



How To Conduct An Effective Targeted Mailing Of Your Resume

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Mass mailing doesn't have to be ineffective. In fact, it can be highly effective if done right. The key to making it so is to understand the difference between just any mass mailing and a carefully planned, targeted mailing.

While a standard mass mailing can be very haphazard and mostly worthless, a good targeted mailing can be one of the most worthwhile and efficient means of finding your next legal job. And that is exactly what Legal Authority specializes in.

A targeted mailing campaign takes mass mailing to the next level. Traditionally, mass mailing has involved randomly targeting every potential employer in a geographical area (using the phone book or an Internet directory) and sending each one of them a bland generic cover letter (addressed to "To Whom It May Concern") along with a resume. However, targeted mass mailing is much more than this. It takes the traditional mass-mailing format and improves it in several ways:

- It refines the list of potential employers, targeting only those that fit your specific skill set.
- It expands the employer list to include not only the names of firms and companies, but also the names of specific contacts at each firm or company.
- It allows the cover letters that are sent with each resume to appear personalized, even if they are generic.

Of course, all this is far easier said than done. In fact, it may seem a daunting task to even begin thinking of tailoring such a large list so specifically. And in reality, if one were to try to do it on his or her own, it would indeed be a daunting task, albeit not an impossible one. Your best bet is to subscribe to a service that does all of this for you. While such services are not inexpensive, they pay for themselves in the time saved and the chances of finding your next job. Of course, this is what Legal Authority does.

To understand how a service like Legal Authority can help you or so that you may determine how to do your own targeted mailing, this article will explain the dynamics of tailoring your mass mailing.

Refining the List of Employers

When doing a mass mailing, it is both very inefficient and ineffective to simply send out a resume to any employer in your geographical area of interest. It is also very time consuming. In all, do-it-yourself mass mailing is not an exciting endeavor. However, by refining your search parameters to closer match your skill set, you will at least make the mailing more effective and efficient should you choose to do it yourself.

Refining your search entails defining your specific skill set. What type of law do you want to practice? For what type of firm or company would you like to work? Depending on whether you are looking for employment with a law firm or with a company as an in-house counsel, you will want to structure your skill set accordingly.



Law Firms

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Practice Area

If you are looking to work in a law firm, you will want to know in which practice areas you would consider working. If you have found a deep-rooted love for defense litigation, for example, you will want to target firms that focus on this practice area. If you loathe entertainment law, you will want to be sure not to target any firms that focus only on entertainment law.

Of course, the question always arises about which firms you should exclude from your job search. Should you exclude a firm simply because it lists a practice area with which you are uncomfortable among other practice areas that you may wish to target?

The answer is a clear and resounding NO. If you were to look only for employers who specialized only in your specific practice areas, then your employer list would be rather short, limited mainly to a few boutiques. Remember that mass mailing is always a numbers game. The more resumes you send out, the more chances you have of getting called in for an interview, and hence, the more likely you are to obtain a job offer. By over-limiting your search, you limit your chances.

So what do you do? You send your resume out to all the potential employers that list your desired practice area(s). What difference will it make to you if they are boutiques specializing in your favorite practice area or if you would be the only attorney in their firms working in that area? Either way, your cover letter and resume will make it clear in which practice area you desire to work (and for which you are qualified), and thus, you will not have to worry about being hired on for a practice area you despise. And any job offer is better than none, even if it's not exactly what you wanted. You can always turn it down.

Of course, figuring out which practice area a firm works with is not always easy. Some firms, especially the larger ones, may work in 30 different practice areas, but perhaps the specific office you are applying to focuses on only 5 of those. Or as often happens, many firms will list some practice areas on a public general directory website, such as Martindale.com, while presenting a slightly different list on their own website. The reasoning behind this is simple-many firms don't want to limit what they practice, or perhaps they lost one or more practice groups to a lateral move, etc. Consider this fictitious, yet common, example:

John is an accomplished real estate associate relocating to Seattle from Los Angeles. He wants to continue practicing real estate law, but knows that there will be fewer real estate firms in Seattle than in L.A. He tailors his search toward real estate law anyway, targeting any firm that lists real estate law on its website or on a public page. Several of these firms list it only on public pages, and their websites have no mention of real estate. One such firm is McConnely, Kineagar & Phelps. The local hiring partner receives John's resume and is impressed by his experience. However, McConnely, Kineagar & Phelps ended its real estate practice six months before, when its only real estate partner moved to another firm. Despite this, the hiring partner sees that John could probably bring in business with his credentials. He decides to interview John and then hires him to restart the firm's real estate practice.



All in all, it's a numbers game. Send your resume to as many potential employers as possible, regardless of whether or not you are 100% sure that they are exactly what you are looking for.

You may ask, then, why you should even refine your search according to practice area. The answer is that by doing so, you can refine your resume and cover letter to focus specifically on the practice area(s) that you would like to work in. That way, your letter and resume will not seem so generic. Potential employers will also be impressed that you took the time to research their firms' practices.

Firm Size

Many attorneys have specific preferences regarding the size of the firm that they would like to work for. Some prefer the opportunities presented in large-firm environments. Others would rather enjoy the friendly feel of small firms. We are not going to advise you on which one is better; it's all just a matter of personal preference. However, we will advise you to decide and to integrate that decision into your targeted mass mailing.

