

RESEARCHING EMPLOYERS AND INITIATING YOUR JOB SEARCH

with www.martindale.com
Handout Series (#12)

There are hundreds of thousands of law firms across the country and around the world . . . how can you find out who does what? Once you know the kinds of firms you might like to work for, how do you apply for a job with a law firm if a job hasn't been advertised?

A mail campaign can be an effective job search strategy, but only if you have compiled a **targeted** mailing list of employers. This list should be limited by several criteria. You will need to decide what criteria you will use. You might include: geographic location, type of employer, size of organization, practice areas, hiring history (i.e., whether or not they have hired attorneys from McGeorge in the past), and diversity of attorneys. One of the best tools available to assist you in creating your targeted mailing list of law firms is www.martindale.com. (Please note that Martindale is not useful for searching the public sector.)

Martindale-Hubbell, the company that owns and operates www.martindale.com is one of the oldest and most traditional lawyer and law firm databases. That is important because it means that if a firm is going to pay to post their information with only one database, it is likely to be Martindale's. While other databases (WESTLAW's EMPL-DIR and www.NALP.org) are all useful in their own right, Martindale is the best starting point for your self-initiated job search.

Martindale is now owned and operated by LEXIS-NEXIS. You will find that the LEXIS directory for Martindale has even more search functions than the martindale.com version of Martindale. Below we will discuss the Martindale.com version, however, if you want to be able to search for lawyers who share your undergraduate institution or other such criteria, you should explore the LEXIS directory for Martindale.

HOW DO YOU GET STARTED?

To begin, go to www.martindale.com. The first screen you come to is the Lawyer Locator **Basic Search**. If you know the name of a lawyer or firm/organization, you can enter it and search for detailed information. If you don't know the name of a lawyer or law firm, you can use this screen to

browse for law firms or individual lawyers by practice area and location.

You may also choose the **Advanced Search** tab to do a more detailed search for lawyers or law firms. When you select the **Advanced Search** tab, you have the option of searching for lawyers or law firms. (While you may use this search tab to search for other organizations, the databases are not as comprehensive as the databases for lawyers and law firms.) If you don't know the name of a lawyer or law firm you can specify the location, practice areas and other search parameters.

FINDING McGEORGE-FRIENDLY LAWYERS

Using the **Advanced Search**, you may search for individual lawyers using the "Search For" dropdown menu. You will be able to choose a location (city, county, or state), a practice area, number of years since admission, and the school the lawyer attended. This last variable is key—search for McGeorge graduates! Most lawyers have a natural desire to help law students who are attending the same institution that they attended. Once you have generated your list (by hitting the "search" button) you can click on each lawyer's name to learn more about him/her.

WANT TO TARGET A CERTAIN SIZE FIRM?

Next, run an **Advanced Search** using the "Law Firms" category. You can now search for firms of a specific size, in addition to specifying practice areas and location. This is useful for a variety of reasons. Knowing that the largest firms are generally the most competitive firms, you can plan your search accordingly. That is, if you are ranked in the middle of your class, while you certainly can apply at the largest firms (over 50 lawyers) you would be wise to also search mid-size and small firms. In addition, knowing that the largest firms tend to hire the farthest in advance, you can plan your search accordingly. For example, if it is December and you are looking for a summer job, most large firms (over 50 lawyers) will have completed their hiring, so you would be wise to search mid-size and small firms.

KICK YOUR RESEARCH UP A NOTCH!

Once you have run your lawyer and law firm searches for one to three cities and one to three practice areas, you can begin researching your firms. To research a firm in which you are interested, read the firm's website, but don't stop there. Use WESTLAW's "All News" database, or LEXIS's similar database, to search for newspaper articles on your firm. Newspaper articles are easy to read and digest and often give you just what you need to start a cover letter off right. Do enough research to develop a hook—that is, something that you can use in the first paragraph of your cover letter to show the employer why you are interested in their firm. Sometimes you can find interesting information about a firm by searching it in Google or any other search engine.

Next, cross-reference your lists: are there firms on your lists that have a McGeorge graduate employed in your area of interest? Is there a graduate at the firm who practices in a different area? If your answer to either of these questions is yes, this should become one of the first firms to which you apply. If there is no McGeorge graduate at a firm in which you are interested, look for attorneys who have something else in common with you, e.g., undergraduate institution, ethnicity or religion.

NOW YOU KNOW WHO THE PLAYERS ARE--WHAT NEXT?

