

Leave Sex, Politics, Religion, and Social Activism out of Your Job Search Career If You Want to Work in a Large Law Firm

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office

Do you want a lucrative career in a large law firm? If so, certain topics are strictly off-limits if you want to further your career. You must leave out of your job search four subjects: sex, politics, religion, and social activism. Although these subjects have their place in life, they are not for the law office.

Working for a large law firm is a worthy goal. If you have just graduated from law school, landing a legal job in a large law firm gives you financial security. Also, the prestige of working in a large corporate law firm is excellent for your resume. Similarly, if you already have a law career, switching to working for a big law firm opens up tremendous opportunities for specialized training and advancement. It can also mean a sizeable increase in your income.

So, the question is, why sacrifice a productive career in a large law firm by including topics that alienate you from your employer? It is worth discussing divisive issues and giving managers reasons to dislike you?

The article discusses several reasons why sexual orientation, politics, religion, and social activism should never be included in your job search. In addition, you will learn how to increase your opportunities in the market.

Why Leave Controversial Issues Out of Your Job Search

Unfortunately, many attorneys make the mistake of bringing up divisive issues with a colleague or in a job interview. In most cases, they end up [creating far fewer job opportunities](#) in the market. In most cases, it does profound damage to their career. This sort of stuff will doom you.

If you want to make sex, politics, religion, and other controversial issues [front and center in your job search](#), I apologize, maybe you should consider [doing something other than working in a law firm](#). I'm tired of seeing the people who do these jobs.

I am not saying any of this because of my politics--my politics do not matter. I think politics are so ridiculous and absurd that I do not even vote. All I care about is [people getting and keeping jobs with law firms](#). But unfortunately, I have seen many people blow good opportunities by making the dumbest decisions you can imagine. The terrible mistakes they make revolve around these three areas:

What they [put on their resumes](#).

What they talk about during interviews.

What they prioritize in their jobs.

See related:

[Top 5 Tips for Creating Your Attorney Resume](#)

[12 Resume Mistakes that Might Cost You an Attorney Job](#)

How to Work in a Large Law Firm -- Check What's on Your Resume

Getting your resume is the starting place if you desire to work in a prestigious law firm. Your resume is a chance to showcase your knowledge and skills relevant to a law career. The resume should have your professional skills, credentials, experiences, and other valuable abilities to your employer.

Although your potential employer is interested in who you are, they are more interested in what you can bring to organization.

[Learn More About This Video](#)

Classic Examples of Resume Mistakes

Here is a perfect example that I saw just the other day of someone messing up their resume and failing to get the wanted.

I was talking to one of the [legal placement specialists in our company](#). She was working with a candidate who had excellent credentials. The candidate had previously worked in a major law firm. He had performed at the top of his class at League law school and was [currently doing a federal clerkship](#). The candidate was also looking for a position in a firm with a lot of demand.

Resume mistake #1

This attorney was in their fourth year of practice, which is usually the [most marketable year for lateral hires](#). Despite this, the firm was interested in talking to this candidate. The candidate could not even get interviews in smaller law firms, much less the largest firms.

See also:

[Will Doing a Legal Clerkship Enhance My Marketability as an Attorney?](#)

[Taking up a job as Clerkship. Tips by BCG Attorney Search](#)

[Should You Choose BCG Attorney Search?](#)

A few other attorneys did not have nearly as good qualifications but were getting lots of interviews. So what was the "star" candidate that they could not get interviews? The answer became clear when I read the candidate's resume.

Read related: [Special Resumes for People with Special Circumstances](#)

This candidate in question was a white male. He had spent three years at a law firm before his clerkship. However, he did not list the pro bono work he had done. He even bragged that he "averaged" over 500 hours of pro bono work each year. Yet, he described all the pro bono work he did in great detail. Yet, there was nothing on the resume about his work for clients--I could not believe it.

