How to Research Legal Employers
Researching Employers

One of the most common comments we hear from employers has to do with how well students do their research prior to applying to and interviewing with that employer. You will need to research employers for a number of different reasons, in varying detail. There is a lot of information available, so be sure to use your time effectively.

At the initial application stage you need to find employers that could be a potential fit for you with respect to the work they do and their geographic location. At the interview and offer stage, your research methods will evolve to include more depth about the employer and its attorneys. Your knowledge of the employer at both the application and interview stage can help you distinguish yourself from other candidates - research pays off!

WHY RESEARCH EMPLOYERS?

1. **To Identify Employer Targets for Applications**
   a. Define your geographic markets – it is impossible to look everywhere at one time. Think about both your dream location and the target rich environments where you have geographic connections and apply to both early on in the process. You can narrow prospects as your job search continues.
   b. Define the employers that interest you. Aspects to consider:
      - Employer type (government agency, private firm, non-profit organization, judge, etc.)
      - Employer size (Are you more suited to/interested in a large or small work environment? The main office of an employer or a satellite office?)
      - Type of practice / structure of summer associate or intern program (Does the employer have the practice area in which you are most interested? Do they primarily represent plaintiffs or defendants? Do they have the rotation program that you are looking for in an employer?)
      - Employer’s sensitivity to grades - Some employers are more grade-conscious than others. Are your academic credentials a fit for that employer?
   c. Determine whether you have a potential contact there (friend, family connection, Washington University Law alumni or alumni from your undergraduate institution, etc.).
   d. Determine if there is some conflict of interest that might prevent you from working for that employer or limit an employer’s interest in you as a candidate (for example, you worked as a paralegal in a firm prior to law school that had cases against the employer’s largest client).

2. **To Draft Cover Letters**
   a. You should already have a standard cover letter. Research will help you modify your standard cover letter in order to target particular employers of interest and to distinguish yourself from other candidates applying to that employer.
   b. How much time should you allocate to research and drafting for each cover letter you write? Do enough research to demonstrate to the employer why you want to work for them (for example, you are from that area and are impressed with their corporate practice or most of your family lives in the area and you are attracted to their rotation program for
summer associates or you are interested in a smaller office because their attorneys get significant responsibility early on in their careers, etc.).

3. **To Prepare for Interviews**
   
a. Prior to an interview, you should be informed about the employer’s summer program, practice areas, recent news about the employer, etc. The best way to show your interest in an employer during an interview is to be able to talk intelligently about them, their clients and what they do. Doing so will help you stand apart from candidates who have not done their research.

b. Develop questions to ask based upon your research. Interviewers are always impressed by the student who has done their research prior to the interview and who asks relevant, topical questions about both the employer and the interviewer.

4. **To Compare Offers**
   
a. If you have received multiple offers, research will help you determine which employer is the best fit for you and your career goals.

b. Additional research will allow you to compare salaries and other benefits offered by the employers.
## Summary of Research Tools

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Reseaching Private Employers (Law Firms)

There are many resources available - on-line and in print - to help you research private employers. At the application stage, two resources to begin with are the Martindale-Hubbell® Law Directory and the NALP Directory of Legal Employers. Note: Martindale-Hubbell is good for private employers of all sizes, while the NALP directory is limited to larger firms that tend to interview and hire at specific times of the year (after December 1 for 1Ls and in late August through October for 2Ls and 3Ls).

1. Martindale-Hubbell® Law Directory:

   A. Who is Listed?

      o Hard copy resource is available in the Washington University Law Library and most other law libraries. Firms are listed alphabetically within a geographic area.
      o Martindale-Hubbell is a resource for identifying mid-sized and smaller law firms. Not all employers are in Martindale-Hubbell (you have to pay to be listed); however, the vast majority of firms with more than 10 attorneys are listed.
      o In the hard copy version, limited information may be available on individual attorneys in the index section even if their firms do not have a listing. The “blue” pages contain the free listings while the “white” pages contain the paid listings.
      o Some federal government agencies and in-house attorneys are listed too.

