
End of Law School Search Strategies

Office of Career & Professional Development
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Most law students do NOT get their first post-law school job through the Early Interview Process (EIP, formerly known as OCI). This is a guide for all 3Ls and recent grads who seek a job outside of EIP.

Nationwide, law school graduates in 2012 got offers after graduation through the following methods:

- Self-initiated contact with a targeted employer (25.8%)
- Being referred by a colleague, professor or friend (22.9%)
- Responding to a posting, advertisement or career office listing (20.4%)
- Starting their own practice or business (8%)
- Being offered a permanent position by a former employer (2.7%)*

* NALP survey of the Class of 2012; statistics cited are for offers extended after graduation.

What does this mean? Mass mailings rarely pay off. Instead, nearly 50% of applicants get jobs by identifying the kind of work they want to do, assessing what skills, knowledge and traits they have that will help them to do the work well, and leveraging or building personal connections to targeted employers.

Why are developing connections so important? Because employers are risk-averse. Having a friend or colleague pass your resume on, or seeing a name they recognize in your cover letter, gives employers comfort – they feel connected to you already.

Good Resource: *Guerilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams... regardless of your Grades, your School or your Work Experience!* by Kimm Alayne Walton, JD. Copies are on the Career Office bookshelf. It is a good resource for an in-depth discussion of strategies to get your creative juices going and for gentle, but expert, reminders of job-search protocol.

Build a Professional Community (NETWORKING)

“People Don’t Get Invested in Resumes. They Get Invested In People.” ***Guerilla Tactics*** @ 661. (Read Chapter 10 if you need convincing.)

Networking involves (1) talking to people you know about what you’re seeking (they like you; they want to help; to help you they need to know what you are looking for and why you fit in that field); and (2) meeting new people strategically, by going to the places where you’ll find those who do the work you seek.

You will be working for a long time and the people you’ll be spending time with will also be working in this field. Remember when you first walked into your 1L section? That was your new community – you probably knew no one. Every other student had the potential to help you (trade seats; trade notes; form a study group, etc). Other lawyers and

business people are in a similar position. You won't know who you like and who you loath, who can help and who cannot, until you meet them. Be open to all; considerate of all, and deepen your professional relationship with those you enjoy being around.

Benefit from your existing contacts: Everyone you know should be aware of the type of job you are seeking. Get out a sheet of paper and list every personal contact you can think of. Include the obvious: lawyers, classmates, alumni mentors, career office counselors and friends. Include all the not-so-obvious: friends-of-friends, relatives, friends of your relatives, law professors, former employers (non-legal), coworkers/clients from your former jobs, alumni from your undergraduate school who now practice law, former teaching assistants, undergraduate professors, service providers that you use frequently (yes, even your hair stylist and the barista at your local coffee shop -- see *Guerilla Tactics* @ 657 for stories of students getting a job over a coffee counter).

If you have regular contact with them, think carefully – are you positive they know what you are looking for and why you are excited about doing that work, or why you think you'll be good at it? If not, make it your goal to tell everyone you know what you are looking for. As you go along you'll get comfortable enough to start adding why you are excited about getting that kind of job; soon you'll be able to say in a quick sentence why you think you'll be good at that job.

Reconnect with people you don't see regularly: e.g., "I wanted to reconnect; find out how you are; let you know what is happening in my life." Make sure before you hang-up or before the email exchange stops that they know what kind of job you are looking for and why you think you will be a good fit.

Expand your list and make contacts in your field of interest: Attend events with other like-minded people and potential employers. Also attend events where nobody is a law student. Expanding your network will create personal connections between you and people who are hiring. Don't worry if you don't meet the hiring partner or top leader of the organization. What matters is making a contact that gets your foot in the door. Be mindful: you might be the one person they mention when talking to lawyers.

Go where others who work in the field go.

- **Attend CLE seminars** and talk to the other attendees; go up afterwards and talk to the presenters; ask to volunteer if you're shy or can't afford the program. For example, look at the [calendar of events for the Bar Association of San Francisco](#).
- **Become a student member** of the bar association in your geographic area.
- **Join specialty sections** of the bar association in your field of interest. Check out www.findlaw.com for a list of professional associations.
- Do a search on our website "Hastings Grad By Location" to identify Hastings alum who work in a particular practice area and geographic location. Email them and see if they would give you some advice about starting out.
- **Talk to a professor** whose classes you love or the classes you are taking because they are important to your field of interest.
- **Get Published:** If you've written an article or note on a topic, contact a practitioner in that area and ask if you can send them your article for review.

Submit the article for publication in a legal journal with your bio. Or—contact a practitioner in your field of interest and tell them you’re writing an article and want to interview them- then write it!