See related:

[Top 6 Things Attorneys and Law Students Need to Remove from Their Resumes ASAP If They Want to Get Jobs](#)

[Prestigious Law Firms](#)

[Legal Billing Clerk - a Great Place to Start in a Law Firm](#)

[To clerk or not to clerk](#)

Resume mistake #2

Forgetting to list experience for paid clients is just one mistake on a resume. Although pro bono work is vital to being an attorney, there is more to having a successful law career. The employer's bottom line is this: will you make money for your company?

This led to the second mistake on the resume--promoting social activism.

The attorney had clerked for a liberal, Democratic judge. Under his experience, he listed and described a few social justice opinions. He used these in a lawsuit that penalized some major corporations costing them hundreds of millions of dollars. Also, the candidate's description of his time in law school was similarly littered with all sorts of activist organizations. He was more interested in overturning our capitalist society and empowering people who do not work with money and power.

See more: [How Legal Professionals Can Use Documented Skills in Law Job Search](#)

Lessons Learned from Resume Mistakes

I learned several lessons from the mistakes on this person's resume. First, I am not political or interested in politics. I am interested in [to help people get jobs](#). Second, I am sure this attorney thinks all these activities are impressive and important. But they should not be on his resume?

Put yourself in the shoes of the owner of a large law firm or a large company spending millions of dollars in legal fees. Ask yourself these questions:

Would you want to hire this person?

Would you want this person to look through your documents and have control over your future if they found something you do not like?

Where do you think the press gets confidential informants?

Where do you think whistleblowers come from?

None of this is good. And this type of attorney could become a liability, not an asset to a big law firm. The truth is

for law firms and clients. This is how people get sued, law firms lose clients, and companies get in significant trouble. Like these can be cancerous for certain groups.

See related: [Being Politically Correct on a Job Hunt](#)

How to Make the Grade

Getting excellent grades in law school is the only way to get a rewarding career in the biggest law firms. Therefore, if you have strong political or social views, it can be challenging to get good grades if you stand up for your opinions. However, it is possible to do this and make the grade.

Here is a crucial thing I learned at the [University of Chicago](#). Professors give good grades to students whose opinions align with theirs and make them feel good about themselves. Therefore, you must be out of your mind to write papers against the top-tier schools.

For example, I could not believe how easy it was to get an A in a class. All I had to do was parrot back the politics of the professor in your papers. AUTOMATIC A. If you started trying to argue against their politics--whether they were Republican, Democrat, Socialist, or even a Communist--your grade would go down accordingly.

Read also: [How To Gain Acceptance In Law School Of Your Choice](#)

How To Get Excellent Grades in Law School

To ensure you graduate law school with excellent grades, you must align yourself with professors you like. This will give yourself the best chance of getting a top job in a large law firm.

Here's what I did to solve the issue of getting good grades. I shopped professors and spent an hour or so in their offices before committing to them. I could quickly figure out where they were coming from and whether they liked me. I was very proficient in figuring out what I needed to say that by my junior year, my grades never dropped below an A in over 10 classes and only one A-. After that, the school asked me to apply for Rhodes, Fulbright, and other types of scholarships.

Lessons Learned

[Most universities have liberal professors](#) who will reward students for being liberal as well. When I was in college, I was walking into some classes so far left that I was the only student not wearing a poncho, tie-dye, or sandals in the middle of a Chicago winter.

However, what happens to many law students is this. They start believing that acting liberal is in their best interest. It is that activism got them good grades in school and will make them successful attorneys. Some continue doing that into their careers.

What's the lesson to learn? You can be whoever you want to be--feel and act in line with your convictions. But, unfortunately, this mentality will not get you a lucrative job or career with most law firms.

Read also: [Why Most Law Firms Expect Their Attorneys to Conform and Act Like Other Attorneys in the Firm](#)

What Law Firms Really Want

The key to getting the law job or career you desire is to realize what larger law firms really want. This doesn't mean you ignore your convictions, principles, and opinions and put them to one side. Instead, it means understating the [basics of how large law firms work](#).

