

# Getting Your First Legal Job: What You Need to Know

Following the bar exam, you must now turn your attention to finding a job after law school. How can you get your first legal job after law school, and how do you find one? The following is an overview of what law graduates can do and how they can land a job.

## Entry Level Legal Jobs for Graduates

An associate attorney position at a small to a midsize firm is the most common job out of school law students. Additionally, government attorneys and staff attorneys can find employment with organizations. If you are interested in the public interest or university legal fellowships, you might want to look into them. Judicial clerkships are a common beginning to a legal career. There are other people who choose in-house roles based on their experience or their connections. As a JD student, you may also be able to work on compliance projects.

## How to Job Search After Law School

To begin with, leverage your network and expand it as much as possible. ABA specialty groups are open for membership if you want to focus on a specific practice area. In the tax law group, for instance, you can connect online with tax lawyers or participate in special committees. Sign up for CLEs and network with speakers and panel members. Interview alumni from your school or people who have jobs that you wish to have. Your resume should be sent to professors with whom you have worked closely. You never know who will have a good connection for you - just ask everyone and anyone you can think of.

Use the resources offered by your law school at the same time. The career center at your school probably offers services such as mock interviews, resume critiques, and cover letter reviews. Keep an eye on your school's job board every day. Attend alumni programs and events and get involved with the alumni association.

You can find jobs on a number of websites. New lawyer jobs are posted daily on a general job website like Indeed, LinkedIn, Simply Hired, and Glassdoor. Public interest opportunities are available through PSJD. Seek out attorney positions on government websites. There are also sites for those who are looking for work in a specific field, like entertainment. On Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, you can even search for keywords such as "legal" and "hiring."

Being flexible is also important. Consider something that gives you a foundation for your dream job, even if it is not your dream job right away. Employers who offer proper supervision and training are more likely to hire you. Other employers outside your geographic location may not require you to pass their state bar (if you are willing to relocate) - some companies may give you time to take it or transfer your score if you have not passed. It is a good idea to apply to as many jobs as possible, even if you are unsure of your qualifications.

## While You Are Applying

The search for a job after law school might take more than a year, so finding work in the meantime to build experience could be beneficial. From December to February and from May to July, bar prep courses look for seasonal essay graders. Temporary document review attorneys are sometimes needed for weeks at a time by law firms. Consider doing pro bono work if you are comfortable volunteering your time. Work on legal projects is another possibility. You can easily sign up for Lawyer Exchange and submit proposals for short-term legal projects like reviewing documents and drafting motions.

After law school, there is no shortage of stress and excitement in finding a job. A thorough search and asking around will lead you to a lot of opportunities. Applying for different jobs and asking for help should not be a

problem.

See Also:

[How BCG Attorney Search Finds Legal Job Openings for its Candidates](#)

[How BCG Screens Candidates](#)

## 5 Tips For Preparing for Your First Legal Job

It is important to know what to expect before becoming a new associate, as you will be expected to prove yourself, but the level of pressure and the expectation you will face will be enormous.

### Understanding Who Can Help You

Although you may have landed your dream job yourself, it is still your first job and you will probably come in as the lowest in the hierarchy. A large company might offer training programs and a mentor to help you, but in a smaller firm, you may be on your own to navigate. What can you do to succeed?

The key to success for a newly minted junior officer is to trust their subordinates, as graduates of service academies know. Junior associates are also affected by this. It is likely that your secretary and the firm's paralegals know more about how the firm operates and how the process works than you do. They can be a valuable source of information from the start that will help you be successful. Knowing how the local legal establishment functions and how to get coffee made, operate the phone system, make copies, and understand what the firm does with billable hours will make your life easier. For example, the staff knows how to interact with local legal establishments. Asking for help and asking questions when you need it is polite and helps get you on the right path. A little politeness and friendliness go a long way and can reap significant rewards.

### Key to Billable Hours

It is important to distinguish between billable time and time spent on other tasks. There may be differences between firms when it comes to which services and bills are billed. You need to make sure that clients understand how much time has been billed and not about the process. Examine why you are taking longer for a particular billable activity and perhaps only enter the billable hours normally associated with it. Often, new lawyers do not have enough experience to judge for themselves how long a particular task should take, so firms may tell them upfront how long it should take. The results are what matter; not how hard you worked. Remember, no one wants to be perceived as ineffective or unreliable.

### Ask Questions

Ensure your delivery of the assignment is what was expected by asking questions; clarifying what was given to you helps ensure your work is what was expected. Ensure that the assignment is delivered in its entirety. Ensure that your work adheres to the project guidelines and does not need to be formatted or cover sheet-ed in any way. You should never take shortcuts. It is important to pay attention to even seemingly trivial details such as typos (or theirs), grammar errors, and spelling mistakes that can disrupt the quality service of your work. Make sure to proofread, check, and double-check everything.

### Manage Your Time, Manage Your Career

Time management is key to success. Choose a time management technique that works for you out of the many available. Be sure you will meet your deadlines by planning your workday. You will be able to carry your habits and processes into your career advancement.

### Make Everyone Look Good

Despite your nature as a senior associate, you are still important to the success of your firm and the reputation of its senior lawyers. Everything you do, everything you say, everything you do reflects who you are. Make sure that this job will be the start of a long and fruitful career. Knowing what getting started means

will help you manage your expectations long-term, whether you approach law firm recruiters or internal legal staff.

