

Business & Careers

Avoiding common pitfalls of the job search



David Namkung
The Headhunter

Every year, starting sometime in the middle of spring, legal employers across the country are flooded with inquiries from newly minted lawyers who were not hired back as associates by their respective firms. The whole articling and hire-back process can leave these junior lawyers feeling disoriented in today's hyper-competitive job market, and the natural instinct for many is to simply hit the pavement without a clear plan.

In addition to working hard, it is equally

important to work smart in the job hunt, and all too often we see otherwise promising candidates get stuck in their searches not because of who they are but how they approach the market. Below are the most common first-year job-search pitfalls we witness annually, and our advice on how to avoid them.

Not defining interests

Newly called lawyers commonly believe they will improve their likelihood of landing a job by keeping their doors wide open and not committing their interests or job hunt to a particular area of practice. Keep in mind, however, that law firms are highly concerned about associate attrition and are drawn to candidates who are specifically and genuinely interested in what they do. Accordingly, candidates who can thoughtfully explain to employers why they are keen in their particular practice

will have a marked advantage over those who are simply seeking employment.

You may have honest interests in multiple areas and that is fine, but you should be reasonably focused in your approach to the market so that your enthusiasm can shine through during interviews.

If you don't have an academic interest in a particular area, examine the day-to-day realities of various practices. For instance, if you are curious about injury law, would you rather be an insurance defence lawyer and spend your time advising and reporting to sophisticated institutional clients? Or would you prefer to advocate on behalf of individuals, which might require more counselling, entrepreneurship and file management? Among other factors, consider your academic interests and how you envision your ideal daily responsibilities in order to narrow down the practices you might wish to pursue.

Underutilizing references

The most powerful resources you have as a newly called lawyer are your references from articles or your clerkship. These are the primary individuals who can attest to the quality of your work, your personality and the reasons why you are not staying on as an associate.

Newly called lawyers tend to underutilize their references, which can lead to missed opportunities. Remember, your references have no formal obligation to assist you, so be respectful with their time and make sure to give them every tool that will help them help you through the process. One of the best ways to do this is to be specific in describing your areas of interest. As you are essentially asking your references to be a matchmaker for you, it is much easier for them to keep you in mind if you are targeting a specific area, **Career, Page 26**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOMING OUR NEW PARTNER

Kate Mazzucco
Partner

McLeish Orlando LLP is pleased to announce that Kate Mazzucco has been made a Partner of the firm.

Kate has been an associate with the firm since 2007 and is an invaluable member of Patrick Brown's team. Kate has extensive experience handling cases involving brain injury, spinal cord injury, and serious orthopaedic injury, with a specific focus on children.

Kate's success is attributable to her skill, dedication and passion. Her attention to detail and creative litigation strategies help get her clients the compensation that they need to secure their futures.

We are privileged to have Kate's thoughtful insight into the ongoing growth, development and refinement of the McLeish Orlando team.



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Career: Don't limit opportunities by geography

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and they are more likely to recommend you if you are genuinely attracted to this practice.

Even better, provide them with a list of prospective employers you are interested in. This not only demonstrates your initiative, but also makes it easier for them to visualize who they might know at each potential firm. Also, while you may want to lead your application package with a reference letter from the most prominent lawyer at your former firm, it can be more important to secure a reference from the lawyer who will be most enthusiastic about you—know who will (and who won't) go out of their way to make calls on your behalf. Direct referrals are generally much more powerful than reference letters.

Mismanaging applications

The most common application strategy is to send applications in waves or stages, start-

ing from the most desirable potential employers and working down through the list. Each year, the masses chase the same "supermodel" firms and ignore the employer next door until it is too late.

Larger and more prominent firms, which tend to receive first priority for applicants, may appear to present more employment opportunities, but they often have their own articling programs and rarely hire laterally for first-year associates.

This doesn't mean you shouldn't apply to the full-service nationals and regionals, but there is no reason to hold back your application to other firms at the same time. Boutiques, smaller regional firms and suburban firms tend to hire newly called lawyers on a more regular basis as they may not have established or robust articling programs. Beat the rest of the pack by targeting these employers at the very beginning of your job search.

Additionally, depending on your career priorities, it may be in your best interest to concurrently target ideal firms in other Canadian markets. It is typically more tolerable for aspiring law students to go afar for law school or for articles than for newly called lawyers to relocate for employment as an associate—but consider that where you gain the first three to five years of your post-qualification experience will likely have more influence on your career trajectory than your previous academic accomplishments.

The feasibility and applicability of approaching other markets largely hinges on the competitiveness of your profile, whether you have demonstrable ties to the prospective regions, your practice interests and relative job market conditions. If it is a high priority for you to practise in a certain area or at a particular level (for instance, to practise at top-tier firms), it could be well worth relocating if this allows you to access

better and more relevant work experience, but be cognizant of the risk that your planned timeline to return home may be delayed due to market conditions.

