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Women's Resource Centre

Six things to do to start your job search

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Six things to do to start your job search

Now that you are prepared for your job search, here are six things you need to do whether your goal is to get a new job or make a career transition:

- 1. Update your resume.** While ideally your resume is customized for a specific job, having an up-to-date resume targeted for a specific “type” of position is the next best thing. If you have taken on additional responsibilities in your current role, or you have changed your job target, or you have added new training or educational credentials, now is the time to update your resume (or speak to a resume writer with experience in the legal profession). And if you do not have a resume at all, now is the time to put one together!

There are several resources to consult when creating a resume, but you want to make sure it is crafted for the legal profession:

- For law students, new lawyers and new paralegals, you can check out University of Ottawa’s Faculty of Law [page](#) or Fasken’s [resources](#)
- For seasoned lawyers and paralegals, you can check out this [sample](#) and [example](#)
- For in-house counsel, you can check out this [sample](#)
- For government positions, check out this [resource](#).

Here is a checklist of things to keep in mind about your resume:

- Always keep your resume up to date. You never know when you might need it.
- You will want to address any long gaps on your resume, which may include a maternity or parental leave. It has become more acceptable to include that information on a resume (not in an elaborate way, just straightforward in the work experience section, “2019-2020 – Parental Leave”).
- Make sure your career communication documents are 100% error-free. Before sending any email, resume, or cover letter, proofread it. And then proofread it again. This sounds obvious, but a reminder is necessary since typos and spelling mistakes are the number one reason for materials to be rejected.
- Never use your current employer’s contact information on your resume — especially not your work email address!
- Be sure to include all your contact information so prospective employers can get in touch with you easily. Include your full name, street address (including city, state, and postal code), cell number, email address and personal pronouns.
- Review your resume to ensure it targets the job you want. Do not try to use a “generic” resume — and do not send a resume that is geared towards one type of job to apply to a completely different kind of job.

- Adapt the resume and cover letter to each position you are pursuing. Choose quality over quantity. It is better to send five targeted resumes than to apply to 100 jobs with an untargeted resume.
- Make sure you understand what the employer is looking for in a candidate before you submit your resume and cover letter. Do your documents highlight the specific skills and experience the employer is seeking?
- Review your resume and make sure you are highlighting your strongest accomplishments. Your accomplishments are what will set you apart from other job candidates. Most job functions are responsible for the same types of responsibilities. What gives you the competitive edge is how well you perform these responsibilities!
- Do not overlook the value of a cover letter. It is your writing sample. A cover letter also introduces you when you cannot introduce yourself personally. Some recruiters and managers will screen out applications that do not include a cover letter.
- Honesty is vital! Never, never, never, never lie on your resume.
- Check out the guide [What to do with your resume](#) for more information!

Resources:

- [How to Update Resume After Maternity Leave: A Quick Guide](#)
- [Do you need to list parental leave on your resume?](#)
- [How to Overcome Red Flags on Your Resume](#)
- [10 Resume Tips for Older Professionals \(With Template and Example\)](#)
- [Gender-Inclusive Pronouns](#)
- [Is a Cover Letter Necessary? Reasons to Include One](#)

2. **Develop — or update — your LinkedIn profile.** A LinkedIn profile does not replace the resume, it complements it. Someone looking for a candidate with your skills and experience might conduct a search on LinkedIn and find your profile. Or someone in your network might be interested in recommending you and forwarding your LinkedIn profile. Make sure you have a LinkedIn profile — and make sure that it is updated.

In the early stages of your career as a lawyer or paralegal, recruiters may not seek you out this way. However, an employer could possibly cross-reference your LinkedIn profile to ensure it matches with what you have said on your resume, so make sure they are consistent. A negative inference can be drawn if the dates or job titles listed on your LinkedIn profile are different than what appears on your resume.

Here is a checklist of things to keep in mind about LinkedIn:

- Create a custom headline for your profile and be sure to have a professional photo. Review your current job position/description and make sure they are updated. Check out the guide [Branding and positioning yourself to get the job](#) to help with creating your headline and positioning statement.

- Increase your connections with contacts by connecting with one of your references on LinkedIn or sending a connection request to a former co-worker.
- Get involved in a new LinkedIn Group. Participate in discussions. Ask questions. Offer relevant resources.
- If you are conducting a confidential job search, make sure to turn off activity notifications on LinkedIn so your current employer does not become aware that you are looking for a new job. If you do not turn off your notifications before you update your profile in LinkedIn, all your contacts will see activity updates as you add or change information on your profile.
- Give endorsements to existing connections and seek out endorsements (where you can) from your connections.