Big law firms want to bring in huge clients and provide a range of legal services. They want to hire people who will work hard and bill tons of hours to these huge clients. They want to bring in people who will identify with these huge clients and new ones as well. They like people who are personable, pleasant to be around, promote a friendly culture, and do not complain or make trouble.

They want smart people. Full stop.

They do not care about anything else. Anything else you bring into the equation of how they evaluate you will have no effect. They are not interested.

See related:

[The Top Three Qualities Warren Buffett Looks for When Hiring Attorneys, Managers, and Others-and Why This Is What You Need to Know to Hire, Get Hired, and Be a Great Employee](#)

[Billing: Lawyers Must Know How to Impress Clients](#)

[How to Make Law Practice Lucrative](#)

[How Law Firms Make Money from their Attorneys and Clients: A Guide to Law Firm Economics for Attorneys](#)

[Four Fatal Mistakes Highly Qualified Attorneys Make When Choosing Law Firms](#)

[How to Write a Resume When Applying to Work for a Large Law Firm](#)

Suppose you want to work for any of the larger firms. In that case, your resume must show your prospective employer that you will be an asset to the organization. They will not hire someone if the resume does not show commitment to hard work. Write your resume right, and increase your chance of working for a big law firm.

For example, think about the attorney who had all this pro bono work and other stuff on his resume. That's great if you want to work for a charitable organization. However, he will not get a position in a big law firm. This is because they see that they give him will take second place.

Basically, his resume gives these signals to the big law firm:

Pro bono work and doing other things are of primary importance.

He is not committed to working in a law firm.

His experience showed he only worked for three years and then decided to work for a judge.

He has powerful anti-corporate feelings.

He is a potential liability to any corporate client.

All these messages are evident from his resume. This is dangerous and will not serve him well inside a large law firm. This is not what the law firm wants.

See other Resume related articles:

[How to Write Your Own Resume](#)

[Contents and Style in a Resume](#)

[Writing Your Resume](#)

[Business Card Resumes For Attorneys: Good Idea or Mistake?](#)

[Why Leave Sex, Politics, Religion, and Social Activism Out of Your Job Search and Career](#)

The truth about being an activist on controversial issues is that it damages your law career. So I will say what needs to be said about sex, politics, religion, and social activism in your [job search and career](#). While I hate doing this, I will alienate you in the process. But the reason for this is I want you to get a great job in a large law firm. So I care very deeply about making it happen.

First, however, let me say a few words about diversity.

Read related:[Being Against Something - and Your Job Search](#)

The Importance of Diversity in The Legal Field

Diversity is crucial in all corners of society. Diversity is paramount and a vital part of changing opinions to equality. I have written a book about diversity in the legal field and believe it is extremely important.

You can see how seriously diversity is taken just by watching television. I love watching various detective movies. Over the past few years, I have noticed that it is exceedingly rare for the top supervisor in any of these shows not to be a diverse person--either a woman or a man of color.

The makers of these shows are trying to change the perception that supervisors are only white males or females. I hope that the dominant culture will start to think differently about the races and sexes of supervisors. All of this is a good thing. Overall, perceptions of our society can undoubtedly be affected by this overreaction of Hollywood to address past issues.

See related articles:

[Law Firm Diversity: They All Talk the Talk, But It's Harder to Walk the Walk](#)

[Rutgers University GC Emphasizes the Importance of Diversity](#)

Talent Trumps All in Large Law Firms

Diversity is vital in society and the legal field. However, being a talented law graduate or attorney gets you a top position. Just because society emphasizes diversity does not mean it will help you advance.

The point is that diversity--whether that be your sexual orientation, race, and so forth--is not something that will make you an excellent attorney. People are still looking for talent.

For example, many Ivy League graduates who got into these schools because of athletic skills or other connections do not succeed much with their careers. The world ultimately rewards your talent and contributions. Where you went to school matters less to your career.

