What Can You Do With Your Law Degree?

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE OF LAW

The Career Resources Center
WHAT CAN I DO WITH A LAW DEGREE?

While the majority of law school graduates go immediately into traditional legal jobs – jobs with the title “lawyer” – thousands of law-trained people find that their career paths take them to jobs where legal training is crucial to performance, but where the title isn’t “lawyer.” These are jobs that do not require a law degree, but can be enhanced because of skills learned in law school. Many of the skills learned in law school (analytical skills, advocacy, communication, research, and the ability to break down a problem into its component parts) are directly transferable to other professions.

HOW DO I FIND THESE POSITIONS?

METHOD 1: Follow your lifelong dream. The most direct method of finding an alternative career is to follow through with whatever has interested or obsessed you since the seventh grade. If you came to law school to "do something, but not law," assess your skill set, which now contains legal analysis and problem solving. Combining new skills and old passions with the contacts that you have developed and will develop because you are interested in a particular issue, will help you give concrete shape to your goals. You will then be able to create a plan to achieve those goals.

METHOD 2: Find your dream. Identify your interests, define your skills, and target prospective employers by understanding their problems and how you can contribute to the solutions. As you sat through law school or worked for some years, do you find yourself particularly interested in one topic? Bring an open mind to discussions of interesting though slightly harebrained schemes, and trust your instincts. Especially for a political science major who never considered anything but law school since the seventh grade, identifying an alternate career -- which may be as mildly offbeat as non-trial work -- is difficult but achievable. Lawyers leave traditional practice all the time.

Issues to explore:

Alternative for whom? Much of what is "non-traditional" for lawyers may be a very traditional career path for someone with specialized training. For example, a Director of Human Resources position may “require” an MBA with a concentration in Personnel. Your four years of employment law could be an appropriate substitute.

What are your interests? If you are interested in sports, and want to represent quarterbacks, unless you are a former pro player or related to one, it may be time to expand your vision of the business of sports. Brainstorm your way through a football game and a football player’s career, considering every bit of instruction, gear, infrastructure, coaching, equipment, insurance, media, sports paraphernalia, licensing by teams and players, licensing by municipalities and more. Note that there are lawyers with clients every step of the way from junior high leagues to the NFL, and that both the helmets and the hot dogs at the sporting events have multiple layers of representation.

What are your skills? If you have managed a litigation caseload or an undergraduate residence hall, you could be a candidate for jobs calling for balancing the competing interests of clients, patients, customers, and suppliers who want immediate attention unless substantive training in something like nuclear physics is required.
**Who are prospective employers?** After defining your interests and skill sets, identify employers with relevant problems is a junior-high level research project. At this stage, you identify the employer’s needs to determine whether they mesh with your desires. You will find yourself reviewing the business press, and the literature of your target industries.

**How do you “know” if a new career is right for you?** The next step is to talk to someone in your target industry – or better yet, someone who has your “dream job.” You will be surprised at the number of people who will talk to you when you call or write beginning with “I admire the work that you do and want to get into your field. May I have 15 minutes of your time?” In these conversations you employ all of your old “Information Interview” techniques, asking about the actual day-to-day work, the relationships between and among colleagues and other constituents, the joys of the job, the stresses of the work and absolutely anything else that you want or need to know. This step is crucial, especially for lawyers making a career change. You know what you don’t like about the job/career you have. This is your chance to make sure that you’re not about to replace one uncomfortable work environment for another.

**How do you approach those employers?** Make a marketing plan and keep in mind that you are the product. Identify the employers who are your targets, figure out ways to meet people in those industries. Read their journals. Join their professional associations. Go to their meetings. Know what you have to offer, and be systematic and persistent in your approach.

At the same time, listen to the people you meet, one or more whom may present some harebrained scheme, for a business or a project that might be “right up your alley.” Pay attention. One of them might be the next Steve Jobs or Steven Spielberg. When something comes along that sounds good, trust your instincts (but do some due diligence on the project, too.)