   B. What Information is Provided?

      o On firms: major practice areas, size of firm, location of other offices; representative clients.
      o On individuals: biographical information, academic information (law school and undergraduate), practice area and research interests, significant cases or publications, and language skills.
      o For government: generally limited to contact information.
      o Some firms only list partners in Martindale-Hubbell.

   C. Martindale Hubbell On-line: [www.martindale.com](http://www.martindale.com) and [www.lexis.com](http://www.lexis.com)

      o Search for firms by geographic location, size, and practice area using the Martindale.com “Advanced Search” function. You can search for individual attorneys by law school, language skills, practice area, firm or agency, or geographic area. Note: If you use the law school attended search field on Martindale.com, you will obtain both Washington University and George Washington University graduates.
      o Martindale.com can provide a glimpse of the types of federal litigation or volume of transactions handled by some firms. Note that Martindale relies on third party statistics for the litigation experience and the mergers and acquisitions information listed. You can also do a “side by side” comparison of firms that includes categories like number of offices, number of practice areas, firm size, awards and rankings and other information.
      o Helpful Tip #1: To search for Washington University Law alumni or alumni from your undergraduate school, use LEXISNEXIS ([www.lexis.com](http://www.lexis.com)) to access the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory.
          - For example, to find WU Law alumni who practice in Chicago, from “Legal>Research,” select “Martindale-Hubbell Listings, All.” Type: LAW-SCHOOL (Washington pre /1 University and not George) and CITY (Chicago).
          - To search for your undergraduate alumni, type: COLLEGE (Vanderbilt) and CITY (Kansas City).
      o Helpful Tip #2: Using Lexis.com to access Martindale-Hubbell allows flexibility in identifying firms and attorneys through combining practice area searches with your other searches or using a “Focus” term to further define your initial search.
2. **NALP Directory of Legal Employers** (also on-line at [www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com))

- Print version of the NALP Directory is available in CSO, or you can purchase your own copy in hard-copy ([www.nalp.org](http://www.nalp.org)).
- NALP members are generally larger employers, federal government agencies, and a very limited number of public interest organizations.
- The print version is organized geographically with employers listed alphabetically within the state and city entries. Non-profit organizations and government agencies are also listed by geographic area in a later section of the publication.
- On-Line ([www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com)): Search by various criteria including geographic area, practice area, whether they hire 1Ls, etc. The online version may provide additional information not found in the print version.

**Deciphering the NALP Form** – see annotated example on following page

1. Recruiting Contact: Address cover letters to this person.
2. Practice Area Breakdown
   - Does this firm practice in/focus on an area I’m interested in?
   - In my cover letter, do I want to say I only want International when only 2 out of their 200 attorneys practice in that area?
3. Compensation and Employment Data:
   - Provides compensation for entry-level associates and summer associates
   - Provides # of attorneys/summer associates hired in the last couple of years
   - Note: the salaries stated are as of February 1 of that year and may no longer be accurate. The online salary information may be more accurate than the print version as employers can (and often do) update the online information throughout the year.
4. What percentage of the 2L summer associates received offers?
5. Does the employer hire 1Ls and, if so, when should they apply?
6. Firm Hiring Criteria:
   - What does the firm look for in potential hires?
7. Work/Life Balance Information:
   - Does the firm have part-time opportunities available for associates?
   - Does the firm have a parental leave policy?
8. Training and Professional Development:
   - Is there a mentor program in place?
   - How often does the firm evaluate associates?
   - Does training time count toward billable hours requirements?
9. Attorney Demographic Breakdown and Diversity Recruitment/Retention Efforts:
   - Breakdown by race or gender
   - Look at the breakdown of partners vs. associates
10. How many schools/job fairs does the firm visit each year for On Campus Interviews?
    - The online version of the form will list all the schools visited
11. Billable Hours Requirements
    - Some firms provide both average billables and minimum billables.
12. Pro Bono/Public Interest Opportunities
    - Do attorneys receive billable hour credit for pro bono work?
13. Firm Narrative:
    - Like the firm brochure, this is what the firm wants to emphasize.

