

# Your Narrative: Explaining Your Lateral Moves

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Whether it be in a cover letter or on an interview (probably both), you will need to explain to a potential employer about your past lateral employment moves. It is of utmost importance that you understand that *you're telling a story* - full of characters (primarily you), conflict, progression, and a central theme.

With respect to theme, think about it as your **"career objective."** In an ideal world, your career objective is consistent and specific, making all of your past moves deliberate, planned, and necessary. In other words, all of your lateral moves make sense. You are not someone with "happy feet," a job hopper, or always thinks the "grass is greener."

These are all good reasons for having moved and should hopefully fit into your narrative:

**Geography:** You lateraled to another firm because you needed to relocate. Perhaps your significant other obtained a position in a different city, you are moving closer to family or friends, or returning to a place you once called home.

**Moving with a Group:** If the partner you primarily work for laterals to another firm and invites you along, this is not truly considered a lateral move. It's a great sign that your partner values you so much as to bring you along to the new firm. *This, in fact, should be included on your resume.*

**Growth:** You felt that you have reached a plateau in a certain position and needed to make a lateral move to enhance your growth as an attorney. Perhaps you were seeking a position that would allow you to conduct depositions or give you first or second-chair experience. Maybe you were interested in running your own cases or having greater client contact. You sought a firm that could help you **advance**, perhaps with greater partnership potential. If at the partner level, maybe you were seeking a firm that had a stronger national platform that would help you further develop business.

See [Top Ten Interview Questions](#) for more information

**Practice Area:** You were interested in expanding or narrowing your practice area. Your firm was staffing you on a various types of matters, but you sought to specify your practice so that you could become an expert in one area. Conversely, your firm was limiting the type of work you were doing. You sought to move to a firm with a greater variety of practice.

***FYI, these are also viable reasons to be considering a lateral move presently, about which your interviewer will definitely question you.***

If possible, all of your past lateral moves should be explained with your central theme, or career objective. If your career objective is: *I want to work at a prominent firm in Los Angeles that has a strong national platform, where I can be regarded as an expert in M&A*, it follows that you could explain past moves by using geography, growth, and practice area.

When discussing your past moves, you want to **avoid** complaining about difficult personalities of employers, long hours at a prior job, or disliking your work. This will not convey a productive or flattering narrative.

In essence, never be running away from anything - be running toward your goal. If every past move is a progression that brings you closer to obtaining your career objective, the number of moves you have on your resume become less of a concern to an employer. You look more deliberate, dedicated, thoughtful, and

ambitious - all qualities that firms love in a new hire.

See [Interviewing Tips](#) for more information

Learn why attorneys usually fail law firm phone-screening interviews in this article:

[Why Most Attorneys Fail Telephone-Screening Interviews](#)