Resources:

- *How to Write a KILLER LinkedIn® Profile ...and 18 Mistakes to Avoid: Updated for 2022* by Brenda Bernstein
- [How to Look For a Job While You Still Have One, Then Leave Gracefully!](#)

3. Know what you are worth and conduct salary research. One of the most often-cited reasons to consider a job search is to increase salary. But how do you know what you are worth? There is more salary research data available than ever before. Here are some places to check out:

- [Pay Equity in the Legal Profession](#)
- [Partner Compensation Survey Report](#)
- For associates, check out ZSA's [resource](#) and Robert Half's [guide](#)
- For partners, check out ZSA's [resource](#) and Robert Half's [guide](#)
- For in-house counsel, check out Robert Half's [guide](#)
- For paralegals, check out the Government of Canada's Job Bank [resource](#) and Robert Half's [guide](#)
- For law students and articling students, check out [OPS](#) ; otherwise, your law school's career office will have salary information.

4. Manage your online reputation. More and more hiring managers are checking out candidates online before scheduling an interview. What will they find when they type your name into Google? How about if they check out your Twitter profile? Or find you on Facebook? Now is the time to conduct a social media assessment and clean up your online profiles.

Here is a checklist of things to keep in mind about a social media audit:

- Research your online reputation — do a search for yourself and see what prospective employers will see when they Google you. You may need to conduct a couple of searches using different variations of your name (First Name/Last Name, First Name/Middle Name/Last Name, First Name/Middle Initial/Last Name) to see what comes up. If there is something negative that comes up, see if you

can have it removed, or plan to put out newer, more positive information about yourself to bump the negative information to the second or third page of the search results.

- Make yourself easy to find — and follow — on social media. Use your name, whenever possible, on your social media profiles (unless you have a very common name — then, include your middle name or some other distinguishing characteristic). Use the same (professional) photo on all your public social media accounts (i.e., Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram).
- Be mindful of what you post on Twitter. Make sure that your Twitter feed is “on brand,” because most Twitter accounts are open to the public. Many people have lost their jobs because of insensitive tweets. Be careful what you post.
- See if there are any gaps in your social media presence — are there websites that are standard for your industry or practice area that you should be on?

Resources:

- [How An Online Reputation Can Hurt Your Job Hunt](#)
- [Get Proactive About Your Online Reputation](#)

- 5. Define your ideal job.** You need to understand what you are looking for in a job search. If you do not know what your dream job looks like, how will you know how to find it? What job title and responsibilities are you interested in? Do you want to work independently, as part of a team, or both? Do you like short-term projects or long-term projects? Who would you report to? Who would report to you? Do you want to work for one client or several? Answering these questions can help you define your ideal position regardless of whether you are looking for a new job or contemplating a career change. There will be more about this in the guide [Knowing what you want and developing a list of dream employers](#).

For law students, this still applies to you. Employers want to know what your interests and aspirations are even if you do not have a clear picture right now. Here are some ideas of the kinds of lawyers that exist: <https://www.law.utoronto.ca/career-explorer>

- 6. Create a target list of organizations you would like to work for.** Like your ideal job, you probably have a preference for the type of organization you want as your employer. Things to consider include company size, industry, culture, location, and structure (public, private, family-owned, franchise, nonprofit, etc.). Once you have made your list of criteria, look for organizations that fit your criteria. If you are in the middle of a career transition, this list will help you conduct informational interviews to determine the right match for you. There will be more about this in the guide [Knowing what you want and developing a list of dream employers](#).

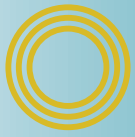
In the meantime, here is some preliminary information for law students, new lawyers, and those in transition to consider:

- Understand how small law firms [hire](#) summer and articling students

- Check out the LSO's [page](#) on fair hiring practices for articles
- If you are considering an international career, check out the [Young Lawyers International Program](#)
- [32 Types of Law That J.D. Grads Can Practice](#)
- [Leaving the Law: 24 Realistic Alternative Careers for Lawyers](#)
- [Finding an Alternative Career for Lawyers](#)

Now is the time to articulate what your ideal role and employer is. Go to the next guide: [Knowing what you want and developing a list of dream employers](#).

This will help even if you do not have a clear picture of what you want!



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