Mastering The Art Of Networking In The 1L Job Search

Duke University School of Law
Career & Professional Development Center
January 19, 2011
There are four key elements to a successful job search:

1. IDENTIFY prospective employers.
2. CONNECT with those inside organizations of interest, and within their surrounding communities.
3. APPLY.
4. FOLLOW UP.
Why Do I Need To Network? Five Simple Truths

“Relationships are all there is .... Nothing exists in isolation.”

The vast majority of legal employers don’t interview on-campus or at job fairs:
- Mid-sized/small firms;
- Public Interest organizations;
- Government agencies; and
- Judges.

There are no OCIs or fairs for your second job.

Your most valued asset as a lawyer is your professional reputation.

Formal applications for legal positions have never been higher.
Networking is so fully integrated into the work and lives of lawyers that it is not so much a separate activity as it is an unconscious aspect of every action.
Value Added Through Networking

Visibility
- In front of potential key market players.

Clarity
- In your career goals.
  - Your chance to learn the “real deal” about a particular industry, organization or position from an insider.

Preparation
- For future interviews while a student.
- For development of “core skills” & “next steps.”
- For possible (and likely) post-graduation career shifts.
The Goal

Getting other people *emotionally invested* in your advancement and success.

Bottom Line: You need at least one “champion” per market
So How Do You Create A Champion?

The Rules of the Game
Know & Use Your Existing Network

- When identifying potential contacts, consider:
  - Who’s doing the kind of work I want to do?
  - In the place where I want to do it?

- But I don’t know any lawyers…How do I find these people?
  - Family, friends, friends of friends
  - Undergraduate/Duke Law Alumni
    - Law School Alumni Directory
    - Duke Connect
  - Faculty/Administrators
  - Your classmates & upperclassmen
  - Fraternities/Sororities
  - Prior Work Experience – Alumni of …
  - Martindale/Leopard Solutions/Linked In
  - Industry/Section Membership Lists
  - Read! (for both authors, and featured experts)
Start With Those You Know Best

- Since conversations come easier the more you have them, “practice” on those you know well

- Save the meetings with more senior decision-makers or your more promising contacts until you feel more comfortable, can concisely articulate what you bring to the table
Your goal is to develop genuine connections with people you can count on to be your champion

Therefore, DON’T JUST SCHMOOZIE!

It is ALWAYS better to spend more time with fewer people having meaningful dialogues, than to engage in the “wandering eye routine” or “shotgun approach”
To get those in your network excited to help you, you’ve got to get them to “buy in” to who you are, where you want to go, and why.

- That’s where your BRAND comes in. Your BRAND is your MESSAGE

- You must be *deliberate about* and *clear in* your message, so that you help shape what others will think whenever they hear or see your name
Know What You Want BEFORE Contacting Anyone

- Work out any preliminary personal issues first
  - Know where you want to go, what you want to achieve, and how this contact can potentially help you get there *in advance*
  - Without a clear objective on the horizon, no one will be able to truly help you
Take The Pressure Off The Contact

Never “ask” for a job
  ◦ Most people with whom you connect will not have a job up their sleeve, and people generally don’t like to enter into a conversation or a relationship in which they can’t deliver
  ◦ So, if you want them to be of greatest help, TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF --
    • Ask for advice on the marketplace
    • Ask for insights on active practices, inactive practices
    • When all else fails, remember that people like to talk about themselves
    • Get into a broader conversation, and 9 times out of 10 if they like you, they’ll try and help in any way they can
In order to build a credible reputation and make people want to pass on your name, you’ve got to demonstrate both a knowledge base and a genuine interest in the area:

- Prepare questions in advance that show you have researched the market/practice area.
- Don’t ask anything you could answer through an internet search or other basic research.
Master The Art of The Sound Bite

- Be ready to **quickly** and persuasively answer such basic questions as:
  - What is it you’re looking for?
  - Why does this area interest you?
  - What experience has prepared you for this type of work?
  - What do you want/need from me?

If any of these questions appear to catch you off guard, the conversation and, thus, the connection is likely to taper off quickly.
Be Pleasant To Spend Time With

- Networking contacts do not want to hurt their own reputations by referring someone else who is likely to be difficult, unpleasant, or boring in the workplace
  - Be courteous
  - Be enthusiastic
  - Be deferential, even if you know they’re wrong
  - Be respectful of their time

- The more you display the above, the more likely the contact will be contact to offer you his/her best suggestions and advice.
Informational Interviewing:

How To Create A Champion Out Of Those You Don’t Yet Know
Why Informational Interviewing?

- **Critical** relationship-building tool.
- Informational interviews are generally easier to get.
  ◦ All attorneys have information about their field & career, but few have positions with their employer.
- You lead the conversation.
  ◦ You conduct the interview, even when you’re in someone else’s office.
- Because no one job is on the table, contacts are:
  ◦ More relaxed; and
  ◦ Less guarded about sharing information.
Despite its benefits...

- Informational Interviewing is terribly underutilized.
  
  WHY?

- Not knowing where to go to meet people.
- Awkwardness of approaching a stranger for the first time.
- Fear of rejection.
- What do I do if he/she says “yes?”
- I’m much more comfortable on Facebook or email.