Diversity, such as athletic skills, can and should get you in the door. However, you still need to have other talents to be truly valuable. You cannot reasonably expect to [use diversity to help further your career](#).

Many people make a big deal about where they went to college or law school for their entire career journey. But it does not amount to much. You still need talent and drive, regardless of where you were educated.

Similarly, diversity helps balance our society. Still, an employer is likely to resent you rubbing it in their face or constantly being reminded of it as a reason to hire, promote, or keep you around.

See more:[How Much Does the Law School You Went to Matter?](#)

When Diversity Backfires

Diversity does not mean "us against them." It does not mean we will not associate with or mingle with others. It does not mean that we expect to be treated as diverse yet want nothing to do with you. It does not mean we will use our diversity as a purpose but not another.

Read more:[What is Diversity and How Can It Help Law Firms?](#)

My Experience When Diversity Backfires

When I was in college, I dated a woman who was from a conservative Jewish background. Her family hated me because I was not Jewish. They refused anything to do with me, and every time she saw them, she would dump me for a few weeks because she was not Jewish.

She shared with me the values of her family and other Jewish people she associated with. They believed that Jews were smarter, cleaner, had better values, and so forth than non-Jews. They did not want to marry or associate with people who were not Jewish. Her friends were Jewish and shared similar values. They had Yiddish words they used to describe blacks and whites and used them against them as well.

She once invited me to a Jewish Seder, and when I went there. The person hosting it was upset that I was not Jewish and made me feel extremely unwelcome. After the dinner, he called the Hillel Center at the school and told them never to let a non-Jew to come to Seder again.

Some adults from the center even visited my girlfriend to tell her what a mistake she had made. During my last year of college, my girlfriend broke up with me. She started dating a Jewish boy because she could not bear her family seeing me at her graduation.

See also:[Law Firm Diversity: How Race, Gender, Age, Social and Economic Divisions Impact the Hiring, Retention, and Advancement of Law Firm Attorneys](#)

Diversity Should Not Mean Exclusion

I learned that some people hide behind the cloak of diversity without taking action to promote equality or inclusion.

My experience broke my heart. It was racist. It made me feel--and I was reminded all through college--what it was like to be excluded based on race, ethnicity, or religion. I was not only excluded; I had all sorts of racist beliefs shared with me. I was inferior because of my race.

Ten years later, after I had started this company and got divorced after a brief 16-month marriage. I then met a Jewish woman and started dating her. I fell in love with her, and the same thing started happening. But unfortunately, I was not Jewish and therefore, not marriage material.

Thankfully, I was not told master race theories about how Jews were better. However, I did have a lot of stuff shared with me about how Jewish value systems and their culture were better. So, I agreed to convert to Judaism to avoid this re-occurring ending and having my heart broken again. This took a year.

Efforts To Embrace Diversity

Several Jews told me that the Jewish culture and religion had only survived by not allowing Jews to marry outside their societies all over the world, Jews are a minority. They come together, reject the dominant culture--and often think of themselves as "the chosen people"--and keep their traditions alive by living and socializing among themselves.

Economically and socially, they help each other. But at the same time, they reject the dominant culture and people's values regarding marriage and socializing. Paradoxically, it is for this reason that our world is filled with anti-Semitism. The common perception that Jews do not like non-Jews and only want to profit from them economically but not be close friends in other ways.

To my astonishment, after committing to convert, I was not welcomed into being Jewish either. I realized that being Jewish was something that other Jews looked down upon.

Several Jews--women and men--told me that I could never really be Jewish because it was cultural. One older Jew told me I would never be Jewish because I had not grown up with the "shared suffering." Almost all my wife's Jewish friends made fun of me after converting. I never felt welcome and, in fact, felt more excluded and more like a minority after converting to Judaism than I did before.

Lessons Learned

I eventually learned that Judaism was something you could never really convert to--or be part of. Non-Jews I knew thought conversion was crazy, odd, and nonsensical, and so did Jews. Converting to Judaism was about the most unwelcome and alienating thing imaginable.

