

Work Experience Does Matter for Law School Applications



Summary: Putting off law school for a year may a good idea since many top law schools are now weighing work experience with higher priority.

Law school applications used to rely heavily on Law School Admissions Test Scores and grade point average to decide which students to admit. A strong personal statement could also play a pivotal role that students knew they needed to pay attention to, according to [U.S. News](#).

Law schools have been putting greater priority into the work experience that students are bringing with them, in a way telling potential students that they may fair better going out and doing an internship or volunteer work instead of applying straight from college.

Former [Harvard Law School](#) Dean Martha Minow started the change in 2009 when she told the admissions committee to “give extra weight to applicants with experience since college.” A result of this move was a drop in students moving straight from college to Harvard. In 2009, 40 percent of students matriculating at Harvard that had come straight from college was 40 percent. This was done to 19 percent by the Class of 2020.

[Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law](#) Dean Daniel B. Rodriguez confirmed to Fortune magazine that they also put “a strong emphasis on work experience,” starting with their fall 2017 class, where 86 percent of the students had at least one year of post-college experience.

Now that application numbers are starting to creep back up since the recession, law schools will have the ability to be more selective when evaluating applicants. Work experience may be the reason one student is selected over another with similar academic credentials. This increase in applicants, referred to as the “Trump Bump,” was credited with encouraging those who were involved in legal disciplines to pursue law school.

Students that are not wanting to put off law school for a year or two can still level the playing field. Applicants can utilize whatever experience they do have, such as summer internships, teaching or research assistant positions, and any leadership positions from chairing the pre-law society or editor of the law review. Whatever experience the student has, it should be part of their law school resume and emphasized whenever possible.

One place to highlight experience is in the personal statement where it can be brought to the reader’s attention about what that experience has taught you. This also allows the student to provide specific examples of any particular events that played a role in their development of leadership, maturity, and diligence.

These law students can also include an addendum with their application that explains their lack of experience to the admissions committee. Law students should be including one when they know part of the application will make the law school apprehensive about them but the student has a valid reason for the weakness.

Remember, not every law school emphasizes work experience so before doing the addendum, ensure the law school is looking for work experience.

Do you think work experience is important? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about law school applications, read these articles:

- [Law School Applications See Big Boost in Numbers This Cycle](#)
- [Number of Law School Applications Increased for 2018](#)
- [Law School Application Advice from Recent Graduates](#)

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