Section V: Networking and Social Media
Networking

Networking is a crucial part of the job search process. Networking is simply meeting people who may be able to help you in career planning and job searching. It involves meeting new people, as well as keeping in touch with already existing contacts in order to obtain information. Kimm Walton says in *Guerrilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams*, “It’s not who you know, it’s who you get to know.”

Why Should I Do It?

Career services professionals stress networking because it is the most effective way of finding a job. Surveys show that only 25–30 percent of all job openings are ever advertised. The rest are filled through word-of-mouth. This means that 70–75 percent of jobs are found through networking. This makes sense from the point of view of employers; they would rather trust someone who comes with a personal recommendation than someone from a stack of anonymous resumes and cover letters. By networking, you are letting people know your interests and putting yourself in a position to hear about unadvertised jobs.

But I Have No Contacts

Often students complain they have no contacts. They are mistaken. Identify people you know in the following areas of contacts:

- Family members
- Friends
- Neighbors
- People from religious activities
- People from volunteer activities
- Professionals (doctors, bankers, stock brokers, accountants, insurance agents, etc.)
- Law professors
- College professors
- College friends
- Sorority, fraternity, or social club members
- Members of professional associations
- Customers or clients
- Health club contacts
- People with similar hobbies
- Former legal employers
- Former non-legal employers
- Co-workers
- People who helped you get into law school and many, many more

Many of these people are not lawyers, and that is alright; they may have lawyers or friends of lawyers within their own networks. It is up to you to let these people know you are in law school and that you are looking to meet people in the field who can answer questions, provide advice, and put you in touch with additional contacts. To make it easy, focus first on those people who helped you get into law school, such as supportive friends and family, and professors who wrote recommendations. These people already have a stake in wanting you to succeed.

How to Meet Even More Contacts

Being in law school, you have the potential to network all the time. Take advantage of these opportunities. Lawyers are everywhere:

- Attend CSO programs. The CSO brings alumni speakers to the school throughout the year.
- Sign up in the CSO for an alumni mentor in January.
- Let the CSO know you are interested in helping out at programs.
- Participate in the CSO’s Mock Interview Program.
- Attend the Practice Tracks Program, where more than 60 attorneys talk with students about different areas of practice.
- Get to know your professors.
- Help a professor who is organizing a conference.
- Join a student group and organize a speaker panel.
- Write an article for a legal publication.
- Join the Chicago Bar Association or other bar associations. Attend committee meetings.
- Volunteer with a legal organization.
- Meet attorneys through internships, externships, and law clerking positions.
- Get to know your classmates. They are the future of the legal profession.

The Alumni Connection

The wisdom of John Marshall alumni can lead to valuable career advice. A CSO counselor can assist you with obtaining an alumni list divided by location and practice areas.

Another way to search for alumni in particular practice areas, cities, or law firms is through Martindale-Hubbell (at www.martindale.com or accessible through LexisNexis). Although Martindale-Hubbell is a very useful tool, keep in mind that it is predominantly used for attorneys in law firms (attorneys in government agencies, for example, are not listed) and law firms need to pay to have a listing. Therefore, many alumni will not be listed in Martindale-Hubbell.
Social Networking

The Internet is a wonderful resource when searching for a legal job. Using social media sites to network provides you with a broader way to share your background and interests with employers and members of the legal community. In addition to providing contacts and job leads, social media sites such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook allow you to provide more in-depth information about yourself and showcase your legal knowledge. Blogging (legal blogs are referred to as “blawgs”) and social networking are becoming an increasingly vital part of the legal job search, and you are encouraged to begin investigating and using these resources as soon as possible.

Although powerful resources, you must keep in mind that social media sites can also hurt your career if you do not use them properly. You must always be professional on these sites and should never add any content online that could harm your reputation. Social networking sites are quickly becoming the top resource for employers who are performing due diligence on current or potential employees, since these offer a fast and inexpensive way to look for “red flags” on candidates. Proceed with caution when adding any content online.