I was able to get married because of it. However, her family, friends, and others she knew constantly reminded me I was not "really" Jewish. I am going through a divorce now. And I have gone back to attending my Episcopal church and am the same person I was before from a religious and cultural standpoint.

Had I known then what I know now, I would have never tried to integrate with a group that was never welcoming. Being Jewish made me feel like an outsider. I never felt safe in any form of Jewish worship because I never felt entirely at ease. My friends I met and spent time with would ask me a few questions to ascertain that "Harrison Barnes" (which does not sound like a Jewish name) was really not Jewish--and, therefore, not part of the tribe.

Read also:[Why You Should Find Your "Tribe" and Not Just Focus on Money in Making Law Firm Job Decisions](#)

Why Talent Always Takes Precedence Over Diversity

I know what it is like to be treated as a minority and feel unwelcome because of your "diversity." It is painful to feel excluded from opportunity and acceptance because of something you cannot control. But, on the other hand, I know what it is like to be with people who are welcoming and supportive. Ideally, only talent and effort matter in a law firm or any other workplace.

Read also:[Hiring Practices Remain Tense with Diversity Efforts](#)

Leave Sexual Orientation out of Your Job Search and Career

Similar to the fact that talent trumps diversity, the same is true with sexual activism. The top large law firms in the world are looking for excellent attorneys who will meet billable hour requirements to earn hundreds of thousands of dollars for their corporate clients. This is what you should focus on, regardless of your sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation seems to dominate resumes. Many are full of men and women listing the various gay, lesbian, and transgender organizations they belong to.

Many gay and lesbian people believe it is imperative that law firms and colleagues are fully aware of their sexual orientation based on how they talk or dress or advertised on their resume. But, of course, you are free to do all this if you know what you are doing.

For more information, also read:[How Critical Is Your Appearance While Hunting For a Law Job](#)

Society has made incredible strides in accepting sexual orientation and treating women better in the workplace. I have worked alongside people of various sexual orientations in two law firms. And from my experience, I honestly don't think society cares anymore.

In my own company, I have had polygamists (I have an office in rural Utah), people in same-sex marriages, and women and men--no one cares. I am sure there are pockets of discrimination; however, the overriding feeling to be that welcoming people of diverse orientations into the workplace is not only accepted but expected.

In a career spanning over 25 years, I have honestly never heard anyone make an anti-gay or anti-woman comm

See also:

[Women in the Legal Profession](#)

[The Importance of Fitting In](#)

[Abraham Lincoln, Bringing People Together, and Your Career](#)

[You Need to Stop Competing and Seeing Differences Between You and Others](#)

[Your Beliefs about Yourself Are Controlling Your Destiny](#)

Making Sexuality an Issue Can Damage Your Law Career

Unfortunately, problems often arise when people make sexuality an issue in their job searches and careers. People who put a bunch of information and statements about their sexual orientation on their resume is a positive thing. They think it will help land them a top law job in a prestigious firm.

Some applicants who have diverse sexuality expect there will be more jobs and they will be more welcome because they share this personal information on their resumes. They want to be able to aggressively advertise their sexuality on their resumes or in person and have doors open because of it.

Why Making Sexuality an Issue Can Negatively Affect Your Law Career

Every law graduate deserves a rewarding legal career based on their talents, skills, abilities, and experience. However, aggressively pushing sexuality is not going to further your career. On the other hand, it is more likely to hold you back.

Let me tell you why.

Say you identified yourself on your resume as a lesbian for some reason. Then let's say a single woman who enjoys dating around other single women is reviewing your resume. Now, suppose she sees one resume of another woman who is not a lesbian. Then she checks your resume. You and the other candidate both have similar educations and backgrounds. Who is she more likely to choose?

I hate to say this, but people are social animals and are more likely to hire people like themselves. That is how it works.

