



**Law Society**  
of Ontario

**Barreau**  
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# **Women's Resource Centre**

**Knowing what you want and developing a list  
of dream employers**

**KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT AND DEVELOPING A LIST OF DREAM EMPLOYERS**

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# KNOWING WHAT YOU WANT AND DEVELOPING A LIST OF DREAM EMPLOYERS

If you do not have a sense of what you are looking for, these questions will help clarify your ideal role. Even if you do know what you are looking for, answering these questions will help deepen what you are looking for and why. Remember, you need to know what you are looking for to be able to spot it when it shows up! The same applies for a career transition.

## Ideal role

- Identify which of your skills are most marketable to a prospective employer. Make a list of your skills: research, advocacy, transactional work, communication, etc. Clarifying your skills will not only help in your job search, but will also help you identify which skills, training/education, and experience you emphasize on your résumé.
- Ask yourself these questions: What am I good at? What am I not so good at? What do I like doing? What skills do I need to update to stay current?
- If you are engaged in a career transition, be sure to ask yourself what you liked and did not like about your past position(s), the work you were doing and your employer(s). For the things you did not like, ask yourself what you needed instead. Combine the things you liked and the things you needed into a statement of what you are looking for.
- Organizations hire employees to solve a problem they have. To be effective in your job search, you should identify what problem an organization is having and position yourself as their problem-solver. For example, organizations do not hire in-house counsel to keep a seat warm. They hire them to ensure compliance with government laws and regulations. Figure out what job you really want to do for an organization. This is particularly important when you are considering a career transition and need to figure out if it is the practice area that needs to change or the type of employer (i.e. from private practice to in-house) or something else. If you are really stuck figuring out what you want to transition to, then consider working with a career coach or counsellor. There are ones who specialize in working with lawyers.
- What is a typical day like in your ideal position? What would you be doing? What kinds of skills would you be using? What kinds of issues would you be working on? Would you be in a client-facing role, or would you be working behind the scenes? Would it involve billing for your time? Would you be working independently on projects, as part of a team, or both? Would they be short-term projects, or long-term projects?
- What type of reporting structure would you prefer? Who would you report to? Who would report to you?

- What are possible job titles for the type of position you want? (The same position might have different names at different companies; the more job titles you can identify for the type of work you want to do, the easier it will be for you to research your dream employer). However, you might not be able to come up with a job title if you are looking to make a career transition, and that is okay. You will still want to determine the substance of what you want to do in your new role (e.g. by answering the questions above and below) to be able to figure out whether a potential job title (i.e. one that you are not sure about but wonder if it would be a good match) or organization meets what you are looking for.
- How much would you be making in this position? Compensation can be an important consideration, but it should not be the only consideration since you will still need to articulate why you are interested in a potential position/organization. Do not just identify a target salary — remember that benefits and other non-cash compensation are part of the total package.

### **Ideal employer**

Now that you have a better sense of what you are looking for, it is time to figure out what your ideal employer is. Here are some questions to help you figure that out:

- What industry/practice area is your target employer in?
- What kind of organization do you want to work for? (public, private, nonprofit? Startup or well-established organization?)
- Do you want to work for a small organization, a larger employer — or somewhere in between? (Identify size by number of employees – 1 to 20, 21 to 50, 51-100, more than 100, more than 500?)
- Do not just focus on large organizations. Small and mid-size organizations — including start-up companies and small law firms or sole practitioners — are a significant source of new job opportunities.
- Ownership structure: Do you want to work for a family-owned business? A sole proprietorship? A multinational organization with an international parent organization? A franchise? An organization with a centralized ownership group? A corporate entity? The government (municipal, provincial, territorial, or federal)?
- Where do you want to work (geographic preferences — like a particular city, or even companies within a certain proximity to your home). Do you want to work for an organization that offers flexible work arrangements or remote work so that it does not matter where you live in relation to where the organization is located? Would you prefer a hybrid model?
- What about the organization's culture? (An organization's culture is defined as "widely shared values that provide unity and cooperation to achieve common goals.") What is important to you in terms of the organization's mission, commitment to employees, diversity, equality and inclusion, sense of fun, emphasis on learning, leadership style, systems and processes, recruiting/hiring methodology, etc.?

## Developing a list of dream employers

Armed with the above information about your ideal role and employer, you can go about finding names of employers that meet your criteria. This will allow you to conduct informational interviews and learn more about a job, organization, or practice area. Start with a list of employers that you may already be aware of or keen on, then do a Google search followed by a LinkedIn search to come up with a list of 30-40 possible employers.

A Google search can look like this: “employment law boutique Hamilton” or “policy analyst Ottawa.”

A LinkedIn search will allow you to do a few things:

1. Put the practice area in the search bar (e.g., “employment law), then narrow the search by either selecting “People” or “Companies.”
2. Once you choose one, you can further narrow it down by “Locations.”
3. If you used “Companies,” you can also select “Company size.” When you click on individual companies, you can read further about them (either the “About” page or visiting their external website) to determine if they match your ideal job/organization. You can also click on their “People” page to see who you might know working there or to select someone who works there that you will want to reach out to.
4. If you used “People,” you can select which level of “Connections” you want to search (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, or 3<sup>rd</sup>). 1<sup>st</sup> level will be within your network, and 2<sup>nd</sup> level will be people within your network who knows someone and so on.

Your list of 30-40 employers can include individuals who you have identified as meeting your criteria. Here are some ideas to identify individuals:

- Someone who is doing the job you want, but at a different organization than you are thinking of applying to.
- Someone who works in the practice area you want to work in — but not necessarily doing the job you want to do (maybe you are a law student and want to speak to an associate or partner).
- Someone who works at the organization you want to work at (so you can get an idea of the culture, benefits, and vacation policies, and to possibly get a referral to the person with the authority to hire you).
- A professor who teaches classes in your preferred practice area (so you can learn about what you need to do to prepare yourself to work in that area).

## Checklist

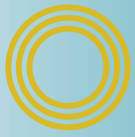
- Success in a job search involves identifying and articulating a clear idea of what you want. Create an “ideal job” description for the type of job you want. You can do this with the answers to the questions that were posed above.

- ❑ Make a list of organizations that you would like to work for or are interested in learning more about. Then research the company. Talk to people who work there. This can help you determine whether they are a match for what you are looking for. Do not just focus on job postings. Are they growing? If so, they will likely be hiring in the future.
- ❑ Many organizations post their job openings on their social media accounts. “Like” the company page on Facebook, “follow” them on Twitter, and check to see if they offer a company page on LinkedIn to follow.
- ❑ Remember, you only need one organization to hire you. Instead of focusing your efforts on making dozens or hundreds of contacts with prospective employers, be selective! That is what this section is teaching you to do.
- ❑ Check out the guide [Informational interviews](#) to make sure you leave a good impression!

## Resources

- The 2-Hour Job Search: Using Technology to Get the Right Job Faster by Steve Dalton
- *The Job Closer* by Steve Dalton
- [What To Do When Your Search For a First-Year Position Isn't Working](#)

**You are getting closer to start reaching out to people and maybe even applying for jobs, but first you need to develop your brand and position yourself for the job. Go to: [Branding and positioning yourself to get the job.](#)**



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