SOUND FAMILIAR?
Six Steps To Effective Informational Interviewing

- There are six steps to effectively “connecting” with professionals:
  1. Clear goals
  2. Personal focus
  3. A short, well-drafted note
  4. A post-note phone call
  5. Purposeful execution during the call
  6. Follow-up
Step 1: Have A Clear Goal

Before contacting anyone, have personal goals in mind.

◦ Be able to articulate what you hope to **LEARN** from this particular individual in one or two sentences.
  • “I’d like to draw on your experience as a ______ to learn more about______”
    • Acquire new information
    • Build new relationships
    • Eliminate a certain position from your possibilities list

◦ Create such a positive impression that the contact will gladly direct you to friends/colleagues

◦ Use those goals as the basis of your initial contact, and focus of the interview itself.
Focus & professionalism are key elements of successful informational interviewing.

- *Know who you are, what you want, and what you have to offer.*
- *Practice explaining it with precision.*
- Remember, contacts did not sign up to be your career counselor, and it’s hard to help a “drifter.”
Step 3: Draft Introductory Note

- Prepare an introductory letter or email.
- Brief, clear, & easy-to-read.
  - No lengthy biography
- Lays the foundation for a future call.
- Your letter/email should tell the person:
  - Who you are (including any “common ground”)
  - Where you got their name
  - What you want
    - Ask for just 15 minutes of their time
  - How they can best reach you, or when you will call
    - 3–7 days later
  - Thank you
Hello, my name is Steve Baer and I am a first-year student at Duke University School of Law, with a background in engineering and a strong interest in construction law. I recently read an article entitled “The Collapse of American Infrastructure” in which you were featured and was hoping I could draw upon your years of expertise as I seek to further define my own career. Importantly, I am not writing to ask you for a job, or to otherwise circumvent the normal hiring process at Anderson Birch. Instead, I am simply looking to gather information. Specifically, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you for just a few moments, whenever convenient, about your unique career in construction law, the state of the Dallas legal market as you see it, and any advice you might have for a student seeking to lay the foundation for a long-term career in construction law, as I am.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Steve Baer
sbaer@law.duke.edu
(919) 123-4567
When Writing (To Establish Initial Contact)

- Remember the following:
  - Avoid references to specific job postings or opportunities within the organization.
  - Maintain high standards of grammar and punctuation.
    - Just because email is more “informal” doesn’t mean the message should be.
  - A “connection” does not equal an instant rapport or friendship.
Sending Resumes With Requests For Informational Interviews?

- Split of Authority.
  - You’re asking for information about THEM & THEIR CAREER, not for a job, so sending a resume may send mixed signals; but
  - Without a resume, you have provided less data with which to pique the contact’s interest in talking with you.

- If you’re going to send a resume, be sure to include some qualifying language in your contact letter.
  - “To give you a bit more information about my background before our meeting, ...”
Step 4: Call & Discuss

- Remember, email then call.
- Use a Land Line whenever possible.
- Make sure you are prepared to deal with additional issues like:
  - The person who answers the phone
  - Explaining your request
  - Leaving a message
  - What to say to someone who is busy or brusque
- Prepare scenarios/talking points in advance.
  - Be concise, both introducing yourself and stating your request.
    - No more than 60 seconds
Step 5: Purposefully Execute

- Do your homework on the person & industry.
- Keep the conversation focused on the interviewees’ professional experiences and career field, NOT on your present needs.
- Don’t forget that you’re being evaluated.
- Be respectful of their time.
  - No more than 20–30 minutes
  - Be mindful of the time you requested initially, and stick to it
  - Signal the meeting is ending at the appropriate time, and follow their lead
“As I seek to learn more, is there anyone else with whom you think I should speak?”

- Always be expanding your network
- *Never end an informational interview without asking for your next point of contact*
Step 6: Follow Up & Follow Through

- 95% of people never follow up at all
  - Therefore, those that do are automatically miles ahead of the game
- While email is acceptable, a handwritten thank you note can particularly capture a person’s attention
- Timeliness is key
- Always express gratitude
- Be sure to include an item of interest from your meeting – moment of humor, etc.
- Courteously reaffirm whatever commitments you each made
- Never forget to follow-up with those that acted as a go-between for you and the other person
  - Give them an update and thank them for their help
People you’re contacting to create a new relationship *need to see or hear your name in at least three different modes of communication* – by, say, email, phone call and face-to-face meeting – before there is substantive recognition.

Then, once you have gained some early recognition, you need to mature a developing relationship with additional contacts *at least once a month.*
Don’t Be Shortsighted

Don’t let the results of your networking efforts fall apart!

◦ Whatever you do, DO NOT drop your contacts and after you’ve achieved your immediate goal

◦ Remember, a network is an ongoing, and ever expanding, set of relationships to be maintained, cultivated and (hopefully) leveraged into future opportunities throughout your entire career
Take Notes And Get Organized!

- *Keep very careful records of your meetings*
  - Who you’ve talked to
  - Advice they’ve given you
  - Common interests/points of discussion
  - Any additional leads/referrals shared
  - When/how you’ve thanked them
  - When you need/intend to follow-up

After the 10th or 20th meeting, you’ve got to be able to connect the dots
Questions?

Contact Alan, Gail, or any member of the Career Center staff

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