

Factors that Matter More than Where You Went to Law School



Summary: A good law school is not the only thing that matters when you are trying to have a long, productive future with a good law firm.

There is no denying that the law school you attend is important but it is not the only or most important thing to consider for a successful future with a good law firm. “[How Much Does the Law School You Went to Matter?](#)” by Harrison Barnes explores this issue that a lot of law school graduates and attorneys ignore. Law school can help a recent graduate get into a top law firm but they won’t last unless they have other factors to carry them along.

10 Other Factors Worth More to Law Firms:

Previous Experience – When you are starting out and applying to law firms before your graduation from law school, your law school is the only thing the law firm has to go off of. They want to see graduates of top law schools because that means you had the LSAT scores to get into the school. Once you have been part of the legal industry for a number of years, having graduated from a top law school is actually a deterrent for many law firms because they assume you will feel entitled to special treatment. Instead they want to see previous work history from top law firms because it means you have been trained properly. Other valuable experience is clerkships for federal judges, work in patent and trademark offices, and work in a prosecutor’s office.

Grades in Law School – You may have gone to a top law school but if you did poorly then the law school you attended doesn’t matter. Getting top grades at any school proves you what it takes to get the job done in the best quality.

Practice Area – Law firms do not like to see someone switching practice areas. This shows a lack of commitment to practicing law. Law firms will now that someone switching practice areas may just quit if they change is not what they expected. There are also practice areas that do not have long-term futures without books of business, especially for those in litigation. There are a lot of attorneys in litigation so trying to stay in the practice area will not happen unless you have your own business to bring, law firms likely won’t be needing to pick up more litigators.

Time Stayed at Legal Jobs/Stability – An attorney that jumps around from law firm to law firm is seen as a flight risk. They want to hire someone who stays with their firm for a long period of time. An attorney needs to be staying with each job for a few years so show they are able to settle in with a law firm happily and can do that again.

Book of Business – Once you have been practicing law for five or six years, you should be starting to build up your list of clients. An attorney that has business secured at a high enough billing rate does not need to worry about what law school they went to when looking for a new position.

Reputation – A good reputation can go a long way in the legal industry. When other attorneys respect your wiliness to work hard, commitment to the work, and intelligence, your law school does not matter. A law firm will be more willing to meet with an attorney looking for new position if they have that reputation carrying them along.

Interest in Practice Area/Involvement – Displaying a commitment to your practice area as well as a commitment to your community goes a long with a law firm. An attorney does this by being involved with their bar association, speaking at seminars, teaching classes, writing papers and more. Many of the best attorneys have a resume filled with papers, speeches, and positions on organization boards. The more active you are in the legal community, the more the law firm believes you are committed to your career.

Appearance – How an attorney dresses, looks and acts will either make it or break it for their legal career. An attorney that has weak credentials but looks good with a good attitude has a good chance of making with a big law firm. While this is not always the case, an attorney that has good hygiene, dresses well, takes care of themselves, and has a good personality has a better chance at success.

Racial and Social Background – There are law firms that exist under specific cultural guidelines. Some are comprised of black women others of Jewish men. While no one wants to admit that there is discrimination within law firms, the truth is discrimination, or reverse discrimination exists.

Commitment to Working in a Law Firm – Taking time off from work, going in-house, or doing other things that show you may not be

completely committed to working at a law firm will be noticed by law firms.

What do you think attorneys can do to make themselves more valuable? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about what hurts an attorneys career, read these articles:

- 10 Mistakes Attorneys Make That Kill Their Careers
- [Going In-house Is Career Suicide for Good Attorneys](#)
- [A Career Killer That Attorneys Are Not Told About](#)

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