

How Long Does it Typically Take Law Firms to Respond to Attorney and Law Student Employment Applications?

By Amanda Mindlin, Recruiter

Summary: Ever wonder how long it will take a law firm to respond to your application? Find out how long it typically takes and the six main factors that affect a firm's response rate.

As a legal recruiter, the question I'm asked most frequently is "How long will it take to hear back from firms?"

And the answer is ... it depends!

There really is no definitive answer to this question. Some candidates begin hearing back from firms within a day or two. For others, it may take many months. How long it will take to hear back from firms is determined by numerous factors, including:

Your Credentials: Generally, the stronger your academic and firm credentials, the sooner you'll hear back.

Your Class Year: Relatively junior candidates (particularly those 3-5 years out of law school) will generally hear back before more senior candidates because large law firms require more junior associates and, therefore, junior associates are in greater demand. Lawyers who are more than ten years [out of law school](#) without a sizeable book of business will wait the longest as they are in the least demand.

The Economy: [Legal hiring](#) is highly dependent upon the economy. For example, no matter how stellar a candidate's credentials were in 2009, it was still difficult to get interviews. Also, the economy will affect various types of lawyers quite differently. For example, in favorable economic times, [corporate lawyers](#) are in relatively higher demand, whereas during downturns, litigators are in highest demand.

Your Practice Area: The busier your practice area is in the geographic market(s) you're applying to, [the sooner you'll hear back because firms need you!](#) For example, in New York, corporate candidates will generally hear back from firms long before similarly situated litigation candidates as corporate is much busier in New York and, therefore, corporate associates are in higher demand.

Geographic Market: You will hear back from firms faster if you apply to jobs in a geographic market in which your skills are in the greatest demand. For example, I recently worked with a fantastic patent prosecution associate with a strong life sciences background relocating from New York to Boston. She was shocked that the entire process (from applying to BCG to accepting a fantastic job offer) took less than a month. The reason things moved so quickly for her was that her particular skill set is in VERY high demand in Boston (more so than any other market). Generally, patent lawyers (both prosecutors and litigators) will hear back from firms in Boston or the Bay Area before hearing back from firms in New York. Likewise, corporate lawyers will hear back from firms in New York before hearing back from firms in DC. Generalists will have more luck in smaller markets than they will in larger markets that prefer specialists.

Dumb Luck: Finally, it is hard to underestimate the importance of dumb luck. Sometimes, a firm's Recruiting Coordinator happens to be away on a long vacation. Sometimes, a firm's Recruiting Coordinator just can't get in touch with a very busy partner whose sign off is required for you to be offered an interview. And sometimes you just get really lucky!

Generally, you can expect to receive an interview anywhere from a day after submission to several months after submission. Even if it does take several months to receive that initial interview, do not lose hope! If you keep an open mind and continue approving firms, sooner or later (but hopefully sooner!), you will receive an interview.

See the following articles for more information:

[Why Every Attorney Needs to Apply to a Lot of Places \(and Not Give Up\) When Rejected](#)

Why an Attorney Should Never Give Up after Being Rejected from a Few (or Many) Law Firms Don't Give Up! Why You Should Work with the Best Law Firm You Can as Long as You Can How Long Will It Take before I Hear Back from a Law Firm?