid off from your job, is exactly what you need to set you in the right direction and propel you to do something you have always wanted to do! I recently spoke with a senior attorney who believed if he began a firm with several other senior level attorneys who had a few clients then perhaps each attorney could support the other and build upon their business. For instance, if one attorney has \$50,000, another has \$75,000, and another has \$100,000 perhaps they could all work together and support each other and market their skills as a group. This is a very good solution to the Senior Associate's predicament. Now, how do you find these fellow attorneys?

I have several ideas on this one. The most obvious option would be to become more vocal and active in your local bar association. Do not simply attend functions related to your practice area alone. On the contrary, you will likely find people who can offer services and skills different than your own in unrelated practice areas! This is also true with CLE classes. Assuming you have not yet met your CLE requirements for the year (or even if you have), [you could sign up for a class that is unrelated to your practice, and use it as an opportunity to meet new attorneys who are in the same situation as yourself.](#)

Another thought is to use www.lawcrossing.com. Think of yourself as an employer! Be honest in your description of what you are trying to achieve. An example of such a job posting: "Solo practitioner with business litigation practice from the Class of 1999 is trying to start a firm. Looking for talented senior level attorneys with a minimum of \$50,000 in [portable business](#) to join forces and build upon our talents and grow a business."

Lastly, once you have decided to start a firm, make sure everyone you have ever met knows about this decision! Make sure to get in touch with old colleagues you had worked with who had since left the firm, law

school friends, family, business friends, family friends, old firm clients, etc. etc. You could go as far back as a law school internship or externship or even a [high school or college summer job](#). It is also important to get in touch with your old firm (even if it hurts your pride a little). Firms often have to turn away work for a number of reasons (e.g., case is too small, client conflict, requires too low of billing rate), and may want to recommend you. Before you know you will have developed more clients and built upon our business. It will take years to double your business but be patient and consistent.