Don’t expect too much when you first meet people. Tell the people you meet what you are looking for and why it excites you. Don’t ask them for a job. Instead, ask for easy things -- Advice, Information and Recommendations/Resources/Referrals (“AIR”). If there is a good connection, they’ll volunteer more as the professional relationship deepens. If not, you’ll get advice, information and recommendations, and a contact.

The goal is to make a personal connection with someone who is connected to each of your top targeted employers. If you haven’t made such a connection, do not despair. You have learned – from the advice, information and recommendations you gained from your contacts – a lot about practicing in this area. You will use that to advocate for yourself in your tailored letter and resume. For more tips on how to network, read the Career Office handout called “Making the Connection”.

Identify Target Employers

Gather and Organize Information: Identify and gather information on employers in your area of interest. The key is to find employers that you might be interested in – organizations, firms, public entities, legal or non-legal. Create a chart, spreadsheet, notebook or other tool to write down employer names and keep track of contacts with and personal connections to those employers. You can start by doing a firm search by geographic area and type of practice on www.martindale.com. Look at the small and mid-size firms that come up. In all likelihood, the largest firms will have fulfilled their needs via OCI and their summer programs.

Ask Your Contacts: Show your contacts the employer list and ask them what they think – are the listed employers good places to work; do they know anyone there; etc. If you are able to rank the employers you are hoping to pursue by preference – top 20, top 10, etc. – it helps you prioritize.

Ask Alumni: A great and often overlooked resource is UC Hastings alumni. Find alumni through our link: [Click Here](#) Ask alumni how they got their job, who hires entry level lawyers, what are the better places to work and why, what would those employers be looking for in an entry-level lawyer, etc. (See the Career Office handout called “Informational Interviews”).

Look Around: Keep a lookout for any information that deepens what you know about the organization, the lawyers who work there, and the leaders/decision-makers. Intelligence gathering increases your chances of finding a connection, increases your appeal to them once you get an interview, and will inform your choice if offered a job. Look for mention of the employer in legal newspapers and online.

Research Employer Websites: Most firms and organizations have websites – check them out for information that will get you more in-depth knowledge about the potential employer. Look at practice areas and profiles of their attorneys to find information of interest or connections. (Did they go to UC Hastings? Same college or university as you? Clerk for the judge you are externing for?)

Advocate for yourself with potential employers

How you apply for jobs shows employers how you'll perform in a job. The lawyer in you will shine when you are organized, fact-oriented, positive, and considerate of your audience.

Get and stay organized: Keeping track of the details makes you more prepared and confident and projects to employers your detail-orientation – ideal traits in a lawyer.

- **Plan your first contact** with the targeted employer and what specific individual you will contact: Will you ask for an informational interview with an alum? Will you pass on your resume and letter to a contact you already have? Will you ask someone connected to the firm if you can include her name in the first line of your letter (e.g., "Jane Smith recommended I contact you.")? Will you call the employer and ask for the name of the individual in charge of hiring? Will you go online to the firm website or www.martindale.com and pull up the name of a Hastings alum in the office and address your letter to that alum, asking to forward the letter on to the person who handles hiring?
- **Keep track of all your targeted employers and contacts:** Set up a spreadsheet, networking app, chart, list, notebook, post-it notes or whatever works for you to keep track of whom you've spoken to, whom you've sent prospecting letters to, whom you've sent informational interview requests to.
- **Follow up:** Set up a system to remind you to follow up a week or ten days after making the initial contact. Failure to follow up is a major reason job seekers don't get hired quickly. Just because the employer doesn't call doesn't mean she isn't interested! Most of the people you write to will be extremely busy, and if you tell them in your letter that you'll follow up, an easy thing for them to do is set aside your letter and wait for your call. Don't lose opportunities to another job-seeker who has the gumption to call!
- **Develop a pitch:** If following up is not naturally comfortable, develop a follow-up "pitch" and keep it in front of you when you call, e.g.: If assistant answers the phone: "May I please speak to [the person to whom you addressed the cover letter]. Why am I calling? To follow up on a letter I sent him/her last week." To letter addressee: "I am ____, a UC Hastings 3L/recent grad and I'm following up on the letter and resume I sent on ____; I am very interested in working for your firm and hope your hiring needs might include someone with my background ... " But use your own words!
- **If you get invited in, send thank you notes promptly afterward!** Be sure to write a thank you email within 24 hours to anybody who is helping you with your career. It's a good habit to follow up with people and building your network.
- **Stay connected.** An initial "No, we're not hiring" from an employer doesn't necessarily mean, "No, never, forget it", but rather that they are not hiring now. Maybe there will be an opportunity later. One alum recently told us she received an invitation to interview in February with a firm she had written to in September.

