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The Essential Guide to Finding
and Landing the Job You Want



Law Practice Management Section
Young Lawyers Division

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1 *The Hidden Job Market*

To find jobs that are right for you, you must go on a journey into the hidden job market.

Your mission is to find the best possible jobs that fit your needs.

Your journey is a quest for a job.

A good job search is a journey from your current work situation to the job you want. When you start out you may not know for certain where you will finish, although you probably have some ideas about the kind of job you would like to find. But where will you gain the information you really need for job search success?

In the beginning of your job search, it is hard to tell where particular jobs can be found that will be possible options for you. That is because there is a unique and idiosyncratic mix of factors that affect your universe of options. What you will be able to attain is affected by such things as your core competencies or skills, your career goals, the current market, your personality, workplaces that are busy enough to hire, how you handle an interview, your motivation, and many other variables. There is no master list of workplaces that have jobs that are right for you. This is a frustrating situation. There is inadequate information for you to rely on as you begin your search.

Up-to-the-minute work world information is, by nature, elusive. Even if you could pin down exactly what is going on in the work place—

every current job held by every person, every company and firm that has work that you would be qualified to do—that picture would change daily because of shifts in work-flow, market changes including global alterations, and decisions about who to entrust with business, not to mention changes in the status of workers including personal decisions about leaving or staying at a job. The marketplace of jobs and work that will match your unique needs is not easy to decipher. Since much of the market knowledge you need is essentially hidden from your view, it is challenging to try to figure out how to plan your journey to find the job you seek. When you begin your quest for a new job, it is as if you are behind a mountain and cannot see over the crest to identify the workplaces that could use your help and would welcome you. You cannot read a book about it. You cannot rely on internet search engines to learn enough about it. Crucial information is concealed from your view, which is why you need to demystify it by conducting a quest.

In almost every other aspect of our lives we can read a book or look up a topic of interest on the Internet and learn what we need to know. But on-the-ground knowledge about where jobs exist that match a job seeker's particular needs is unwritten and constantly evolving. In fact, the work world is by nature a constantly shifting place where workplaces change quickly: a new branch of a large firm opens up; a group of lawyers leaves a large firm to open a boutique or join a smaller firm or move to a different large firm; companies decide to hire in-house counsel; other companies decide to use midsized firms for outside counsel instead of the large firms they used in the past; firms declare bankruptcy or merge with larger firms, sometimes without warning.

People—the workers themselves—also contribute to the instability of the work world. As goals and expectations for current employees change, personnel ebbs and flows. New parents take family leave. Some decide not to return for a period of time or at all. Junior partners move to different cities. People are fired. Senior partners retire. People harboring dissatisfaction about their current work situations make plans to move on. Worker status changes constantly.

The amount of work, or work-flow, also can be erratic, slowing to a trickle at times and then suddenly flooding the workplace. Employers are not always certain if or when they need to advertise or even start to look for more help. Employers may think it is best to hope that the current staff will be able to handle all the work. Then again, if more work comes along, will they be shorthanded, resulting in less than stellar job perfor-

mance, which in turn might jeopardize future business? This sense of uncertainty is especially prevalent when the work world has been hard hit by economic upheaval.

In this era of reliance on Internet information it can be tempting to hope that the Internet will reveal the terrain that you cannot see. Unfortunately that is not the case. While the Internet provides valuable information, it will not reveal everything you need to know to have the most productive job search you could have. In part, this is because not all employers are using the Internet to find their hires. As a general rule, larger employers tend to post their jobs online. However, many jobs are never advertised. And even when the job is advertised, a large number of jobs, especially in midsize to smaller workplaces, are created because the work is there, the need for help has developed, and an enterprising and qualified job seeker with a positive buzz comes to the attention of the workplace through the grapevine.

For that reason job seekers have to rely, at least in part, on soft information—speculation, rumor, oral history, gossip, and hearsay—to learn where to find jobs that match their needs and skills. That is not your average lawyer’s favorite way to gather information; it’s closer to the way people communicated in medieval times. Although soft information is not always perfectly accurate, it can provide sufficient guidance to job seekers to point them in the right direction for their job searches.

To learn what is afoot in the marketplace for work, diligent and effective job searchers seek out informants or contacts who can provide valuable on-the-ground information. Done the right way, job seekers become knowledgeable about what is happening in the legal neighborhoods in which they may find work.

You *can* conduct a productive job search to find opportunities in the hidden marketplace. That search into the hidden job market is crucial to your job quest. To have a productive search you need to keep four key concepts in mind. These four key concepts consist of certain attitudes that lucky job seekers employ and two additional concepts that help to promote your search efforts.