Suppose the woman reviewing your resume is also a lesbian. In that case, she might be more likely to bring you in. However, statistically speaking, it is more probable that she is not. Therefore, putting your sexual orientation on your resume does you more harm than good.

Do I think this is fair? No.

Do I approve of this? No.

Is this how the world works? Yes.

Can I change it? No.

Can you change it? No.

Do I want you to get a job? Yes.

Sexuality Is Only Your Business

A lot occurs in the thinking processes of people who interview and hire inside law firms. For example, an attractive

nothing on her resume about her sexuality is more likely to be hired. The same is true for a man. I'm not going to give you specific reasons why this is true but think about it.

Use your head and leave your sexuality off your resume. Revealing your sexuality will help you 10% of the time and hurt you 90% of the time. I honestly do not think it will matter once you are hired. I have not seen people hurt by their sexuality who are hired, but it can happen.

You are not joining a law firm to hook up, have sex, or marry people there. Leave that part of your life out of your professional life. You are there to do a job for one's business who you sleep with. You are there to do a job.

What Happens When Sexuality Becomes an Issue

Unfortunately, I have worked with far too many men and women who made an issue out of their sexuality during their job search at a law firm. This even happens if it is not on their resume. The result? They do not get positions.

I hate seeing this happen because it is avoidable. Just put yourself in the shoes of the law firm. Suppose they have two equivalent candidates to hire. One who makes everyone they interview feel comfortable and another who does not. Who do you think they will hire? Who would best represent the law firm, and who would they be most comfortable sending to a client?

Enjoying a lucrative career in a large law firm has nothing to do with whether you are gay or not.

A straight woman who dresses provocatively for an interview will not get hired any more than a gay man who dresses effeminate. I am not being anti-gay or discriminatory here. Your sexuality is not and should not be an issue for getting hired. You are there to work and not show people how attractive and available you are to the same or opposite sex. Leave your sexuality at home.

Read related: [Practicing How to Dress and Present Yourself for a Formal Professional Life](#)

Leave Politics out of Your Job Search and Career

Being a political activist will not further your law career. On the contrary, spouting political views and opinions during your job search will likely cost you the job. Law firms don't want attorneys who cause divisions in the workplace.

I work with a bunch of brilliant people. I honestly do not know whether anyone working for me is Republican, Democrat, or anything else. This is precisely how it should be. It does not matter, nor do I care. I have never even asked them their political persuasion and they do not want to know. I love working on what we work on without worrying about any of this crap--and to me, it is crap.

Politics do not belong in the hiring stage, nor do they belong in the office. It just does not matter. Probably, I would have hired most of the people working for me if they had made their politics an issue when I interviewed them.

What Politics Can Do to Your Law Job Search or Career

I worked in my office a few years ago with a couple of women who were extremely political. They were angry about the political situation going on at that time. And they continuously made remarks about this or that. Was it a nice place to be? Certainly not.

For example, we had a big screen TV in our waiting room tuned to a news channel. They would walk by it, get a drink, and talk about it for some time. Then, at night, they went to political party rallies and were vehemently against anyone who did not share their political persuasion.

Not surprisingly, they were also suspicious of others who had no political persuasion, like me. At first, they thought

left liberal. They would then say the most outrageous things to me but get no reaction. When I did not react, they be a severe conservative, upsetting them.

I have no idea why they wanted to make politics part of where they were working. It did not matter to me and should not have concerned them either.

But it did matter to them--a lot. They wanted to believe they were working for a flaming liberal, which was important to them. When they realized I was not sharing any liberal views, they assumed I must be the enemy, and they were furious. Being mad at me was also important to them.

It made very little sense to me since I have nothing to do with politics, but I did not explain this or think it was necessary.

The Odds Aren't in Your Favor If You Bring Politics to The Office

There are serious risks to making politics part of your job search or career. For example, statistically, identifying as a Republican or Democrat will alienate at least 50% of the people who do not share your politics. You will be popular with some people but not others.

