

Frequently Asked Questions

General

What are the most common reasons attorneys decide to make a lateral move to another firm?

Most attorneys cite lifestyle issues, more responsibility, different types of clients and cases, better partnership prospects and a more collegial atmosphere as their reasons for deciding to make a lateral move to another firm

When am I most marketable to firms?

You are most marketable after a minimum of one year of experience. The bulk of opportunities are for associates with a minimum of two to five years of experience.

Should I ever resign before lining up another job?

Never! If you do, you invite serious scrutiny. A firm may doubt your judgment and commitment to practice or, worse, assume you were asked to leave. When competing with hundreds of other applicants, a period of unemployment, without mitigating circumstances, can characterize you as an undesirable risk.

How easy is it to return to a firm after I go in-house or leave the law?

Once you leave law firm life, it is often difficult to return. As someone who has already shown an interest outside of a law firm, firms may question your commitment, and view you as a flight risk. If you are resolved to leave, but believe you might want to return to private practice, leave your firm on the best possible terms. Hopefully, the door will remain open for a return.

The Search Process

If I am looking to move to another law firm, how do I choose a search firm?

Choose your search firm carefully. Work with a firm that has a strong network of contacts and is knowledgeable about openings.

Make sure they will provide you with detailed, candid information about potential employers – their reputation, the corporate culture and the firm's history.

Confirm that they will be available when you need them most – at crunch time, when an offer is on the table and you need a mentor now!

The Search Process (continued)

How long does the search process take?

Allow several months. The timing will vary based on your schedule and the schedules of the law firms.

How do I learn more about law firms?

Your search consultant should provide an objective overview of each firm. American Lawyer and Vault Surveys are good sources for information.

Firm websites offer valuable insight. Websites such as www.infirmation.com provide information. We advise using caution in relying on information found on message boards and other informal venues.

To what extent do firms compensate associates for bringing in business?

Some firms award associates a percentage of the business they bring in. Some firms pay bonuses to compensate associates for rainmaking. Some firms that represent large institutional clients and do not require new business do not reward associates for new business developed.

The Interview Process

What do I need to prepare for the interviewing process?

- Resume – You need an up-to-date professional resume. We will comment on your current resume. If you need to work on it, we will provide good examples, or if required, we will draft a resume for you.
- Transcript – Have several copies of your law school transcript available. If you do not have a copy of your transcript we will order it from your law school on your behalf. Firms consider how an attorney performed throughout law school even when hiring a senior level associate.
- Writing Sample – Firms sometimes require a 7 – 10 page sample with minimal or no edits by the partner or another attorney. Unless it is a matter of public record, carefully redact client names and confidential information.

What questions are inappropriate during an interview?

Do not ask questions about money, hours or personal concerns during the interview process. These issues can be addressed once you have received an offer.

How many rounds of interviewing should I expect?

The interview process can be completed in anywhere from one to three rounds. Most interviewing takes place in two rounds.

The Interview Process (continued)

What happens if I want to interview for a different practice area?

It is difficult to change practice areas when moving to a new firm. Some firms will retool top attorneys that have stellar credentials. Most firms will want to move you back in class year and salary. It may be easier to retool within your current firm.

Will firms pay for expenses incurred when interviewing out of state?

Some firms pay all expenses. Other firms ask to meet only “when the candidate is in town.”

Accepting Your Offer

How much time do I have to make my decision after I've received an offer?

Two weeks is standard. Smaller firms may give you a shorter time period because there is often only one opening and they are holding up other applicants while you weigh the offer. Sometimes firms will allow you more time, but you should request an extension before the offer expires.

If I leave before the end of the year, will my new firm reimburse me for the bonus I am giving up from my old firm?

Some firms will but most firms will not. Most firms will give you a pro-rated bonus going forward based on their bonus system.

Can I take time off between jobs?

Most firms want you to start as soon as possible, but most attorneys take one or two weeks between jobs. Attorneys often take a longer period if relocating to another state. If you need more time than what is offered, you should arrange for this with the firm before you accept the position.

Relocating

Will firms pay for relocation costs?

Most firms will pay for at least some of your relocation costs.

If I plan to relocate to another state, do I need to be admitted in that state?

Some firms require that you be admitted in the state, but most will overlook this in favor of strong credentials. If you are planning to sit for an upcoming bar examination, consider indicating this under the Admissions section of your resume as follows:

“Admissions

New York; planning to sit for the [month] [state] bar exam.”

Many firms will pay for bar exam costs and will give relocating attorneys a period of time to study for the exam.

How Do I Learn More?

Call us at (212) 308-6560. We will answer all of your questions and provide you with a market overview and other helpful information.