A. Sampling of Other Available Resources to Find Private Employers On-Line.

- Vault Guides to Top Legal Employers - see CSO website to obtain password for access to the Vault website – provides employers rankings obtained through anonymous surveys.

- Chambers Guides - [http://www.chambersandpartners.com](http://www.chambersandpartners.com) - Published by Chambers & Partners and based upon client research, these guides provide an analysis / rankings of both firms and attorneys worldwide.

- LawPeriscope - [www.lawperiscope.com](http://www.lawperiscope.com) - Searches the web pages of the largest firms in the country. It will search for key words or practice areas and provides direct links to that portion of a firm's site.

- Legal 500 - [www.legal500.com](http://www.legal500.com) - This site is useful for large international firms and offices abroad.

- West Legal Directory – online access via Westlaw.com or [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com) – can be useful for identifying mid-sized and smaller firms.

- The local Yellow Pages of the community in which you are interested. Look under “attorneys” for a full listing of law firms in that area.

- See also the Web-Based Career Resources on the CSO website in the "For Students" section.

B. Employer Web Page.

- To locate: use the link from Martindale-Hubbell listing, Findlaw ([www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com)), or a commercial search engine, such as Google or Yahoo.

- Look at other parts of the firm website in addition to the Recruiting Section. Many firms will have a News or Press Release section with recent stories that will help you learn more about the firm and prepare for potential interviews.
Researching Judicial Clerkships

Judicial clerkships or internships are a wonderful way to begin your legal career or to spend a summer while still in law school. Working for a judge is valuable legal experience and often leads to interesting career opportunities following the clerkship or internship. The vast majority of federal judges hire their post-graduate law clerks in September to start the following August, however new federal judges are appointed throughout the year leading to potential clerkship vacancies. State court judges have more variety in their hiring timeframes for post-graduate clerkships. For summer internships or externships, most judges hire students during the spring semester.

For more detailed information concerning judicial clerkships, please consult the Judicial Clerkship Manual available in the CSO and on the CSO website. The following resources, however, will help get you started with identifying judges.


3. **Federal Judiciary Library online** - [http://www.loislaw.com/judlib/](http://www.loislaw.com/judlib/) - Available by password protected subscription from Aspen Publishing, the library includes full text of the Almanac of the Federal Judiciary, links to full text opinions by federal judges, and the complete judicial questionnaires submitted to the Senate by judges when they were nominated. **Contact the circulation desk of the Law School library for a password.**

4. **Online System for Clerkship Application and Review (OSCAR)** - [http://oscar.dcd.uscourts.gov/](http://oscar.dcd.uscourts.gov/) - Online application system used by many federal judges for post-graduation clerkships. Even after September, some vacancies may still be listed. If you register on OSCAR, you can receive email notifications of new clerkship listings.

5. **Alliance for Justice: Judicial Selection Project** - [http://www.afj.org/judicial/judicial_selection_resources/selection_database/](http://www.afj.org/judicial/judicial_selection_resources/selection_database/) - Contains statistical data on the appointment process and vacancies of the federal judiciary. This is a great resource to check for new judicial appointments that will likely be hiring law clerks. Information is regularly updated.


7. **Federal Administrative Law Judges Conference** - [http://www.faljc.org](http://www.faljc.org) - A voluntary professional association for administrative law judges, this site provide information about the role of administrative law judges and a list of judges, by agency, who are members.

Several federal agencies also have links to the administrative law judges including:

- **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Administrative Law Judges:** [http://www.epa.gov/aljhomep/](http://www.epa.gov/aljhomep/)

8. Federal Judicial Center - http://www.fjc.gov - Biographical information on all past and present judges, court histories, educational materials and links to other legal resources.

9. Judicial Yellow Book – available in the Law Library. This resource lists all federal judges as well as state Supreme and Appellate Court judges. It includes brief biographical sketch of each judge and contact information.