Remember: Never put anything online that you would not want potential employers or future clients to see. Once something is made available online, it is difficult to delete later due to archive and caching sites, which keep copies of old web pages.

Social networking sites are also helpful to employers in other ways. For example, they allow employers to recruit candidates with specific skill sets, share job leads, and promote themselves to clients and others in the legal community. Therefore, it is a benefit to both law students and employers to utilize online resources in the job search.

Managing Your Online Reputation

Your introduction in the legal community begins while you are in law school. You must appear professional and have an impeccable reputation. This includes your reputation online. Before you start building your reputation in the legal community, you must first check the status of your online reputation. Check your online profile on sites such as Facebook and MySpace. If there are inappropriate pictures, information, or tweets you have posted that are available to the public, then change your privacy settings, so this information is less easily found.

Next, use a search engine such as Google, Yahoo!, or Bing, to search for references to yourself. If any embarrassing information about you has been posted by others, try to ask those who posted the information to remove it. Currently, the most popular professional site is LinkedIn; however, new legal sites, such as Justia.com and JDSupra.com, continue to appear.

You may want to consider purchasing your domain name, creating a nameplate, finding a web host, and linking it to your name on other indexed pages you would like to be associated with in the professional world. By doing this, you protect your reputation and can continue to monitor and add to your reputation indefinitely through online updates. Purchasing your own domain name is very convenient since no matter how many times you change your email address people can still easily find you. This is an inexpensive option (approximately $60 annually), and many web hosting sites will provide a free domain name registration in the hosting package.

Keep in mind that these online profiles can be viewed by many, so protect your personal information and keep it professional. Unlike your resume, your on-line profiles should tell employers and peers more about who you are, including what you know about legal issues and your professional goals. You can do this by providing information on your main page or linking to other pages where you have written about legal topics or made scholarly contributions.

If you do not have the time or skills to set up your own website, you can set up your own blog instead. There are several free blogging sites, such as WordPress (www.wordpress.com) and Google’s Blogger service (www.blogger.com). You can use your own blog to easily provide information online without knowing anything about HTML or website management. Blogs also allow you to upload your resume, sample work, articles, and whatever else you wish to share with a potential employer.

If you are very active online and hope to use social media for networking, you may want to create an online resume through VisualCV. The site allows your resume to look more professional-looking and more like a website compared to LinkedIn. It is a very useful tool and creates another URL that helps build your online profile. You can also send it to potential employers, instead of a Word document, or link to it from any other online profile, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, or Facebook.

LinkedIn

The most popular social networking site that was created strictly for professional networking purposes is LinkedIn. If you don’t yet have a profile on LinkedIn, you are strongly encouraged to create one. LinkedIn has thousands of profiles for people in different professions and is a wonderful resource for law students trying to build their network of contacts.

LinkedIn allows you to add information about your educational and work experience. Unlike paper resumes that are limited in space, your profile on LinkedIn can be longer and more thorough. This will allow you to share more information about yourself to employers and others. Once your profile is created, you can then “link” to other people you know and join groups such as the alumni chapters of your schools or organizations in which
you are active. For each person with whom you link, you can see others with whom they are linked. Therefore, your network grows indefinitely each time you link with someone new.

Once you have the network of people you know in place, you can then use your contacts to introduce you to other people on LinkedIn that you want to meet. For example, if you are interested in working at a particular law firm and you notice that a lawyer at that firm who you don’t know is linked to one of your contacts, you can ask your contact to provide an introduction using the “Introduction” feature. By using your contact as the intermediary, you will have a better chance of success compared to cold calling that person. Most of the time, if you send a message that is more informational gathering, such as “What is it like to work there?” or “I have an interview, what else might I expect?” people will respond kindly.