**Should I rewrite my resume?** A typical legal resume summarizes your experience in language that other lawyers understand. You will need to revise your resume to describe your skills and experiences in words that make sense to non-lawyers. Instead of “Handled 30 arraignments a day” you might describe your work in more detail using “managed,” “presented,” “organized” and “summarized.”

**Will they hate me because I’m a lawyer?** “Hate” is, perhaps, too strong a word for the resistance that you may encounter. Some people have had dreadful experiences with law-trained people who were less than cooperative or who were perhaps not the best of team players. Be prepared in your meetings and interviews to explain (repeatedly) that your complex skill set includes more than “just law,” and reiterate the fact that you are a team player.

**METHOD 3: Serendipity.** Be at the right place at the right time for the "dream job" to be handed to you. While this works often enough to be a reportable job source, relying on it is like doing lifetime financial planning with lottery tickets.

Special thanks to the University of Minnesota Law School
300+ THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH A LAW DEGREE

**Alternative Dispute Resolution**
- Arbitration Administrator
- Arbitrator
- Dispute Resolution Professional
- Domestic Resolution Specialist
- Hearing Officer
- Mediator
- Ombudsman

**Civil Rights**
- Affirmative Action Officer
- ADA Coordinator
- ADA Compliance Manager
- Children’s Advocate
- Civil Rights Analyst
- Civil Rights Investigator
- Conciliation Specialist
- Director, Human Relations
- Director, Human Resources & Cultural Diversity
- Equal Opportunity Compliance Specialist
- Equal Employment Opportunity Manager/Officer
- Human Rights Administrator

**Contract and Procurement**
- Contract Negotiator
- Contract Specialist/Administrator/Officer
- Contract Termination Specialist
- Industrial Property Manager
- Procurement Officer/Analyst
- Purchasing Officer/Director

**Court Administration**
- Assistant Circuit/District Executive for Legal Affairs
- Bankruptcy Administrator
- Bankruptcy Appeals Clerk/Work leader
- Bankruptcy Case Administration Manager
- Bankruptcy Examiner
- Circuit/District Court Executive
- Clerk of Court
- Court Administrator
- Court Analyst
- Court Operations Specialist
- Deputy Clerk
- Disciplinary Administrator
- Estate Administrator
- Friend of the Court
- Guardianship Clerk
- Jury Commissioner
- Land Commissioner
- Legal Documents Officer/Supervisor
- Legal Research Director
- Parole Officer
- Pretrial Services Officer
- Probation Officer/Director
- Registrar
- Reporter of Decisions
- Settlement Director
- Supervisor of Public Trust Accounts
- Support Payments Officer
- Training Professional
- Violations Bureau Manager

**Criminal Justice**
- Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Inspector
- Asset Search/Information Investigator
- Bank Fraud Investigator
- Border Patrol Agent
- Child Abuse Investigator
- Civilian Complaint Review Board Officer
- Compliance Support Inspector
- Consumer Safety Inspector
- Crime Analyst
- Crime Prevention Coordinator
- Criminal Investigation
- Criminal Justice Administrator/Analyst
- Customs Inspector
- DEA Special Agent
- Economic Crimes Investigator
- Enforcement Professional
- FBI Special Agent
- Fines, Penalties and Forfeiture Specialist
- Foreign Service Narcotics Control Officer
- Forensic Investigator
- Game Law Enforcement Officer
- General Investigator/Inspector
- Immigration Inspector
- Inspector General
- Investigations Review Specialist
- Law Enforcement Specialist
- Legal Investigator
- Postal Inspector
- Revenue Officer/Agent
- Securities Fraud Examiner
Seized Property/Asset Management Specialist
Special Agent (Wildlife)
Treasury Enforcement Agent
Victims Compensation Officer/Claims Analyst

**Education Administration**
Assistant to the President/Chancellor
Director of Federal/State Relations
Grants and Contracts Manager
Judicial Affairs Officer
Laboratory Business manager
Law School Career Counselor
Law School Clinical Program Supervisor
Law School Development/Fundraising Officer
Law School Director of Admissions
Law School Director of Alumni Affairs
Law School Director of Institutional Advancement
Law School Director of Career Services
Law School Director of Continuing Legal Education
Law School Director of Student Affairs
Director of Planned Giving
Technology Licensing Associate