Advocate for yourself in prospecting and application letters: Think of the letter as your advocacy piece. There is a format – just like a memo, brief or demand letter – that works best. Use this format to market yourself. See the Career Office handout on cover letters for more tips.

- One page only.
- Avoid starting too many sentences with “I.”
- Focus on what the employer needs and how your background, skills, experience and strengths match that need (don’t focus on what your employer offers you).
- Be specific in the first paragraph about what you are seeking – an informational interview or a specific job (use the specific title). When possible, in a phrase or sentence demonstrate why you are particularly interested in this exact employer.
- In the second paragraph give evidence-- with specific references to the facts of your background-- of experiences and skills that will make you the perfect employee in this position. Do not repeat what is in your resume. Instead, refer to what is in there as back-up evidence to your statements, or give additional detail beyond what is in the resume. Address each letter to a specific individual.

Tighten and tailor your resume

- Is it up to date?
- Have you gone over it with a counselor in the Career Office?
- Is your legal experience emphasized?
- Does each job paragraph lead with descriptions of the highest, most challenging, and most lawyer-like work you have done?
- Do the descriptions show what transferable skills you gained from each job?
- Do the descriptions show your unique attributes in your work -- taking initiative, producing more work than is typical, becoming a liaison with other groups to avoid communication problems, using technical tools to problem-solve etc.?
- Does the writing, editing and proof-reading reflect well on you?

Prepare for Interviews

- Present your most confident, relaxed self. Thorough, but short, answers – assume a **15 second attention span**.
- **Practice** how to describe your strengths – at least three of them, in 15 second sound bites. Practice responses to anything that worries you – grades, commitment, holes in your resume, etc. Such responses should be factually correct, but as positive as possible. Acknowledge responsibility without accepting or implying blame. For example: “I was used to a very different academic environment and it took me a while to adjust. My overall grades are not what I wanted them to be, but they steadily improved each year and I did well in the classes related to this area of law, which is what I seek to practice.”

- **Never say anything negative about another employer.** This is hard if you were treated poorly or unjustly. But diplomacy, reserve and good judgment will serve you better than spotlighting another's poor judgment or blaming another. Work with an advisor or mentor on how to describe the situation in the best light, using the actual facts. Conclude with what you learned or how you acted to improve your skills, then move on. Become practiced at your positive answer until you feel you can say it without defensiveness or hesitation.
- Have **thoughtful questions** ready to ask interviewers.
- See the Career Office handouts: "Basic Interview Preparation" and "Commonly Asked Interview Questions".

Career Office counselors can assist with any of these steps! [Schedule an appointment.](#)

Resource List

Resources for **Self-Assessment:**

- My Ideal Job handout (for in-depth self-assessment, see a Career counselor)
- *Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, by Paul D. Tieger & Barbara Barron-Tieger (Career Office bookshelf).
- *The Pathfinder: How to Choose or Change Your Career for a Lifetime of Satisfaction and Success*, by Nicholas Lore.

Resources for **Research:**

- ***Guerilla Tactics*** (Chapter 2)

Resources for **Decision Making:**

- *Should You Really be a Lawyer? The Guide to Smart Career Choices Before, During & After Law School*, by Deborah Schneider, JD & Gary Belsky

Resources to Find **Employers to Target:**

- *America's Greatest Places to Work With a Law Degree*, by Kimm Alayne Walton

Private Firms

- [Martindale-Hubbell](#): or on [Lexis](#). Search by the town and the kind of practice the firm has- the "Location/Practice" tab. You can also include your desired firm size.
- The Yellow Pages "Attorneys" section – yes, folks, it's true. Attorneys are listed alphabetically, then by practice area (the ones who pay for it), and you can check out all the advertising. Extremely handy and comprehensive.
- [HastingsCareersOnline.com](#) (HCO) In the documents library is a list of some of the small and mid size firms where UC Hastings grads have found jobs in the past;
- Professional associations or sections of local bar associations, explain your interest and ask if there is a publicly available mailing or membership list. Sometimes the mailing list is even available through the association's website

Public Interest Organizations

- [www.PSLawnet.org](#) - great site for researching public interest and public sector organizations.
- [www.idealists.org](#)
- [www.fdncenter.org](#)

Corporations

- Martindale- Hubbell: www.[martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com) or on Lexis at (lists some corporate law departments).
- Best Places to Work lists in Fortune Magazine, Working Woman Magazine or from Great Place to Work Institute -- <http://www.greatplacetowork.com/>
- ***Going In-House: A Guide for Law Students and Recent Graduates***, by Donna Gerson

Government

- Binders in the Career Office
- Bar committees and specialty organizations whose members are government lawyers

Networking Resources:

- *Building Career Connections: Networking Tools for Law Students and New Lawyers*, by Donna Gerson