

A Successful Move between Legal Jobs

Making a move between legal jobs in private practice, or in house can be exciting, refreshing and daunting! Each individual lawyer's situation is different and the reasons for the move are often complex.

Here at Re Legal, all our recruitment consultants have also been lawyers. This means that we are able to offer a unique insight into the art of moving legal jobs successfully. As an experienced legal recruitment agency, we already know the things you need to know and we are always happy to provide help and advice, talking you through what we know with no strings attached.

There are many reasons lawyers contemplate a move:

Money - Will the short term fix of a pay rise solve your issues - maybe not?

Career Development - Despite good PR, is the firm you are contemplating really as good as they say?

Quality of Life - Is it possible to move to a smaller law firm and get the same quality of work and the same **financial** prospects?

Prospects - Is a legal vacancy or a law firm really going to provide you with a solution or will you hit the same problem again?

Personality - Do you want to know your new colleagues' history and reputation?

Once you've started to think about a possible move, how do you maximize your chances of the best available legal job? Take time to prepare yourself fully for the potential legal jobs and career search. This means research into;

- The market in your area of legal specialisation
- Your worth in that market
- Which law firms or commercial in house legal teams would best suit you

There are many ways to do this research - word of mouth, browsing the Gazette and other legal publications, surfing the internet - but this can be time-consuming and may not be sufficiently discreet. The best way forward is to speak to a professional legal recruitment consultancy that can assist you in complete confidence from initial cv and business plan creation, through the interview process to successful salary and benefits package negotiation in the legal job of your choice.

Re Legal - Recruitment specialists for legal jobs

At Re Legal, the experienced legal recruitment agency in Manchester and Leeds, we already know the things you need to know and we are always happy to provide help and advice, talking you through what we know with no strings attached.

We will never provide your details or send your CV to clients without your express permission. Please feel free to contact us for a confidential discussion. Re Legal specialise in legal vacancies for Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Liverpool.

Once you've done the research, then you need to sell yourself to potential employers using your CV, maybe a business plan, and then focus on a successful interview process.

As well as information about current legal jobs, we have put together some legal career and law jobs search tips to help you sell yourself. Set out below are detailed points covering cvs, business plans and interviews.

CVs

Advice preparing CVs for legal jobs applications

As a legal professional, your CV is the marketing tool with which you sell yourself. It is an important document as, in most cases, it will create a potential employer's first impression of you. First impressions can be lasting impressions so your CV must look professional and should reflect your law career accurately and positively.

As a leading legal recruitment agency run by lawyers, Re Legal have had many years' experience in the creation of effective legal CVs, for in-house counsel, lawyers and solicitors. Based on this, here are some dos and don'ts for you when you're creating your own CV. Some are obvious, others less so. We have produced a legal CV template which contains sample headings and some guidelines regarding content. We have also produced a CV template specifically for Trainees/NQs.

Legal CVs - Assistance and guidelines

These are general guidelines only. CVs, by their nature, are individual documents and must be closely tailored to your personality and experience (whether at law firms or working for commercial clients) as well as the positions you are going after. You must be confident in the content of your CV and be able to back it up at interview.

Of course, we are always available to chat to you and to provide more personal assistance if you require it. Please feel free to contact us for this service.

We will never provide your details or send your CV to clients without your express permission.

When creating your CV:

DO

- Use good quality paper
- Keep it to 2-3 pages, maximum
- Be consistent in your presentation (headings, typeface, etc)
- Keep paragraphs short and subject specific
- Use bullet points and indents to highlight key points
- Start out with your name, address and preferred contact details
- Set out your education and law career history, starting in each case with the most recent and working back

- Include examples of your current legal caseload, your involvement and achievements and give less detailed examples of your caseload at previous employers. If you have had a number of positions, consider simply listing them and including a section summarising your experience as a whole
- Show yourself to be a rounded person by including at the end of the document brief details of your achievements and interests
- Prepare a covering letter, tailored to the specific position, highlighting the skills and experience that make you perfect for the role
- Proof read, proof read, proof read, don't forget to run a spelling and grammar check - and then get someone else to proof read!

