

## *How Many Firms Should I Apply To?*

There are some job searches where the attorney is reasonably happy where they are and thus is not 'actively looking' for a new job.

This question has multiple meanings, and thus multiple answers. If asked with respect to a job search in general, the obvious answer is "as many as is necessary to find the right job." But not all job searches are the same. There are some job searches where the attorney is reasonably happy where they are and thus is not "actively looking" for a new job. Nevertheless, for purposes of exploration, education and other good reasons, the attorney is taking a look at select firms in order to compare them to the present firm. If it turns out that the attorney finds something significantly better during their more limited search, then they will make a move. If they do not, then they will stay where they are for the time being.

But with respect to the more common open-ended search for a new job, the question I hear most often from my candidates is how many firms should I apply to initially? The usual answer to this question is "as many as you can handle." Once again, the goal in a typical job search is to find that new job as soon as possible. This means you should work as hard and as long as it takes to accomplish your goal. On the other hand, there are necessary limits that you must recognize. The two biggest limits are time and energy. If you are still working full time (or more realistically for an attorney, more than full time) you are only going to have so much time and energy that you can dedicate to interviews and other necessary aspects of the search. If you are unemployed, however, then you will have much more time and energy at your disposal for your job search. Consequently, you should put some kind of appropriate limit on the number of initial applications based on these two limiting factors.

The other factor is the strength of your credentials. Are you likely to generate a significant number of interviews from a relatively small number of applications? If so, you do not need to send out as many initial applications to get to your estimated limit of interviews that you can handle at one time. If, however, it is more likely to take a larger number of applications before you get an interview, then you should take that into account and maximize the number of initial applications that you send out. As interviews come in, you continue to manage your time and energy limitations in determining how many subsequent applications to send out.

The other reason you should have as many applications as possible - both initial and subsequent -- is that you want to be able to interview with as many firms as possible. In this way, you can best learn about different firms and educate yourself on what kind of firm works best for you and your practice. If you just jump on the first offer that comes along, there is a possibility that you have not had a chance to fully investigate your options. On the other hand, there can be very good reasons for accepting that first offer. One good reason would be if offers are going to be very few and far between, and this option is likely to be your best option. Another good reason would be that you just happened to have just hit upon the right firm on your first try. This is unusual, but it does happen. In that situation, you do not need further investigation. You have already reached your goal.