Of course, you are much more likely to run into other Republicans or Democrats in certain parts of the country. However, the chances are still too great that you will miss out on jobs and opportunities. You will alienate the following people:

- Half of the employers
- Half of your potential clients
- Half of your colleagues at work

The result is that you will be wasting a lot of time and effort on stuff that has nothing to do with your job.

If you want to be a politician and participating in the political world is essential to you, then go ahead and do it. If you want to be an attorney and represent clients, make this job and your client's matters your passion. Political leanings will not help you get a job or keep a job.

Why Politics Is Bad for A Law Career in A Large Law Firm

I regularly see attorneys in large cities unable to get jobs because they include organizations like the Federalist Society and so forth on their resumes. Think about it--how will listing these on a resume get you a law job in a place like New York or San Francisco?

Filling resumes with political viewpoints and opinions will not get you a job. People hire people who are like them. To even get through the door into an interview, your interviewers may find reasons not to like you based on politics alone.

But suppose you get hired despite a list of political ramblings on a resume. The people you work with will find reasons not to like your work product. They will not assign you any work and dislike you if you are loud enough about political issues they do not like.

The world is a complicated place. Countries go to war, and people kill each other--sometimes in the millions--over different political points of view. Therefore, you cannot reasonably make politics an issue in your job search and career and still get and stay ahead in most law firms (unless most people are like you).

Suppose being a political activist and attorney is important to you. In that case, it's best to find and work with a group of like-minded people who serve like-minded clients. However, this severely limits your job opportunities if you want to work in a large law firm. And I have no idea why anyone would want to complicate their job search and career this way.

Leave Religion out of Your Job Search and Career

Bringing your religious beliefs to the interview room or the law office is another thing that hinders careers. Like politics can be a divisive influence among colleagues. And an interviewer is more interested in your abilities as an attorney than your religious zealot.

Of course, you may be very proud of your religion. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that. You may be very proud of being Christian, Jewish, Muslim--or whatever religion you are. But it is essential to realize that many people may not share your enthusiasm.

See also: [Moses, Great Religious Figures, the Wilderness, and Your Career](#)

Real-Life Experiences When Religion Impact Job Searches and Law Careers

You take uncalculated risks when advertising your religion or making it an issue in your job search and career. Here are some cases highlighting why this is so.

Case #1

After the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, I had an experience with a candidate in New York City that I can only attribute to fear and racism. The applicant was Muslim and graduated from a top law school. He also came from a practice area that was high in demand.

As you probably guessed, he could not get a single interview, and firms were utterly silent about him. Not only would they not interview him, but they also would not even respond to his candidacy.

In contrast, other attorneys I was working with who were not Muslims were getting numerous interviews. I am 100% sure this guy was discriminated against because of his Muslim faith. None of that information should have been on his resume.

Being Jewish in certain parts of the United States can hurt you. Being Muslim in certain parts of the United States can hurt you. Being a conservative Christian in certain parts of the United States can hurt you. Advertising that you are a Scientologist can freak out employers in most parts of the United States.

Sorry, folks! Religious discrimination exists and can hurt you if you are seeking a job--and it can hurt you if you are not. Keep one as well.

Suppose I was in a major law firm and suddenly announced that I was part of a controversial religion and following its teachings. Do you think my law firm would welcome this? What if I announced that I was a fundamentalist Mormon with multiple wives? How would that go over?

Case #2

When I converted to Judaism, I visited some working-class step-relatives in rural Ohio for the Fourth of July. As I was walking around, I saw a bunch of them whispering, smiling, and laughing while looking at me and my exotic Jewish then-girlfriend from Los Angeles. Finally, after witnessing this for some time, I walked up to them and asked what they were laughing at--they had no idea.

"Your secret is out!" one of the men said. "We all know you are Jewish."

This made me uncomfortable because I had grown up with them and knew their thinking process. I realized they were not an idiot for converting to Judaism. It is highly unlikely they knew any Jews in this rural Ohio farming community.

made me feel uneasy and like I needed to get out of there.