DON'T

- Lie
- Be too modest
- Be too verbose
- Be negative about yourself or any current or previous employer
- Include salary details
- Include reasons for leaving - but be prepared to deal with these points at interview
- Include date of birth - unless you want to
- Leave any gaps in the chronology of your education and/or legal career history
- Include details (e.g. of any skills you have or courses you have attended) for the sake of it - include only those which are relevant to the position you are seeking

Interviews

Re Legal recruitment consultants provides an agency service that specialises in providing legal jobs and career assistance that is second to none for lawyers, solicitors and in house counsel interested in legal vacancies in the North West and North East, covering Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Liverpool. Based on our expertise and experience in the law jobs market, we have prepared an interview guide to help focus on this key recruitment stage.

Interviews for Legal Jobs - Top Tips

- Plan carefully. Do you know where you are going and how to get there? Who are you seeing?
- Make sure you know and can pronounce the names of the people who will be interviewing you.
- There's no such thing as enough preparation for an interview. Find out everything you can about the law firm, business or organisation and what it makes or does. Look for current news - show you are up to date.
- Why does this legal job exist? What problems will it solve? What are the Key Result Areas?
- Remember: employers buy experience. Think about what evidence of achievement you can talk about in the interview; rehearse your success stories.

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- Work out what is appropriate in terms of everything you present, including yourself. Look the part, and you will feel it. Dress as if you are already doing the job.
- Second guess the employer's "shopping list" from the job details - what skills / qualities / experience do you have to match?
- Be your own worst interview nightmare. What is the most difficult question you might have to face at an interview for a legal job? Practice the answer. Practice again.
- Be upbeat. Employers latch on to negative messages, so don't give them any.

Tough Questions for Any Lawyer / In House Counsel

You can't prepare for every question that will come up at interview, but you can anticipate most of them. Here are some of the deadliest questions, and ways of handling them:

"Tell us about yourself".

Prepare for the worst - a classic opener that can really throw you. Plan ahead by having a coherent statement to cover this.

"Why do you want to be a lawyer?"

Don't be thrown by questions such as this. Simply have a credible answer prepared.

"Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?"

If your answer doesn't ring true for you, it won't for anyone else. Talk about career plans, and what you want to learn and achieve in the future.

"Why do you want this job?"

Have a clear answer to this (even if, privately, you're not sure - you only have to decide when the job offer is in your hand).

"What attracts you to our firm?"

Ensure that you have done your research (or spoken to us) about the particular law firm, company or organisation you are going to see and its personalities. Use the fruits of your research in your answer.

"What kind of person are you?"

Handle questions about personality carefully. Rather than say "I'm an ideas person", talk about a time when you changed things with a good idea.

"Why did you leave.....?"

Employers will probe for reasons for job change. If you are currently out of work, they will probe this, too. Rehearse short, simple, positive "stories" to cover these points.

"How will you cope in a crisis?"

Have a couple of good examples of past triumphs up your sleeve.

"How will you..."

These questions at legal jobs interviews begin to create a future which includes you - so welcome them. Describe what you would do within the organisation or law firm as if you are there already. Create the right picture, and the employer won't be able to imagine a future without you...

"What would you do if?"

Some interviewers ask lawyers and solicitors fantasy questions not related to reality, but watch out for questions that are like verbal in-tray exercises. You might be asked to "sell me this pencil sharpener/ paper clip/ biro" - prepare to think on your feet.

"What do you need to earn?"

Wrong question. Focus on the value you can add to the employer, not your basic needs. Find out what salary and rewards the company is willing to pay, or work out what similar employers pay for good people. Always throw pay questions back to the other side of the net.

