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Practical Job Search Suggestions for Unemployed Attorneys

by Lucas A. Stelling

Like every other aspect of the legal profession, searching for a great job is challenging. I consider myself lucky in that I have been employed with the federal government for the past nine years in a job that I truly enjoy. But recently I was put to the task of brainstorming a few job search suggestions for a colleague, and then I was encouraged to share the list. So, to anyone who needs a list of tips or suggestions for a nascent or ongoing job search, here is that list:

1. Create a LinkedIn profile. If you already have one, make sure that you show up in search results and that the information is accurate and up to date. Assume that any prospective employer will review the profile. It is also good to have a head shot-style photo with good lighting on your LinkedIn profile.
2. Create business cards for yourself. It is simple to go online to Vistaprint or another online stationery source and print up a few hundred professional-quality business cards for under \$20.
3. Sign up for a continuing legal education (CLE) program in an area of law that interests you at the New Jersey Institute for Continuing Legal Education (ICLE) in New Brunswick, or attend one put on by your local bar association. You need the CLE credits anyway. At the program introduce yourself to at least 10 people. Offer your business card to these people if they seem interested in talking to you. Ask for their card if you are interested in talking to them. It is okay to let people know you are looking for a job, and what type of law you are knowledgeable or interested in. If you get a card from someone, follow up with them in about a week. They probably won't have a job for you, but you'll be working on your skills and getting your name out there.
4. Identify attorneys you are acquainted with—perhaps former classmates, family friends or attorneys who have offices in the location where you see yourself practicing. Offer to buy them a cup of coffee somewhere and ask if you can pick their brain for half an hour. If they say no, shrug it off.
5. Contact the career services center of your law school and ask for some help. For example, find out whether there are any alumni in the area you may contact. Offer to go back and volunteer for being a judge at mock trial or moot court, or any number of things along those lines.
6. Check Craigslist often. Every week there are dozens of new jobs posted on Craigslist. Moreover, the employers posting vacancies on Craigslist usually want to hire someone within a matter of a few days or a week, rather than within several weeks or

- months. Be sure to select the correct geographical location for where you are, since long-distance hiring is not common with Craigslist vacancies.
7. Register to take the bar exam in another state.
 8. Go to open court wearing a suit or appropriate dress, and watch a trial or watch attorneys argue motions. Be polite, look interested, and take notes. If you are impressed by one of the attorneys you see, and the opportunity arises, briefly introduce yourself and offer them a compliment.
 9. Write a note or letter in an area of law that interests you and that is popular at the moment. Submit it to a law blog, website, and/or local newspaper or periodical for publication. Online and print media sources are always looking for fresh content. It's a great way to get your name out there.
 10. Lastly, please do not complain to other lawyers or professionals, or anyone else who is not a direct family member, if you are having a difficult time. Understand that other lawyers and professionals are sympathetic to what you are going through; however, all people want lawyers who are confident, proactive, and capable. When someone complains, they do not exhibit confidence. In fact, when a struggling job searcher tells others how bad their situation is, two things happen: 1) people don't want to talk to the individual anymore, and 2) the struggling searcher starts to believe the situation is very bad and will stay that way. When in a professional setting, please tell people what you are good at and what you like to do. It can be anything, although it is better if it law related. For example, you could say: I am good at preparing expungements. I like helping people get a second chance in life. I like to talk to people on the phone. I read the *Wall Street Journal* once a week. I know some Spanish. Unless someone inquires directly, do not tell people what is bad, what you don't like, or what you are not good at. So avoid talking about loans, debt, failed interviews, recruiters who won't call back, or a perceived lack of experience. In short, stay positive.

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