If possible, call a McGeorge graduate (or attorney who shares something in common with you) before writing your cover letter. (Bear in mind that this strategy can be used for advertised as well as un-advertised jobs.) When you call the attorney, make clear that you are interested in applying to the attorney's firm, so that you are not mistaken for someone doing an informational interview.

You should also make your McGeorge connection (or other commonality) clear and ask the attorney for fifteen minutes of his/her time, sometime within the next week. You might say the following:

Hi, my name is Julie Bowers, and I am a second-year student at McGeorge. I am very interested in applying with your firm for a summer position. I noticed that you went to McGeorge, and I would love to talk to you a little bit about the firm and the work that you do there. Might you have fifteen minutes for me, some time this week?

Most graduates will respond favorably to such a call, though you may need to call them back a few times. If the graduate gives you the fifteen minutes, you will want to use it to develop a bit of rapport with that lawyer. Ask questions about the person's most interesting cases and the most intellectually challenging and stimulating aspects of their practice. Get them to tell you a war story. This also is the perfect time to ask questions based on something that you read about the firm. Here is an example: *"I read in the Daily Journal that your firm just acquired three new partners who practice in white collar criminal defense. Can you tell me more about how you acquired them and how that may impact the firm?"* Here's another example, *"When I researched your firm, I found that you represent Jack Abramoff--that must be keeping you very busy. Can you tell me more about how that client was acquired and how that litigation is impacting your firm?"*

THE CLOSER

Throughout your fifteen minute conversation with a McGeorge graduate, you should try to impart a bit of information about yourself, whenever it seems to fit, including your interest in the firm. Toward the end of the conversation, you might thank them for the information they have shared and indicate that it confirms your desire to work for the firm. At the end of the conversation, unless the graduate has already offered to do so, you will want to close the conversation in one of the ways listed below. Some of these closings are more forward than others, and you will need to select a closing with which you are comfortable.

1. May I send my materials directly to you? Would you be willing to deliver them to the hiring partner for me? (Most forward, but still polite.)
2. Shall I cc' you a copy of my application materials?
3. May I use your name in my cover letter?
4. May I mention the fact that we spoke, when I write my cover letter?
5. Do you have any suggestions for me as I prepare my application materials?
(Least forward, but still useful.)

Any of these closings are appropriate, although the graduate may or may not respond positively to your requests. Even a graduate who would respond to the first question with, "No, go ahead and send your materials to the hiring partner," might put in a "good word" for you. Any of the closings above should prompt the graduate to think about what he or she is comfortable doing, if anything, to assist you. If the graduate responds positively to your request to use his or her name in your cover letter or a reference to your conversation, you can begin your cover letter with what Kimm Walton (a Career Development Guru) calls the "magic words," i.e., "[Name] recommended that I contact you," or "I recently spoke with [Name] and was excited to learn . . ."

THEY'VE GOT YOUR RESUME . . . DO YOU NEED TO DO ANYTHING ELSE?

Once you send in your materials, be sure to follow-up with the firm. You can do this by following up with your contact, the hiring partner, or both. The window for follow-up is ten

days to two weeks. Calling will demonstrate your initiative as well as your interest in the employer. It also gives you some sense of control to know your status with an employer rather than guessing or assuming their decision about you. When making a follow-up call, primarily you want to confirm that the employer received your materials and to show your enthusiasm for the firm. For example, you might say, *“My name is Heather Frawley. About two weeks ago, I sent my application materials for a summer associate position to your firm. I wanted to touch base to make sure that you have received the materials and to find out if you can give me any information about your hiring time line.”*

As long as you let your enthusiasm come through in your voice, and not your stress or feelings of being annoyed, a follow-up phone call can do you only good.

A Note about Martindale’s ratings . . .

Some lawyers are rated by Martindale and those that are rated will bear (on their full data screen) a blue link that reads “Rating Info.” Martindale creates ratings for lawyers and law firms by collecting data from other lawyers and judges (a tough crowd by any standard). Martindale is not able to rank a lawyer if it does not have enough data, and ultimately each lawyer (who is paying for the advertisement) gets to decide if s/he want his/her rating information to be posted. Therefore, you can’t take much away from the fact that a rating is not posted, but you can rely on ratings that are posted. To find the rating, click on “Rating Info” and then scroll to the bottom of the page. You should find a two letter rating. A, B, or C will be the first letter and will indicate the lawyering skills and abilities of the lawyer. The second letter will be a “V” and should be present only if the records and surveys indicate that the lawyer is ethical. For more details about the rating system, please see the description on Martindale’s site.