"What are your weaknesses?"

Remember that the recruiter gives far more weight to negative information. Talk about weaknesses that are also strengths, e.g. being demanding of your team, being a perfectionist, pushing hard to get things done...

Business Plans

Business Plans in the legal recruitment process

Particularly at senior levels, a Business Plan can be an essential part of the recruitment process. A well thought out and well-drafted Business Plan can also assist candidates in establishing exactly where they are in their legal career and what they need to achieve to progress.

Attention to detail is crucial because often at partner level a law firm will base a decision to invest significant sums at least partly on your Business Plan.

An important point to consider is that each Business Plan can be different for each different firm. There is no point coming up with a plan if it bears no reference to the new firm - you will need to know about them in detail in order to draft a plan which is coherent and relevant - ask questions.

Advice from legal recruitment consultants

Re Legal recruitment agency is happy to help lawyers, solicitors, counsel and barristers draft your Business Plan and you should feel free to contact us in this regard. We will never provide your details to clients without your express permission.

The essentials of a Business Plan are as follows:

Executive Summary

A brief summary describing you succinctly – include here any references to you in the Legal 500 or Chambers or any significant client testimonials.

Legal Track Record

This is an important part of the plan - it should detail the business development successes you have had previously in your career and put them into context. What we mean by this is that not only must you be able to point to your part in the success but also give others and the firm you were at due credit. There is no point missing out essential facts and then making excuses later on.

This section should also detail any management success you have achieved – as with any business development opportunity; once it has been converted it then needs to be managed profitably.

You should detail your charge out rates and those of your team.

You should also include here current and past billings and any other relevant figures including billings of your team and profitability figures. Be prepared to answer questions on how the profitability is calculated – what is your team's contribution to central overheads or fixed costs for instance - so that it is easy for a law firm to see how your billings may be more or less profitable comparatively with their cost base.

Define Your Legal Expertise

Clearly this will already be in your CV but it does no harm to repeat it briefly and it goes some way to helping put the next section Define Your Market into context.

Define Your Market

This is often the difficult part and it may depend on your area of expertise but these are some general guidelines:

- List your existing clients with breakdowns if you have them of fees generated and set out how likely they are to travel with you to a new firm and how they became clients in the first place (there may be Restrictive Covenants to consider (see later))
- The internal market - by this we mean try to research the new firm's client base, whether there are opportunities to cross sell your expertise into the existing client base, is anyone else within the firm currently doing this - establish here any synergies between you and the new firm - is the whole going to be greater than the sum of the parts
- List intermediaries and referrers that you know, have dealt with and have had a reciprocal relationship with – this will help the new law firm establish whether you can add something to their practice without necessarily having to bring a client base
- List details of cold targets with brief details of how to target them – profile raising, cold calling, targeting their other advisors or networking as examples. How long will this process take – weeks, months or years?

Transfer Strategy

Have you thought through exactly how you will manage your exit from the old law firm to the new one. Provide written details of your restrictive covenants and evidence as to how the old firm has reacted in the past to senior lawyers or solicitors who leave with clients.

Set out how you will manage your exit. If you are moving with a team, how will this affect your situation, will your covenants be relevant, will it make the transfer of clients more secure?

Good Legal Business Development Strategy

It is important to try and set out why you think your business development strategy may work and that it is not just based on your charming personality!

A good way of summarising this is to do a traditional SWOT analysis – set out the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

The strengths and opportunities section is the most important and as much detail as possible is required.

This will demonstrate that you have thought through your strategy and you know what is involved in executing it.

Future Growth of Your Legal Practice

If it is possible set out your plans for growing your own practice (and maybe a team) in terms of timescales and figures.

It is useful to obtain any financial information from the new firm to put this in context – for example if you were offered £x what would your break-even figure be in year one?

For further information and a chat in complete confidence, please contact one of our experienced [recruitment consultants](#) in Manchester and Leeds.