**Education Faculty**
Law School Clinical Program Instructor
Law School Professor
Legal Research & Writing Program Instructor
Paralegal Program Instructor
Undergraduate Business Ethics Teacher
Undergraduate Business Law Professor
Undergraduate Criminal Justice Program Instructor
Undergraduate Environmental Policy Teacher
Undergraduate Law and Anthropology Professor
Undergraduate Law and History Professor
Undergraduate Law and Psychology Professor
Undergraduate Law and Society Professor
Undergraduate Legal Studies Program Coordinator
Undergraduate Legal Studies Program Teacher
Undergraduate Security Assistance Management Instructor

Undergraduate/Graduate Labor Relations Instructor
Undergraduate/Graduate Tax Teacher

**Energy**
Energy Advocate
Energy Conservation Program Specialist
Energy Efficiency Officer
Gas Supply/Regulatory Affairs Professional
Mineral Appeals Analyst
Natural Resources Specialist
Public Utilities Specialist

**Environmental Careers**
Coastal Zone Resource Manager
Conservation Field Representative
Director of Environmental Affairs
Director, Legislative Analysis/Environmental Policy
Environmental/Public Health Advocate
Environmental Compliance Manager
Environmental Policy Analyst
Environmental Protection Specialist
Hazardous Waste Management Consultant
Remediation Protection Specialist
Resource Policy Analyst
Safety and Occupational Health Specialist
Technological Program Hazards Specialist
Trade Association Environmental Staffer

**Financial Services**
Bank Investment Compliance Officer
Bank Probate Administrator/Officer
Bankruptcy Analyst
Benefits Professional
Claims/Settlement/Termination Specialist
Compliance Officer
(Commodities/Securities) Consumer Affairs Examiner
Corporate Finance Executive
Credit Examiner
Financial Institution Examiner
Financial Services Sales Agent
Futures Trading Investigator
Investment Banking Officer
Legal Fee Auditor
Loan Administrator/Specialist
Loan Workout Officer
Pension Benefits Examiner
Pension Law Specialist
Probate Accountant
Public Finance Consultant
Securities Compliance Examiner
Securities Firm Executive
Securities Transactions Analyst
Trust Business Development Professional
Trust Employee Benefits Administrator
Trust Examiner
Trust Officer/Administrator
Trust Risk Analyst
U.S. Trustee/Assistant U.S. Trustee

Human Resources
Employee Benefit Plan Specialist
Employee Disability Programs Manager
Employee Relations Manager/Specialist
Government Benefits Director
Health Plan Member Services Coordinator
Lawyer Temporary Agency Manager
Legal Career Counselor
Legal Search Consultant
Manpower Development Specialist
Personnel Management Specialist
Public Guardian
Reemployment Rights Compliance Specialist
Retirement System Administrator
Salary Administration Specialist
Veterans Program Specialist

Insurance
Bankruptcy Claims Examiner
Civil Service Retirement Claims Examiner
Claims Representative/Manager
Dependent and Estates Claims Examiner
Document Compliance Specialist
Environmental Claims Specialist
Errors and Omissions Claims Manager
General Claims Examiner
Health Benefits Program Analyst
Health Care Policy Analyst
Health Plan Member Services Coordinator
Insurance Agent
Insurance Fraud Investigator
Litigation Examiner
Loss and Damage Claims Examiner
Pension Investigator
Personal Trust Product Manager
Risk Manager
Social Insurance Administrator/Representative
Social Insurance Claims Examiner

Transportation Claims Examiner
Unemployment Insurance Administrator
Veterans Claims Examiner
Workers’ Compensation Claims Examiner
Workers’ Compensation Program Specialist

