

Job search guide with advice, resources, and forms.

The 90 Minute Job Search Guide for Lawyers: A Book You Can Read in 90 Minutes

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**The 90 Minute Job Search
Guide for Lawyers**

***A Book You Can Read in 90
Minutes***

Erin C. Coleman, JD

The 90 Minute Job Search Guide for Lawyers
A Book You Can Read in 90 Minutes

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INTRODUCTION

Have you decided that if you have to write one more memorandum comparing the statutes of limitations for filing a contracts claim in Delaware and New York, you are not sure you will make it to partnership? Does your position in the District Attorney's Office have no resemblance to *Law & Order*, and that's not a good thing? Do you want to save the whales, the trees, and the children, but being a lawyer for a nonprofit only makes you want to start another nonprofit called "Save the Bored Lawyers"? Put another way—Is it time for you to look for a new job? If the answer is "Yes," *The 90 Minute Job Search Guide for Lawyers* is the book for you.

No, you cannot in most instances complete your job search in 90 minutes, but you can read this book in that amount of time. As an attorney or any legal professional, you do not have a lot of time. There are many great resources out there about searching for and getting a job, but in the time that it takes to read these books, you could be searching for a new job. There are other resources that include self-assessment tools and a lot more information about finding happiness as well as finding a job; however, some of these resources are more than 300 pages long!! These books are often good resources and are in no way mutually exclusive with this book. In fact, there is a list (*Appendix H*) in this book that includes the titles of some of these books. However, if you have bills and student loans to pay, and you need a job yesterday, this is the book for you.

The 90 Minute Job Search Guide for Lawyers is for those who do not have the time or maybe just don't have the desire to read 300 or more pages. This is a bare-bones book with a few tips about searching for a job, accepting a job, and

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many of the steps in between. This book can be a starting point or it can be a refresher. For example, this is a book that you can pull out right before your interview for a few pointers before going into the interview without having to flip through hundreds of pages to find out whether you should ask about salary at the initial interview. This is more of a quick reference book, not an encyclopedia.

This book is written for the person who has never conducted a job search as well as those who have conducted several job searches. If you are the latter, do not be insulted by the suggestions in this book. To the more experienced job searcher, some of the suggestions might seem too simple to put down on paper. But, whether the suggestions in this book are simple or complex, my hope is that the suggestions are useful and helpful to you. For the first-time job searcher and the most experienced job searcher, this book is merely advice. You can follow it or not follow it—in the end—do what is most comfortable to you and what makes sense to you.

Simply stated, this is a book you can read in 90 minutes. This is *The 90 Minute Job Search Guide for Lawyers*.

Chapter Five

Hello! Your Cover Letter

The cover letter is your opportunity to introduce yourself and to explain not only why you want the job but why you are the best person for the job. It is an opportunity to pull from your resume those transferable skills that would be beneficial in the position sought. Although you want to express that you want the job and why you want the job, do not use the cover letter as the mechanism to express your job search wish list. Think about what you would want to know if you were the employer reading this cover letter and you were trying to hire a person for the position. Generally, not literally, tell the employer how you would make the employer's life easier if hired. Tell the employer why you are the person for the job. Do not merely state that you are the person for the job—support your statements with examples. Also, look at the job description. This can tell you what the employer is looking for as well as what credentials are needed for the position. Make sure that whatever you write in your cover letter, you ensure that you have used correct grammar, there are no typos, and the spelling is correct. Get a friend or family member to review the cover letter for you. Send the cover letter to your law school career services office if the office offers the service of reviewing cover letters and resumes. I promise, you can read the letter 100 times and not realize that you have stated that “I worked **their** for ten years” instead of “I worked **there** for ten years.”

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Make sure that your cover letter conveys what you want to convey but also is to the point and not too long. Your cover letter in most cases should not exceed two pages—one page is even better. Just as when you are meeting someone for the first time at a networking event you would not spend an hour introducing yourself, you do not need to have a five page cover letter. You want to grab the reader’s attention and convey important information.

Include items in your cover letter that you could not put in your resume as long as the items are relevant to the job for which you are applying. For example, in certain industries, an “Objective” section is included in the resume. An “Objective” section might provide as follows:

Objective: To obtain an associate position in a law firm in the Corporate Department.

For a legal resume, instead of including an “Objective” section, place that information in your cover letter.

If you are conducting a long distance job search, include information that indicates your ties, if any, to the targeted geographic area. For example, if you are living in Washington, DC and you are applying for a job in Atlanta, Georgia, if you were born in Atlanta, include a sentence such as the following: “As a native of Atlanta, Georgia, I am eager to move back home to practice law.” You could also include in your cover letter times that you will be visiting the targeted city and a statement that you would like to meet: “I will be in Atlanta March 2, 2009 – March 9, 2009 and would welcome the opportunity to meet with you.”