## Decide What Kind of Law You Will Practice

Even many new graduates find it difficult to decide on the type of law they would like to practice. In law schools, students might have the impression that they will be working for large corporations or for litigation firms. To be happy in legal career services, you must find a career that is a good match for your personality and interests. If you are having difficulty determining the type of law that would suit your needs, consider these questions:

### How Much Do You Enjoy Arguing?

Most litigators do not anticipate the level of conflict they would face on a daily basis. Their arguments in court are obvious, but they underestimate the ongoing animosity they have with opposing counsel. Those who wish to become litigators should enjoy fighting. Litigators who are the happiest love the game and thrive on winning.

A different law job might be a better fit for you if you are more conciliatory. There is the option to switch your litigation firm if you are not satisfied with your choice.

### What Motivates You About Money?

The lowest-paid lawyers tend to be the most satisfied, according to studies. There is often a trade-off between meaningful work and high pay in the legal profession. In a job where you have a strong desire to make a lot of money, you are going to be happier than someone who has a weak financial motivation and who cares more about doing meaningful and important work. For lasting happiness, it is important to understand where you fall on this spectrum.

### How Much Control Do You Need Over Your Work-Life?

Legal professionals will not necessarily be able to exercise perfect control over their work. The court might require it, your non-profit may have a funding cycle, or your partnerships might demand it. You can gain more control over your work life by starting a solo practice or taking a position at a government agency with more predictable hours and demands. Work environments vary, and everybody thrives in a different type, so consider your own needs. BigLaw is probably not the best choice for you if you want autonomy and control over your time.

### How Much Interaction Do You Need With Other People?

Generally speaking, law attracts introverts. It is important to seek out legal jobs where you will have ongoing contact with other people or a legal community. The reality is that lawyers spend most of their time churning out work in their own offices. Whether you want to work in a team or just attend court regularly, you will have to proactively seek out these experiences.

### What Do You Like to Do?

Pay attention to the type of work you enjoy as you go through law school or your early legal career. Do you enjoy writing briefs the most? Working with clients? Negotiating deals? Planning an oral argument? Having to work a lot as a lawyer means looking at the nitty-gritty of the day-to-day tasks you will actually be doing. As an attorney, you will be much happier if you enjoy the work you do every day.

See Also:

[How to Select the Best Legal Recruiter and Maximize the Effectiveness of Working with One](#)  
[A Comprehensive Guide to Working with a Legal Recruiter](#)

## Top 10 Legal Careers

There has almost always been a legal profession in the US on the list of top-ranking and best-paying jobs, making it an attractive career choice for many. The following is a list of the top 10 legal careers in the US, based on factors such as popularity, salary, and job satisfaction.

**Litigation and Trial Lawyers-** There is high demand for lawyers who represent clients in both civil and criminal cases. When they are successful in their cases, they get well paid. Legal professionals are the top earners in the legal field. Depending on their location and the litigation process they handle, their salary and experience may vary.

**General Counsels-** A general counsel oversees the legal department of a corporation. A typical executive earns an executive-level salary and may earn more money through stock options or stock dividends.

**Judges-** Judges receive health benefits, expense accounts, and retirement contributions on their behalf, which increase their compensation package.

**Academia-** It can be challenging to land a teaching assistant or faculty position in law schools. Law school teaching in the United States is one of the top-paying jobs in the country because top candidates will need a law degree from top law schools, high grades, work experience, publication in scholarly journals, etc. There is a wide range of salaries that would depend on an individual's educational background, experience, and location.

**Arbitrators, Mediators, or Conciliators-** Lawyers or industry experts serve as arbitrators. As an impartial third party, they listen to and decide conflicts between opposing parties. Alternatively, mediators assist in resolving disputes. They assist opposing parties in reaching an agreement.

**Litigation Support Roles-** Computerized litigation support involves organizing, analyzing, and presenting case materials. A litigation support professional is paid well and has a law degree or an advanced degree in technology. Many law firms are increasingly opting for technology-based roles, such as legal research, database managing, or administrative functions to handle processes and data.

**Legal Specialist Roles-** Legal specialist roles have specific industry knowledge and are also gaining popularity. Apart from drafting, editing, and updating legal documents and validating their accuracy, a legal specialist may assist with scheduling, obtaining equipment, and editing presentations and notes. The majority of the work involves being a part of the organization's processes and developing, implementing, and validating document management, version management, and discovery processes.

**Law Firm Administration:** A law firm administrator typically works regular hours and earns good wages. Besides overseeing the business aspect of running a law firm, they also manage non-legal aspects such as business development, human resources, facilities management, technology, marketing, and practice management. People seeking a regular job in the legal industry can find this a great career option.

**International Organizations-** Candidates often consider a career with an international organization such as the UN, an international charity, or a campaigning organization, although these jobs are not the best-paying ones. A career in international relations is a career option for many students and recent graduates, particularly those with a background in law. New graduates have few options for employment in this field other than as an intern or volunteer, although it can be rewarding.

**Law Firm Consultant/Legal Recruited-** Despite the varied work environment, flexibility, travel, and ability to attend meetings, law firm consultants enjoy good working relationships. Legal recruiters play a vital role in linking top law firms with new entrants. Recruitment agencies are capable of identifying law graduates, reviewing their CVs, and conducting interviews. This position is better suited to those who have recruitment experience.

## See Also:

[Top 10 Reasons Attorneys Should Look at Multiple Markets in Their Job Search](#)

[Everything You Know About Finding a Legal Job Is Wrong: You've Likely Fallen for the Worst Piece of Attorney Job Search Advice Ever](#)

[Is it a Waste of Time for an Attorney to Apply to Jobs Online?](#)

[Networking Tips for Attorneys](#)

[Is Your Networking Working?](#)

[Get a Job Through Networking](#)

## How to Network

### How Attorneys Can Network: Why Networking is Essential to Attorney Success