If you want a small firm, apply to one with a maximum number of attorneys that you define as your preference. If you want a large firm, choose a minimum number. Or choose a specific range if you are very clear on what you want. This, however, brings up an interesting question: Should you go by overall firm size or by the size of the local office?

The answer is clear. With any targeted mass mailing, you are applying to local offices in your geographical area of choice. That means that you are sending a resume to the hiring contact at that local office, not to the regional or national hiring director. You will thus be considered primarily for that office. Therefore, regardless of the size of the firm as a whole, tailor your search according to the size of each local office.

If you do it any differently, you will run into several problems. The most common occurs with those wishing to work in a large-firm environment, where they are in a large office surrounded by many fellow attorneys. However, when they apply to the local office, they may find that that particular office only has two or three attorneys. It is therefore very different from what they actually want.

On the other hand, if you are looking for a small-firm environment, you can find it in a local office of a large firm if that local office has very few attorneys. While the approach is certainly not perfect, it is better than finding the exact opposite of what you were looking for. Plus, this allows you to send your resume to more offices. Once again, this is all a numbers game.

Companies

Becoming an in-house counsel is no easy task. It is important that those seeking such positions keep open minds. However, there are a few ways to refine an in-house search.

Target all companies, not just those that have counsels

About the worst thing you can do in an in-house search is to target only those companies that already have in-house counsels. Think about it. Unless you are only sending your resumes to Fortune 500



companies, how many of the companies that you will be targeting will have more than one counsel in their local offices? That means that many of the companies you send your resume to will already have one counsel and may not wish to add another.

Of course, you should still send your resume to these companies. Who knows if they have been having problems with their existing counsel and are looking to replace him or her? It doesn't hurt for you to try; many legal jobs are found this way.

You really must, however, set a minimum company size. This can be done by examining revenues. For instance, perhaps you will send your resume only to those companies that have \$5 million or more per year in revenues. Keep in mind, however, that many companies misreport their revenues on public listings, or many public listings extrapolate revenues when the company is not forthcoming with an exact figure. Thus, it is often a better idea to search according to number of employees. However, you then run into the problem of actually finding that information, even if it is more accurate.

Either way you choose to do it, setting a minimum company size will allow you to target all companies that have enough money and operations to afford an in-house counsel, and need one, regardless of whether or not they already have one.

So what happens when you send your resume to a company that doesn't already have an in-house counsel? Well, they may very well reject you, and you have really lost nothing if they do. However, perhaps they have been looking for a counsel, or perhaps the CEO or General Manager sees your resume and decides the office needs a counsel. Consider the fictitious example below:

Fred is looking to transition from his law-firm-partner position into the role of in-house counsel in the Houston area. He sends his resume out in a carefully targeted mass mailing. The first 50 percent of his mailing is to offices that already have counsels. The other 50 percent is to offices that don't. One of the latter, Purple Mountain Majesty Exporters has never had a counsel in its Houston office. However, the counsel in the main office is always busy, and the Houston office is one of the company's rising stars. The local General Manager sees the resume and proposes to the regional Vice President that they hire a counsel specifically for that office. The VP agrees, and the GM calls Fred in for an interview.

The same principle holds true for companies as for law firms. Target the local offices. If a local office of a large or small company has high revenues, it is very likely to hire its own counsel. Don't go by the revenues or employee sizes for the company as a whole; you may end up sending your resume to an office that only has two employees and \$100,000 a year in revenues.

Target the industries that you prefer, but be open

If you are an environmental nut, you won't want to go work for a strip-mining company. On the other hand, if you think strip mining is a good thing, you won't want to go work for an environmental organization dedicated to stopping it. While an extreme example, this illustrates the point that you should think about which industries you are targeting.



If it really doesn't matter to you what kind of company you work for, send your resume to all of them. But for many, it does matter. Use industry descriptions and Standard Industry Classification (SIC) codes to limit your search to those companies that specialize in things you feel comfortable with. This will also allow you to more specifically tailor your resume and cover letter.

Of course, the same rule applies here as to practice areas with law firms. Industry descriptions and SIC code listings are not always 100% accurate (in fact, they almost never are). Don't be discouraged if your resume gets sent out to a company in a different industry. Remember that any job offer is better than none. It's all a numbers game.

Finding the Name of a Contact at Each Potential Employer

Conducting a mass mailing addressed to "To Whom It May Concern" is grossly ineffective. It lacks any personal touch and is immediately labeled as a mass mailing. Remember that the point is to make a potential employer think that you are not doing anything generic, that you have specifically researched and targeted it.

Thus, it is vitally important to find the names of contacts at the firms or companies to which you wish to send your resume. A cover letter addressed to "Mr. Jones" is infinitely more effective than one addressed to "HR/Recruiting Coordinator."

So you may ask to whom in particular you should be sending your resume. You may automatically think about the HR or recruiting director. This, however, is sometimes a mistake. While it certainly makes the most sense procedurally, just think about how many resumes the HR or recruiting director sees every day. Your resume stands a better-than-average chance of being simply filed away.

If, however, you send your resume to a partner (especially a hiring partner) or to the top executive at a company's local office, you have a better statistical chance. Fewer resumes come across their personal desks. And if they look at your resume and like it, they'll forward it along to the HR or recruiting director themselves. And think of how much more attention the HR or recruiting director will pay to a resume forwarded by the General Manager, the Hiring Partner, or the CEO. In short, take the time to find the best person to whom to send your resume. If you don't have this information, look it up or invest in a service such as Legal Authority that has already done the research for you.