

Making Your Attorney Resume Stand Out in the Crowd

By Leslie White

This is the most competitive attorney market we have seen in decades, and that means that a lot of great attorney resumes are hitting desks across the country. Attorney job postings can generate as many as a 100 resumes a day! As a result, it has become a lot harder for candidates to make themselves stand out in a growing stack of attorney resumes.

As a job seeker, you are competing with a lot of other outstanding applicants – the candidate pool has become deeper, and job seekers are getting savvier. Gone are the days when you could quickly put together your one-page attorney resume and get an interview. Candidates looking for a competitive edge are getting smarter about the process, often enlisting professional help with their application materials. The competition has given rise to the professionally written attorney resume. If you aren't looking beyond the basics of resume writing, your attorney resume may end up being just another resume lost in the crowd.

Two Heads Are Better Than One: Consider Working with a Third Party.

Is your attorney resume the best it can be? Truth is that resume writing is a skill, one that attorneys are generally not well trained in. Most attorneys create their resumes based on other attorney resumes they have seen from friends or colleagues. It is usually a typical listing of education, work experience, and bar admission. Format changes a bit here and there, but for the most part attorney resumes are based on a similar template.

The key to making an attorney resume stand out is to include the information that is most relevant to the type of position you are applying to. The shortcomings on having to draft your own attorney resume is that you often don't ask yourself the right questions. You may not always analyze the most important aspects of your practice objectively, and you may be looking at a position from job seeker's perspective rather than an employer's. As a result, something is lost in translation. Also, when you are editing your attorney resume, having a fresh pair of eyes, other than your own, to look over grammar, typos, and overall content can save your attorney resume from a one-way-trip to the "no pile." This is why working with a third party on your attorney resume is critical.

Working with a third party, a friend, colleague, or a professional resume writer can assist you objectively extract and describe the most relevant information to be included in your attorney resume. A third party will be less biased in his or her analysis of your skills and expertise, and will be better positioned to identify them for you. Of course, a third party will only be as good as his or her knowledge of the law, your practice area, the legal market, an employer's preferences, and resume editing skills. Therefore, when choosing a third party, at minimum make sure it is an attorney who knows the tricks of the trade when it comes to resumes. Another option is to consider engaging the services of professional resume writers who specialize in attorney resumes. Experts who deal day in and day out in attorney resumes will be better positioned to know what legal employers look for, what

questions to ask, what information to include, and how to make your attorney resume stand out against the competition.

The One Way to Really Stand Out: By Not Following The Flock.

When everyone is telling you how bad the market is, as a job seeker your first reaction may be to send out your attorney resume to all of the jobs that sound remotely interesting. Or to all of the jobs you can find. When you do that, you have to realize that everyone else is doing the exact same thing. When you consider that as of May 5, 2009, there have been over 4,564 lawyers laid off by major law firms alone, you can imagine what the application rates look like on those Internet job postings.

Rather than submitting hundreds of resumes in response to law firm, corporation, or government positions, take some time and think about what these employers are looking for. Corporations for instance are looking for a different set of skills than a law firm would use. Therefore, if you are applying to different organizations, you need an attorney resume that will specifically emphasize the skills required by the particular organization. You need to either create a law firm resume, an in-house resume, a government resume – or all three.

If you are focusing on in-house attorney positions, your attorney resume will need to cover both your technical legal skills, as well as your service skills. Remember, as an in-house attorney, a company wants you to provide a service for them, which involves team play. This means that your attorney resume should include examples of teamwork and cooperation. Your attorney resume will also need to emphasize your business skills, and your ability to multitask. As a member of a corporate law department, you will need to advance the company's business goals, as well as handle a great variety of legal matters. You will need to emphasize your broad range of skills and interests.

If you are applying to a government position, real world experience may be just as important as technical skills. Even if you are a junior-level attorney, you need to get out there and interact with clients and acquire legal counseling skills. Even if your real world experience was obtained through *pro bono* projects, make sure your attorney resume reflects those acquired skills. In short, if you have experience advising or serving organizations, even if it is as *pro bono* counsel for a local organization, including this experience in your attorney resume will help your candidacy for a government position.

Conclusion

To recap, when drafting your attorney resume try working with a third party who has both legal and resume editing experience. Consider engaging the services of a resume professional that focuses on attorney resumes. If you are applying to different organizations, you need to create an attorney resume that will specifically emphasize the skills required by the organization. Creating more than one attorney resume if you are pursuing diverse types of positions may be the answer.