The following is a sample job advertisement and a sample cover letter in responding to this ad. Place the cover letter on high quality paper such as linen in a neutral color such as white or cream. This sample job advertisement will be the basis for other documents in this book, such as the resume and references.

Sample Job Ad

ABC Law Firm is searching for an associate with at least 2-4 years of experience working in a large law firm to work in its Corporate Department in the Atlanta, Georgia office. The candidate should have experience in general corporate law, securities, and mergers and acquisitions. Banking law experience is a plus.

Please send a copy of your resume with a cover letter and law school transcript by mail or by e-mail to Walter Coleman by March 2, 2009 for consideration. No phone calls please.

Walter Coleman
Hiring Partner
ABC Law Firm
1234 Symphony Way
Atlanta, GA 30309
wcoleman@ABCLawFirm.com

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Sample Cover Letter

HEATHER L. PARKS

1200 Music Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 111-1111
hp123@fakemailaddress.com

February 2, 2009

Mr. Walter Coleman
Hiring Partner
ABC Law Firm
1234 Symphony Way
Atlanta, GA 30309

Re: Application for Associate Position in Corporate Department at ABC Law Firm

Mr. Coleman:

I am writing to express my interest in the associate position in the Corporate Department at ABC Law Firm, in the Atlanta, Georgia office, listed on the ABC Law Firm Web site. My current position is at Big Law Firm as an associate in the Corporate Department in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to that, I worked in the Washington, DC office of Big Law Firm in the Corporate Department. As an attorney who practiced law in the District of Columbia for two years, and in Atlanta, Georgia, I have gained experience that will allow me to make a substantial contribution to ABC Law Firm.

As you will find from my resume, my legal experience allows me to satisfy many of the requirements listed for the position of an associate at your law firm. At Big Law Firm, in addition to drafting and negotiating various merger agreements and associated documents, I recently closed the acquisition by my firm's client, a large national bank, of another bank. Additionally, I assisted in various aspects of the formation of state-chartered banks in Georgia. From the first day that I sat in my *Securities Regulation* course at Georgetown University Law Center to the Form 10-K I filed last week, I have enjoyed learning the intricacies of securities law and using that knowledge in my law practice. I would welcome the opportunity to join ABC Law Firm as an associate in the Corporate Department in Atlanta, Georgia where I can provide top-notch service to clients while working on sophisticated corporate matters only handled by a law firm such as your law firm.

Please find attached my resume and law school transcript. If you have any questions, comments, or would like further information from me, please contact me at (404) 111-1111 or at home via e-mail at hp123@fakemailaddress.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration of my application for the position of an associate at ABC Law Firm.

Sincerely,

Heather L. Parks

Attachments

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As discussed in the chapter entitled “Where are the Jobs?: Searching for Job Openings,” you can send a cover letter to a list of employers for which you would like to work to ask about job openings. The following is a sample of such a cover letter.

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Sample Cover Letter – Cold Letter

HEATHER L. PARKS

1200 Music Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
(404) 111-1111
hp123@fakemailaddress.com

February 2, 2009

Mr. Walter Coleman
Hiring Partner
ABC Law Firm
1234 Symphony Way
Atlanta, GA 30309

Re: Associate Position in the Corporate Department at ABC Law Firm

Mr. Coleman:

I am writing to express my interest in any open associate positions at ABC Law Firm in the Corporate Department of your Atlanta, Georgia office. My current position is at Big Law Firm as an associate in the Corporate Department in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to that, I worked in the Washington, DC office of Big Law Firm in the Corporate Department. As an attorney who practiced law in the District of Columbia for two years, and in Atlanta, Georgia, I have gained experience that will allow me to make a substantial contribution to ABC Law Firm.

At Big Law Firm, in addition to drafting and negotiating various merger agreements and associated documents, I recently closed the acquisition by my firm's client, a large national bank, of another bank. Additionally, I assisted in various aspects of the formation of state-chartered banks in Georgia. From the first day that I sat in my *Securities Regulation* course at Georgetown University Law Center to the Form 10-K I filed last week, I have enjoyed learning the intricacies of securities law and using that knowledge in my law practice. I would welcome the opportunity to join ABC Law Firm as an associate in the Corporate Department in Atlanta, Georgia where I can provide top-notch service to clients while working on sophisticated corporate matters only handled by a law firm such as your law firm.

Please find attached my resume. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you. If you would like to meet with me, have any questions, or would like further information from me, please contact me at (404) 111-1111 or at home via e-mail at hp123@fakemailaddress.com. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Heather L. Parks

Attachment

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