International Affairs/Trade
Commercial Loan Specialist
Customs Entry and Liquidation Specialist
Economic Development Project Officer
Export Administrator
Export Control Specialist
Export Insurance Issuing Specialist
Foreign Affairs Officer
Foreign Service Officer
Foreign Trade Zone Manager
Import Compliance Specialist
International Agency Liaison Officer
International Relations Officer
International Trade Analyst/Specialist
Passport and Visa Examiner
Political Risk Insurance Officer
U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service Officer

Intellectual Property
Copyright Examiner
Intellectual Resource Director
Patent Administrator
Patent Examiner
Patentability Review Examiner
Patent/Technology Licensing Officer
Technology Transfer Director
Trademark Examiner
University Corporate Liaison Officer

Intellectual Property
Aviation Security Specialist/Officer
Foreign Assets Control Intelligence Analyst
Foreign Service Diplomatic Security Officer
Industrial Security Specialist/Officer
Information Security Specialist/Officer
Intelligence Officer
Intelligence Research Specialist
Internal Security Specialist/Officer
Personnel Security Specialist/Officer
Physical Security Specialist/Officer
Security Administration Specialist/Officer
Security Classification Specialist/Officer
Security Inspector

Insurance
Aviation Security Specialist/Officer
Foreign Assets Control Intelligence Analyst
Foreign Service Diplomatic Security Officer
Industrial Security Specialist/Officer
Information Security Specialist/Officer
Intelligence Officer
Intelligence Research Specialist
Internal Security Specialist/Officer
Personnel Security Specialist/Officer
Physical Security Specialist/Officer
Security Administration Specialist/Officer
Security Classification Specialist/Officer
Security Inspector
**Labor Relations**
- Industrial Relations Manager/Specialist
- Labor Investigator
- Labor Management Relations Examiner
- Labor Negotiator
- Labor Relations Manager/Specialist/Analyst
- Wage and Hour Law Administrator
- Wage and Hour Law Compliance Specialist

**Legal Administration**
- Bar Association Professional
- CLE Training Manager/Specialist
- Litigation Management Professional
- Law Firm Administrator/Executive Director
- Law Firm Management Consultant
- Law Firm Recruiter
- Legal Services Program Executive Director
- Pro Bono Coordinator

**Legal Documents/Information**
- Analyst in Social Legislation
- Freedom of Information Act/Privacy Act Officer
- Law Librarian
- Law Library Computer Network Manager
- Legal Archivist
- Legal Database Manager
- Legal Instruments Examiner
- Legal Researcher
- Litigation Support Specialist

**Legislation and Regulatory Affairs**
- Congressional Affairs Specialist
- Governmental Affairs/Relations Positions
- Legislative Analyst/Director
- Legislative Assistant
- Legislative Correspondent
- Legislative Program Manager
- Legislative Representative
- Legislative Staff Director
- Lobbyist
- Manager of Regulatory Affairs
- Policy Advocate
- Policy Analyst
- Regulations/Rulings Specialist
- Regulatory Compliance Director
- Regulatory Impact Analyst

**Management**
- Acquisitions/Divestiture Professional
- City/County Clerk/ Administrator
- Elections Administrator Officer
- Emergency Management Specialist
- Foundation Executive/Program Manager
- Grants Management Specialist
- Management Analyst
- Nonprofit Advocacy Organization Manager
- Program Analyst/Officer
- Trade/Professional Association Executive

**Marketing**
- Bar Review Regional Director/Administrator
- Director of Gift and Estate Planning
- Economic Development Positions
- Franchise Development Manager
- Law Firm Director of Client Relations
- Law Firm Business Development Editor
- Legal Cost Management Sales Consultant
- Public Affairs Specialist

**Miscellaneous**
- Advocacy Coordinator
- Child Support Enforcement Case Analyst
- Civil Penalties Officer
- Corporate Secretary
- Ethics Officer
- Family Support Magistrate
- Food Program Specialist
- Hidden Assets Investigator
- Internal Affairs Director (State/Local Agencies)
- Legal Fee Auditor/Legal Cost Specialist
- License Examining Specialist
- Municipal Code Enforcement Officer
- Professional Licensing Board Compliance Officer
- Senior Paralegal
- Small Business Advocate
- Trade Specialist
- Unclaimed Property Administrator/Officer

