



Job boards and advertisements: how helpful are they?

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When you start thinking about a career move, you may choose to begin by looking on Internet job boards and in the classifieds—either those in the legal newspapers or those on the Internet (such as LawCrossing.com or Monster.com)—and answer the job opportunities that seem interesting and attractive, even if you are not completely sure of your direction. Answering advertisements benefits your job search in several significant ways:

- Reading want ads gives you a general idea of the viability of the job market in the geographical area you are considering.
- Scanning help-wanted pages familiarizes you with the kinds of credentials that legal employers are seeking in your specialty area.
- Responding to advertisements within your particular area of expertise will provide an opportunity to “test the waters,” to see what response your resume triggers and discover how well your credentials attract employers.
- Advertisements that result in interviews also offer the occasion for you to sharpen your interviewing skills, practice describing your accomplishments, and see how you do as a “free agent” in the legal job market.

Remember: answering classified ads is not the most time-efficient or effective way to find a new legal job, nor is it a substitute for self-marketing. Answering ads is not enough by itself. As an ancillary way of seeking employment, however, it is well worth the effort. Indeed, comprehensive Internet job boards, such as LawCrossing.com, provide you with detailed information regarding current legal-job market trends and often have resources to enhance your search. By studying the job descriptions, you can learn how employers view their open positions.

In addition, there is a sort of a strange psychological benefit, a “halo effect,” that happens when a job seeker starts answering even a few advertisements per week. An exercise as seemingly simple as mailing in a cover letter and resume answering an ad gives a person a sense of momentum, a feeling that at least he or she is doing something to move into the future and beyond the present job.

Keep in mind that your reply letters to various legal employment ads are, by nature, business communications. For many law firms, electronic mail still seems too casual a form of communication for job applications. So no emails, unless requested by the advertisement.