

## 7 Job Search ‘Tips’ Legal Professionals Can Ignore

By:



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When you’re looking for a job in the legal field, career advice often pours in from colleagues, friends, family and online sources. Most people intend to be helpful, though they may spread some misconceptions. Here are seven pervasive myths about the job search you can feel free to disregard:

**1. Openings are always advertised.** Some of the most sought after legal positions never reach job boards. Before turning to formal job postings, law firms and corporate law departments may look first to their own professional connections and associations to fill vacancies. These employers may also have an employee referral program, which gives priority to friends and outside colleagues because they’re known quantities. So while job post websites are indispensable in today’s search process, don’t overlook good, old-fashioned networking — both in-person and via social media.

**2. Cover letters are just a formality.** Quite the opposite. This document is a writing sample, statement of purpose and a window into your personality all rolled into one. Like resumes, cover letters should be concise, typo-free, well written and tailored to the specific job. Even if a job posting or online application system says the cover message is optional, you could improve your chances of impressing hiring managers with an expertly crafted letter.

**3. Use a gimmick to stand out from other candidates.** Do leave a lasting impression on potential employers. But don’t resort to cutesy antics, which usually backfire. Get noticed for your brilliant legal mind, stellar soft skills and keen business acumen — not your cheetah-print suit or colorful resume in Comic Sans and Brush Script fonts.

**4. Following up makes you seem pushy.** Many professionals have the mentality of being overly nice when applying for jobs. They think, *If the law firm really wants me, they would call or email.* Right? Not always. It’s true some job postings state to not contact the employer. However, when there’s no such prohibition, a polite follow-up — either after you submit the application or a few days after the interview — could be just the extra measure needed to tip the scale in your favor. It also demonstrates your drive, determination and perseverance — three traits legal managers like to see in their staff members.

**5. Always say ‘yes’ to a job offer.** You may be tempted to take the first offer that comes along. But be fair to yourself, and don’t accept a position out of desperation. Let’s say you applied for what seemed to be a good job, yet during the interview process you had an unsettled feeling about the firm’s ethics, or you’ve determined the workload is the equivalent of two full-time legal specialists. Be sure to evaluate each offer on its own merits, and don’t be afraid to decline a job that isn’t a good fit.

**6. Don’t waste your time on temporary employment.** Whether you’re a new graduate or between jobs, it’s worth your while to look at project-based legal work. Some employers are wary of hiring until they first try out a candidate in real time. Think of this short-term assignment as a test drive. If you pass the test, you might be offered full-time employment. Even if a contract position is to fill in for an employee on leave, it’s still not a waste of time because that person may not come back, or another job within the firm could open up. In short, temporary legal jobs get your foot in the door and give you valuable work experience.

**7. Only top lawyers can discuss compensation.** No matter how much or little legal work experience you have, it never hurts to negotiate salary and benefits before accepting a job offer. If you haven’t yet researched what your labor and work history are worth, consult resources like the [Robert Half Legal Salary Guide](#). Your assertiveness could net you more money and extra perks — as long as your counteroffer is reasonable and you negotiate professionally.

There’s no shortage of legal career tips, but here’s one more: Learn to separate myth from bona fide advice. If you’re unsure about something, do some research to get a gauge on it. By leaving the myths behind, you increase your chances of landing that coveted job in the legal profession.

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