11. Want’s Federal-State Court Directory - Listing of address and other contact information for federal and state courts and judges. It also provides information about the structure of the state court systems. Published annually.

12. 2008 Guide to State Judicial Clerkships – can be found online at http://vermontlaw.edu/career. In the "search block", type Judicial Clerkship Guide, then:
   - click on "Judicial Clerkship Guide"
   - click on "Access the Guide"
   - click on "Complete Guide" or a specific state name
   Enter   Username: maple
            Password: syrup

Researching Government Employers

We all know that Federal, State, County and City Governments employ almost uncountable numbers of lawyers in both legal and non-legal capacities. Seeking employment with the government may seem daunting, but it also offers a wealth of opportunities and range of practice areas. It may, in some instances, permit a better work/life balance than the private sector. Here are some resources for researching opportunities for government employment.

1. **Government Honors & Internship Handbook** – The most comprehensive resource for federal government (and some state government) volunteer, internship (for 1Ls and 2Ls) and Honors (3L, post-clerkship and LLM) Programs is available on the web at: [www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm](http://www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm).

   UserID: graham
   Password: cracker

   Don’t miss the helpful tables in the appendices listing programs alphabetically, by due date and eligible class, explaining security clearances, demystifying government pay grades and other essential information. Hard copies are available in the CSO.

2. **www.usajobs.gov** – is maintained by the federal Office of Personnel Management. It contains a searchable database and permits applicants to build and save a federal resume online. It also contains an alphabetical listing of all federal agencies at: [www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml](http://www.usa.gov/Agencies/Federal/All_Agencies/index.shtml).

3. **www.avuecentral.com** – is a site through which various federal agencies manage recruiting and is free to applicants. It contains information about the federal application process, as well as a searchable database for state and federal jobs.

4. **The Legal Times** [www.law.com/dc](http://www.law.com/dc), **Roll Call** [www.rollcall.com](http://www.rollcall.com), **The Hill** [www.hillnews.com](http://www.hillnews.com), and the **Washington Lawyer** [www.dcbar.org](http://www.dcbar.org) all contain information regarding job opportunities on Capitol Hill and legal jobs in DC.


6. **The Plum Book** (US Government Policy and Supporting Positions) is available online at [www.gpoaccess.gov/plumbook/index.html](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/plumbook/index.html) and lists over 7,000 Federal civil service leadership and support positions appointed by the President including agency heads, their immediate subordinates, policy executives and advisors, and aides who report to them. It is published every four years; the most recent edition is 2004.

8. National Legal Aid and Defender Association - [www.nlada.org](http://www.nlada.org) links to legal aid offices, public defender’s offices and to private criminal defense attorneys. The homepage features Equal Justice News (good interview preparation) and the “Jobs” tab links to a national listing of civil legal services and criminal defense job postings.

9. The Vault Online Employer Guides available through a process described on the CSO website at: [http://law.wustl.edu/career_services/index.asp?id=1224](http://law.wustl.edu/career_services/index.asp?id=1224) are most often consulted by students evaluating private sector jobs, but please note that the guides include: The Vault Guide to Capitol Hill Careers and The Vault Guide to Top Government and Non-Profit Employers.

10. Yellow Book Series – available in the law school library.

   o **State Yellow Book** – lists all state government offices including all State Attorneys General.

   o **Federal Regional Yellow Book** – lists all federal government offices and high-level managers in regions outside Washington, D.C.

   o **Federal Yellow Book** – lists all federal government offices and high-level managers in Washington, D.C.
Researching Public Interest Employers

Public interest employers are a large and varied group. They range from non-profits (small to huge and local, regional or national in scope), to Legal Services and Legal Aid offices. They include NGOs and private, public interest law firms. Some aim at specific, target populations, some are issue-specific, some are advocacy or policy-focused, some engage in lobbying, some provide direct legal services to individuals, some engage exclusively in impact litigation. Some engage in extremely complex transactional work. Your search may require that you devote some thought to what kind of work you hope to do, what issues motivate or engage you and what kind of settings in which you’d like to work before you begin to research employers.

