

A Resume Must Tell the Whole Story

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I think it's instinct--we all know how important it is for a resume to tell all there is to know about our qualifications. When it comes to attorney resumes, it goes one step further. Not only must we adequately summarize our qualifications; we must also include certain pieces of information that law firms will undoubtedly want to know. The following are just a few examples of special information that is appropriate to include on attorney resumes:

Practice Description: In addition to a description of your day-to-day responsibilities and maybe some highlights from specific cases/deals; it is crucial for the person reviewing your resume to immediately spot the substantive areas in which you have experience. Thus, the first line under each position you have held should include this information. **Example: "Primary areas of focus include real estate, land use, and environmental."** [Keeping in mind the number of resumes law firms receive for a single opening and the fact that the person doing the initial screen is not always an attorney](#), including such basic information in an easy-to-spot manner can make a dramatic difference.

Firm Description: When moving from one geographic region to another, it is often helpful to include a short description of your current firm. This especially applies when you work at a firm that is well-regarded or highly ranked in your particular region but may not be as well known in the region of your job search. **Examples: "XYZ's litigation practice is routinely ranked as a top practice by _____."** or **"ABC Firm is one of the largest firms in Small City and is known for its corporate and finance practices."**

Reason for a Move: When a candidate leaves Firm A to join Firm B with a partner or group, it is common practice to list the two firms as separate and distinct entries on the resume. Now consider the fact that one of the most common reasons firms have for passing on a candidate is "too many moves." Having said this, moving because a partner recruited you or because your entire practice group moved is quite distinct from making a move for any number of other reasons. Thus, in such situations, it is proper (and helpful) to note that the move occurred under special circumstances. **Examples: "Moved to Firm B with partner from Firm A" or "Practice group left Firm A to start the Big City office of Firm B."**

Bar Admissions: Most attorneys know to include their bar admissions on their resume. However, if you are moving to a different region and have definite plans [to sit for that state's bar exam or, you are eligible to waive into the bar, you must let the firm know](#). **Example: "Admitted in Massachusetts and New York; Sitting for February 2008 California Bar Exam."**

Summer Associate Offers: If you summered at a firm and received an offer but did not elect to accept the offer, it must be clear that you did receive the offer. Many times, attorneys will include the summer position in their work history but will not indicate whether or not an offer was extended. This likely leads the firm to believe that an offer was NOT extended. If that is the case, fine. You can't go back and change that. However, it is absolutely crucial to indicate if that was NOT the case. **Example: ABC Firm, Summer Associate (offer extended).**

[Applying for a lateral position at a law firm](#) is a unique experience because law firms place a huge emphasis on very specific aspects of your career history and qualifications. These are just a few examples of information that can make a difference in the consideration you receive from a law firm. A good legal recruiter should always go over your resume with you and be ready to advise on whether these and other modifications are appropriate given your particular circumstances.

- **See 6 Things Attorneys and Law Students Need to Remove from Their Resumes ASAP If They Want to Get Jobs with the Most Prestigious Law Firms** for more information.