This introduction feature of LinkedIn has worked very well for many lawyers and law students to “get their foot in the door” at employers. It is also a useful tool if you are exploring different areas of law and would like to find practicing attorneys and meet with them for an informational interview. LinkedIn will not only provide you access to the attorneys profiles, but it will also allow you to see if you have a connection with that person. Sometimes even reaching out to people you don’t know who have interesting profiles will provide positive results. The People tab on LinkedIn will assist you with this type of search.

Another benefit of LinkedIn is its “Jobs” feature. You can search for jobs, both law clerk and attorney positions, using the Jobs tab. The “Recommendations” feature can also be used to either recommend people you know, or seek recommendations from others.

Also, as discussed above, an advantage often overlooked of LinkedIn is its high ranking within search engines. Your publicly available LinkedIn profile should appear near the top of all search results, whenever someone does a search on your name. Potential employers will find your professional profile on LinkedIn toward the top of their search results and can explore it further.

The more actively you use LinkedIn, the more helpful it will be to your search. If you create a profile on LinkedIn, be sure to keep the profile up-to-date.

Remember: Any information you put on the site will be available to potential employers. Therefore, don’t be surprised if during an interview an employer brings up something about your background that was not on your resume.

Think carefully about what you add to LinkedIn and how you portray yourself since, like your resume and cover letter, your LinkedIn profile is another avenue for you to introduce yourself to the professional world.

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**Remember: Even if you only use Facebook and other social networking sites for strictly personal reasons, you need to be aware that employers and others in the legal community may be trying to access your information. Therefore, use the security settings smartly to limit who has access to your information.**

**Twitter**

Twitter is quickly growing in popularity in the legal world. More and more attorneys are using Twitter to find clients, get referrals from other attorneys, and build their reputation. Even if you don’t feel comfortable yet “tweeting,” you should still start following the tweets of others in the legal world who are practicing in areas you hope to pursue. You can follow interesting legal discussions online and learn about new legal programs or developments in the law as they are occurring. There is also a resource called Tweet-Up. It is essentially a networking event where people on Twitter from the same geographic location with similar interests, can meet one another in person at a designated time and place. It is a good networking opportunity, as you never know who exactly you will meet and what may come from the meeting.

Twitter is also helpful with job leads and changes in the legal market. Many people, companies, and firms solely tweet about job openings, or retweet on behalf of others looking for work, as JobAngels. Do a search on Twitter for law firms, job openings, and the like, and follow those people. You can also use an application like TweetDeck to...
help you manage the various Twitter feeds. Even simply following the tweeting of a practicing attorney about their day-to-day routine will allow you to get a better feel of what it is like to practice in particular areas of law. Two legal sites to start exploring immediately are LexTweet and LegalBirds.

Remember: If you do become active on Twitter, please be aware that the opinions and information you share will be available to the public.

Final Thoughts

Social networking is a good way to grow your network beyond the confines of where you are, but it is still important to get out and meet people face-to-face. Social networks are effective at providing a common ground right away but you should consider them a first step toward building new relationships with people in the legal profession.

Also, keep in mind that it helps to use social networks together. For example, if you post something to JD Supra, you should then tweet about it. If others retweet it, then you might end up with more followers, which sometimes will lead to an inquiry or perhaps a new contact to add to your network.

Do not forget that once information is available through the Internet, it cannot be easily retrieved and may one day create problems for you. The more information you share online, the more information employers and legal professionals will have with which to judge you. Social media sites are wonderful tools but all students using them should understand the long term implications when they share information publicly. Think before you post!

Results are not instantaneous, even though it is the Internet. The key is to stay active and be patient. Job hunting can sometimes be frustrating, but social networking can make it fun and ultimately rewarding. And when you participate in a Tweet-Up or another event found through a social network, it makes the experience a little more enjoyable. There are plenty of other people just like you, and there are other people who want to help you. Social networking is a way to bring you together so you can help each other.

For more information on using social media as a law student and to keep up with current trends in this area, the Social Media Law Student blog (www.socialmediawebstudent.com) was very helpful in preparing this section of the Job Search Guide and highly recommended.