The Career Development Office of Yale Law School has prepared a series of brochures that are publicly available on their website. You may wish to look at their brochure on Public Interest Careers or other available publications http://www.law.yale.edu/documents/pdf/CDO_Public/PUBLIC_VERSION-PI_CAREERS_BODY.pdf as you begin your research.

Suggested Websites

1. PSLawNet - www.pslawnet.org is the central clearinghouse for public interest jobs (and public interest funding) in the United States. The site provides a searchable database of more than 12,000 public interest job postings, organization profiles and fellowship opportunities all over the world. Washington University Law subscribes to PSLawNet, and all students interested in public interest work should become members. In order to sign on, students should go to the website listed above, select Washington University School of Law from the drop-down menu and enter their WULaw e-mail addresses. PSLawNet will e-mail you a password promptly. Pay special attention to the “Opportunities” section as well as “Fellowship Corner”.

Note: A hard copy of the 2007-2008 Comprehensive Fellowship Guide is available for your review in the CSO, but will not circulate.

2. The Society of American Law Teachers posts public interest job announcements on their website at www.saltlaw.org under the "Help You" tab on the homepage. Click “Job Openings” to see listings.

3. The National Legal Aid and Defender Association - www.nlada.org (previously listed as a resource for those interested in criminal defense work) also links to civil legal services providers. Click the “Civil Resources” tab on the homepage, for connections to legal aid and legal services offices, “News from the Field”, etc. You will also see a tab called “Jobs” on the homepage.

4. Action without Borders maintains a searchable database for non-profit jobs, legal and non-legal, domestic and international at: http://www.idealist.org/career/career.html. You may also sign up for daily e-mail alerts based on your non-profit interests.

5. Symplicity Job Bank – Don’t forget to check the job bank regularly throughout the year; we post public interest jobs as we receive them.

You should also actively and regularly check the websites of non-profit organizations in which you are interested as well as bar association websites in geographic areas in which you are interested. They are both excellent sources of information about job postings, initiatives and, occasionally, grant, fellowship or other funding sources for which you may be eligible.

Job Fairs

6. Equal Justice Works Public Interest Job Fair – Held annually in Washington, DC and scheduled to take place this year on October 6th and 7th, 2007. This is the largest job fair for
Government and Public Interest employers in the nation. Even if you are unable to secure a formal interview, this is a wonderful place to network and practice informational interviewing. Go to http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/employers/browse.aspx for a searchable list of employers. Most employer entries link to organizations’ websites, so this list can also be an excellent search tool.

7. **Midwest Public Interest Career Conference** – takes place in February at Northwestern University School of Law; look for notices from CSO early next year.

8. **Washington University School of Law Government and Public Interest Career Fairs** – These events are scheduled for October 26, 2007, at Washington University and February, 2007, with a date to be determined at St. Louis University. Local, regional and national employers will attend these events designed for Washington University and St. Louis University law students exclusively. Employers include: public defenders, legal services providers, local prosecutors, public interest organizations, state and federal agencies and more. These events always include a “Table Talk” session that can provide invaluable access to government and public interest employers.
Other Helpful Resources for Researching All Types of Employers

1. **CSO and Washington University Law Library Materials.**
   - Vault Reports give narrative accounts of a number of firms and some government and non-profit employers. Hard copies available in CSO – see CSO website for how to obtain password for online version of Vault Guides.
   - Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory (hard copy in Law Library)
   - NALP Directory of Legal Employers (hard copy in CSO)
   - Summer Employment Surveys completed by Washington University Law students who worked for those employers in the past – available on the password protected portion of the CSO website.
   - Job Search Guides are available in the CSO for the following geographic areas: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Connecticut, Dallas/Houston, Denver, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Massachusetts, Miami, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Philadelphia Area (inc. Wilmington, DE and Southern NJ), Phoenix, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Upstate New York, and Washington, DC.
   - In-House Counsel Employment Search Guide developed by the CSO and available in the CSO.