Do you think advertising my religion would be a good idea if I were trying to get a job in a law firm in that Ohio town? Absolutely not. I would have to be crazy to do so.

Lessons Learned from Bringing Religion to Your Law Career and Job Search

If you are seeking a position in a major law firm in New York City, advertising that you are a conservative Christian will help--although it might be in the South. You just do not want to make your religion an issue. Every time you put your resume, you will alienate some people you would not alienate if you left it off. Why risk it?

Why make an issue out of it when you are working, either? If you want to work with people who share your religion, you probably find a law firm where you can do this. But in general, you will always risk alienating others when religion is an issue.

Read also:[Strategies for Success in Law Firm Interviews](#)

Leave Social Activism out of Your Job Search and Career

Social activism has the potential to limit your job search severely. You may find that even if you get a job, voicing your views on various social issues will alienate you from your law colleagues. Typically, large law firms don't have social activism as a priority and will not hire attorneys based on their extreme viewpoints.

Many people are very proud that they support various organizations that aim to resolve serious problems. For example, organizations against pollution, sexual exploitation of minors, child labor in China, people eating meat, and more. They advertise this on their resume and try to convert people everywhere they go to believe in their cause.

This is not a good idea unless the cause is closely related to what the attorney does for a living--or wants to be doing for a living.

What Social Activism Does to Law Jobs Searches and Legal Careers

Years ago, I represented a woman who had graduated from Stanford Law School. She included on her resume that she had been raped and was actively involved with organizations for rape victims. She was not getting interviews.

I pointed out to her that the subject of rape might make people uncomfortable. She then accused me of being a naysayer. She told me that it was important for people to know who she was and that being raped was part of her identity.

So, I asked her if this was something she wanted to discuss in her interviews. She said it would be "inappropriate" to bring it up. I then asked her why she had this all over her resume and if it was inappropriate for people to talk about it. If I was sympathetic, I also believe she was creating an impediment to getting a job.

If someone has strong feelings about being a vegetarian, does it make sense for them to talk about it in interviews?

Suppose someone has formidable anti-immigrant or pro-immigrant sentiments. Does it make sense to make an issue of them?

Of course, you are entitled to have feelings about social justice and other issues. However, pushing or publicizing these issues is more likely to disqualify you from getting a job--or keeping one--than ever helping you. You can fight these battles on your own time.

See related:[The #1 Thing Attorneys and Law Students Need to Say in Law Firm Interviews to Get Hired](#)

Do you Want to Work in a Large Law Firm? Here is What You Should Do

To ensure you get a top legal job in a large law firm, stay away from anything with the potential to alienate you. To keep sex, politics, religion, and social justice out of conversations. Even though they are components of you, they are the most divisive issues in society.

They will get in the way of you getting hired. And they may even mean losing your job.

To be a successful attorney in the largest law firms, you must avoid giving people reasons to dislike and not hire you. In interviews, never make things about you--an attorney's job is to put other peoples' needs first. Your employer expects your work to be a top priority. Your clients expect the same.

The best advice is to always make it about them and never about you. If you want to do something that emphasizes sexual orientation, politics, religion, or social activism, maybe you should be in another profession. Or limit yourself to the legal profession where that is important.

That way, you will maximize your chances of getting an excellent law job in some of the largest firms in the country.

Read more:[Seven Things the Best Legal Recruiters Do That You Cannot Do Yourself](#)

For more motivational job and career-related posts, read also:

[The Power of Gratitude: Getting and Keeping a Job by Being Thankful](#)

[Avoid the Dangers of Getting Jobs Through Friends and Family](#)

[Focus on Doing - and Stop Talking about Those Who Are Doing](#)

[The Kick-Ass Marketing Secret of the Most Successful Job Applicants and Employees](#)

[Why You Need to Love Yourself and When You Need to Change Your Friends, Job and Life](#)