You should take advantage of the factors that can distinguish you from the rest of the crowd. So, be sure to make the most of your candidacy by having a clear approach to your job search by defining your areas of interests, helping your references help you and being strategic with where you submit your application.

You can't change your past academic record or career accomplishments, but as the saying goes, by doing your best to "control what is controllable" you can best position yourself to land a great job and achieve your goals.

David Namkung is a partner with The Counsel Network in Vancouver and vice-president of the Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (B.C. chapter). Follow him on Twitter @DNamkung.

CAREERS



JUDICIAL VACANCY ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE OTTAWA

The Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee advises the Attorney General of Ontario on the appointment of Judges to the Ontario Court of Justice, and invites applications for a judicial position in Ottawa.

This appointment involves presiding over criminal law matters and also involves travel within the regional boundaries as assigned by the Regional Senior Justice and/or the Chief Justice.

The minimum requirement to apply to be a Judge in the Ontario Court of Justice is **ten years completed** membership as a barrister and solicitor at the Bar of one of the Provinces or Territories of Canada.

All candidates must apply either by submitting 14 copies of the **current (April 2014)** completed Judicial Candidate Information Form in the first instance or by a short letter (14 copies) if the current form has been submitted within the **previous 12 months**. **Should you wish to change any information in your application, you must send in 14 copies of a fully revised Judicial Candidate Information Form.**

If you wish to apply and need a current Judicial Candidate Information Form, or if you would like further information, please contact:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
Tel: (416) 326-4060 Fax: (416) 212-7316
Website: www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/jaac/

All applications, either sent by courier, mail or hand delivery, **must** be sent to:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
c/o Ministry of Government Services Mail Delivery
77 Wellesley Street West, Room M2B-88
Macdonald Block, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N3

Applications must be on the current prescribed form and must be TYPEWRITTEN or COMPUTER GENERATED and **RECEIVED BY 4:30 p.m. on Friday, May 15, 2015**. **CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE 14 COPIES OF THEIR APPLICATION FORM OR LETTER**. A Fax copy will be accepted only if 14 copies of the application or letter are sent concurrently by overnight courier. Applications received after this date **WILL NOT** be considered.

The Judiciary of the Ontario Court of Justice should reasonably reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Applications from members of equality-seeking groups are encouraged.



POSTE À POURVOIR AU SEIN DE LA MAGISTRATURE COUR DE JUSTICE DE L'ONTARIO OTTAWA

Le Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature conseille le Procureur général de l'Ontario sur les nominations de juges à la Cour de justice de l'Ontario et invite les personnes intéressées à présenter leur demande au poste de juge à Ottawa.

Cette nomination consiste à présider des causes criminelles et nécessite également des déplacements à l'intérieur des limites régionales, selon les assignations du juge principal régional ou du juge en chef.

Pour pouvoir poser sa candidature à un poste de juge à la Cour de justice de l'Ontario, il faut, comme condition minimale, avoir été inscrit comme avocat-plaidant et procureur au barreau de l'une des provinces ou de l'un des territoires du Canada **pendant au moins dix ans**.

Tous les candidats et candidates doivent poser leur candidature soit, dans le premier cas, en présentant le Formulaire de renseignements sur le candidat/la candidate à la magistrature **courant (avril 2014)**, soit en envoyant une courte lettre (en 14 exemplaires) si le formulaire courant a été présenté au cours des **12 mois précédents**. **En cas de changements à apporter à un formulaire déjà envoyé, le candidat ou la candidate doit envoyer à nouveau 14 exemplaires du formulaire de renseignements corrigé.**

Si vous voulez poser votre candidature et que vous avez besoin d'un Formulaire de renseignements sur le candidat/la candidate à la magistrature courant, ou encore si vous souhaitez obtenir de plus amples renseignements, veuillez communiquer avec :

Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature
Téléphone : (416) 326-4060 Télécopieur : (416) 212-7316
Site Web : www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/fr/jaac/

Toutes les demandes envoyées par service de messagerie, par la poste ou en main propre **doivent** être soumises à l'adresse suivante :

Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature
a/s Ministère des Services gouvernementaux - Services de distribution du courrier
77, rue Wellesley Ouest, salle M2B-88
Édifice Macdonald, Queen's Park
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N3

Les demandes de candidature doivent être déposées par l'entremise du formulaire prescrit courant et DACTYLOGRAPHIÉES ou CRÉÉES PAR ORDINATEUR et **reçues au plus tard à 16 h 30 le vendredi 15 mai 2015**. **LES CANDIDATS ET CANDIDATES DOIVENT FOURNIR 14 EXEMPLAIRES DE LEUR FORMULAIRE OU DE LEUR LETTRE DE CANDIDATURE**. Une télécopie ne sera acceptée que si 14 exemplaires du formulaire ou de la lettre de candidature sont également envoyés par service de messagerie de 24 heures. On n'accordera **AUCUNE** considération aux candidatures reçues après cette date.

La magistrature provinciale doit refléter raisonnablement la diversité de la population qu'elle sert. Nous encourageons les membres de groupes de promotion de l'égalité à présenter une demande.