In addition to the above listed resources, a variety of materials on employers, industries, and job search strategy and skills are available in both the CSO Library and the Law Library.

2. **Employer in the News.**
   - Up-to-date research on employers of particular interest: search on LEXISNEXIS, WESTLAW and legal and business publications' Web sites (for example, the St. Louis Business Journal or Missouri Lawyers Weekly to find information on St. Louis law firms).
   - Local Business Journals – The CSO has copies of the Book of Lists published by business journals in many cities across the country (including Boston, Chicago, D.C., Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco and St. Louis). The Book of Lists includes a list of the largest law firms in the metropolitan area. However, for some cities, such as St. Louis, the “largest” law firms get fairly small as you go down the list, so it may be useful for smaller firms too. You will need to use the NALP Directory or Martindale to find additional information about these firms, including contact information.
   - National legal journals or periodicals may have articles or lists of employers (ex. National Law Journal or American Lawyer – legal periodicals often publish associate surveys which can give you an indication of what it is like to work for the employer – for example, the annual Mid-Level Associate Survey published by The American Lawyer).

3. **Bar Associations.**
   - Many state and local bar associations, practice area professional associations and affinity group bar associations have member lists which are searchable on the Web. If you are a member of the bar association (frequently student memberships are inexpensive), many bar associations will provide lists of attorney members in different specialties or practice area
groups, even if that information is not publicly available on the Web.

- Job Search Guides containing bar association information are available in the CSO for the following geographic areas: Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Connecticut, Dallas/Houston, Denver, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Massachusetts, Miami, Minneapolis/St. Paul, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Philadelphia Area (inc. Wilmington, DE and Southern NJ), Phoenix, San Francisco, Seattle, St. Louis, Upstate New York, and Washington, DC.


- Talk to friends, other students, professors, CSO, Washington University Law Alumni or past employers about firms, agencies, organizations or lawyers.

- Attend networking receptions organized by the law school or local bar associations both in St. Louis and in other cities.

- Attend bar association CLE opportunities, committee meetings and functions in the city where you wish to eventually practice. Talking to practicing attorneys is a great way to obtain information about legal employers.

- Alumni Connections Database – More than 1,200 Washington University Law Alumni/ae from around the country may be found in this database, assembled by the Alumni & Development Office, and willing to serve as a resource. Available on the Law School Intranet, mylaw.wustl.edu, under Documents.

- Washington University Law Alumni Class Notes – [http://law.wustl.edu/alumni/classnotes.asp](http://law.wustl.edu/alumni/classnotes.asp) – Class Notes is a compilation of information that alumni submit to Washington University Law about their professional and personal lives.

- University Career Connections Database – Database of over 13,000 Washington University alumni & parents who have identified themselves as willing to assist in career path research – [www.wustlconnections.com](http://www.wustlconnections.com); click on career & networking services, student or alumni login.
PRE-INTERVIEW RESEARCH CHECKLIST:

We hear from employers how much candidates stand out if you have done your research. There is a lot of information online, and at a minimum you need to have reviewed the employer’s website, NALP and/or Martindale-Hubbell information, and any materials they have provided to you.

Some things to look for as you research:

How is the firm/agency structured?

What are the major practice areas of the firm? (What percentage of their business/attorneys are in each area?)

Who is the biggest client(s)/type of client(s) of the firm?

In litigation matters, do they generally represent the plaintiff or the defendant?

Where is the firm’s/agency’s main office? Are there satellite offices?

Approximately how many attorneys are in each office?

How does their summer/new associate program run?

Are there Washington University alumni with the firm or agency? Alums of your undergraduate institution?

What are recent big cases/deals the firm has been involved in? (particularly, if highlighted in firm materials/web site) Has the employer been in the news lately?

How does the firm or agency see/portray itself? (look to the website and marketing materials for clues)

What are the bios on the individual interviewers? (if you can find out who you’ll be meeting with)

You may also run across: hiring criteria, salary, bonus structure, percentage of summer associates hired out of prior classes, etc . . .