**Publishing/Broadcasting**
- Acquisitions Editor
- Legal Writer/Editor
- Law Firm Business Development Editor
- Law Correspondent/Reporter
- Legal Newspaper/Journal Publisher
- Legal Publisher Account Representative/Executive
- Technical Legal Information Specialist
- Technical Writer/Editor (Law)
Real Estate/Housing
Director of Real Estate
Housing Advocate
Housing Authority Director/Professional
Housing Service Planner
Land Agent
Land Law Examiner
Land Preservation Director
Land Protection Director/Specialist
Real Estate Auction Project Manager
Realty Specialist/Officer
Tenant’s Broker
Title Examiner
Zoning Administrator

Taxation
Estate Tax Examiner
International Tax Analyst
Property & Transaction Taxes Manager
Tax Law Specialist
Tax Manager/Tax Planning Manager
Tax Research Manager

Transportation
Ad measurer
Boating Law Administrator
Highway Safety Specialist
Marine Transportation Policy Analyst
Traffic Management Specialist
Vessel Traffic Specialist
Resources

There are a number of resources for students and alumni seeking information about alternative careers. The following resources are available in the Career Resources library and may be useful in a search for alternative career options.

*Alternative Careers for Lawyers* (available in the Resources Library)
  - **Author:** Hillary Mantis
  - **Published:** New York, NY: Princeton Review Publishing, 1997

*Beyond LA Law: Break the Traditional Lawyer Mold* (available in the Resources Library)
  - **Author:** Janet Smith, Ed.
  - **Published:** Harcourt Brace, 1998

*Breaking Traditions: Work Alternatives for Lawyers* (available in the Resources Library)
  - **Published:** ABA Section of Law Practice Management, 1993

*Changing Jobs: A Handbook for Lawyers in the 90's* (available in the Resources Library)
  - **Author:** Heidi McNeil (Ed.)
  - **Published:** American Bar Association, 1994

*Doors Open to Alternative Careers*
  - **Published:** Maryland Bar Journal, Maryland Bar Association, March-April 1992, p. 3-6

*Federal Law-Related Careers Directory*
  - **Author:** Richard L. Hermann, Linda P. Sutherland, and Jeannette J. Sobojian (Eds.)
  - **Published:** Washington, DC: Federal Reports, Inc., 1994

*Full Disclosure: Do You Really Want to be a Lawyer?* (out of print)
  - **Author:** S.J. Bell
  - **Published:** Chicago, IL: American Bar Association, 1992

*J.D. Preferred, 400+ Things You Can Do With a Law Degree (Other Than Practice Law)*
  - **Published:** Washington, DC: Federal Reports, Inc., 1994

*The Lawyer's Career Change Handbook* (available in the Resources Library)
  - **Author:** Hindi Greenberg
  - **Published:** New York, NY: Avon Books, 1998

*Lawyers in Transition: Planning a Life in the Law* (available in the Resources Library)
  - **Author:** M. Byers, D. Samuelson, and G. Williamson
  - **Published:** Natick, MA: Barkley Company, Inc., 1988

*Life After Law: Second Careers for Lawyers*
  - **Author:** M.A. Altman

*Non-Legal Careers for Lawyers, 3rd Ed.* (available in the Resources Library)
Author Gary Munneke and William Henslee  
Published American Bar Association, 1994

The Road Not Taken: A Practical Guide to Exploring Non-Legal Career Options  
(available in the Resources Library)  
Author K. Grant and W. Werner  
Published Washington, DC: National Association for Law Placement, 1991

Running from the Law: Why Good Lawyers are Getting Out of the Legal Profession  
(available in the Resources Library)  
Author Deborah Arron  
Published Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1991

Turning Points-New Paths & Second Careers for Lawyers (available in the Resources Library)  
Author G. Cain  
Published American Bar Association Senior Lawyers Division, 1994

Author Deborah Arron  
Published Seattle, WA: Niche Press, 1999