

Relocation and Your Attorney Cover Letter

By Karen Anderson

The jobless rate rose last month to 8.9%, which gave more discouraging news to laid-off attorneys and recent law school graduates. But despite the doom and gloom, analysts say that unemployment isn't evenly spread throughout the nation, and in some regions legal jobs were added. The Midwest and some regions such as North Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska and South Dakota have seen some growth.

Of course, relocating isn't feasible for everyone, and relocating simply for a job is not always a good idea. However, if you are willing and able to relocate for a job, here are some do's and don'ts to follow with respect to your attorney cover letter.

- If you are willing to relocate at your own expense, be sure to mention that fact in your attorney cover letter. It could open you up for wider consideration by employers, as many companies and law firms may automatically exclude you from consideration, preferring to employ local candidates to forego the expense of relocation.
- Plan at least one trip to the new city before your actual relocation, including a preliminary exploratory trip in which you can conduct informational interviews to expand your network in the new city. Make sure your attorney cover letter mentions the date of your upcoming trip to the city, and don't be afraid to ask to schedule an informational interview while you are in town.
- Your attorney cover letter should discuss any ties or connections you might have to the area. This can include family, friends, colleagues, alumni associations, professional associations, or religious associations. Employers will be more likely to consider your candidacy if you are relocating to a city you are familiar with or where you already know people.
- If you are relocating to be with a spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, or fiancé/e, or your significant other has connections to the area, be sure include this fact in your attorney cover letter. If you're moving because a spouse or fiancé/e has been transferred, you should also let a prospective employer know about this in your cover letter.
- Do offer in your attorney cover letter the possibility of conducting a phone or videoconference interview in advance of an in-person meeting. An employer may be more likely to consider you for a position if he or she has been able to speak with you without having had to incur the expense to fly you in for an interview.

- Check whether you can be admitted by reciprocity to the state you are planning to move to. Reciprocity in this context refers to a state allowing a member of the bar association of a different state to obtain a license in that state without sitting for and passing a separate bar examination. If you can be admitted by reciprocity, or are in the process of being admitted, make sure you mention this in your attorney cover letter to a prospective employer.
- Finally, make sure your attorney cover letter is in good shape and briefly explains the reasons for your relocation. Include your intended location, and whether you have any particular reason for relocating to the area (such as that you are returning to your home town). If you're willing to locate to any area for the right position, make sure to tailor your cover letter accordingly. For help writing your cover letter see our articles "How to Write an Effective Cover Letter for an Attorney Job," and "The Do's of Legal Cover Letter Writing."