



Q: Dear Legal Eagle,

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What is the optimal time to try a lateral move between law firms in different states?

Signed . . .Moving

A: Dear Moving,

Relocating to a different state is a big career move and Legal Authority is highly experienced in assisting attorneys with this big step because so many of our clients are making this move. There are several things you can do now to get better situated for the relocation. You should first determine whether or not your firm has a branch in the city you are considering relocating to. Assuming that a lateral transfer within your firm is not an option, there are steps that will make the transition easier.

1. Sign up to Take the Bar Exam in the State you are Considering Relocating to.

It is possible that you have already taken the bar exam in the state you are considering relocating to. If not, you should strongly consider signing up for the bar exam before you search for a position. Nothing shows a firm that you are dedicated to a long-term practice there than taking the steps to become licensed in a particular state.

2. Perform as Well as You can at Your Current Firm.

Even though you have plans to leave your firm in the relative short term, you should not burn any bridges. The relationship you have with your current firm is extremely important in your job search. The advantage that many lawyers have when relocating is there is usually a personal reason for making the move and not any underlying dispute or conflict with their current firm. Having said that, good references and relationships will be an asset throughout your whole career. Therefore, it is vital that you resist the urge to adopt the mentality that it doesn't matter how you perform, since you'll be gone soon anyway.

3. Wait if necessary.

Although it may sound counterintuitive coming from a service that charges to assist you in relocating, you may be better off waiting. Associates are generally most marketable when they have between 1-7 years of experience. If you have less than 6 months of experience then, by all means, wait! Your practice area plays a role also. If you are a junior corporate associate, we would highly encourage you to wait at least another year before considering a move. With bankruptcy or ERISA experience, however, you may be marketable sooner. Ultimately, there is no 'magic' time to get started. Keeping abreast of all your options at any given time is likely the best way to go and if an opportunity perfectly suited for you surfaces, by all means, consider it. Just be careful not to apply for a position prematurely - you may want the option to apply later when you have more experience.

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continued on back



If your firm and the department to which you have been assigned have work with a more national focus, you should volunteer to contribute to that work as much as possible. For instance, if you are a litigator, working on a Texas Deceptive Trade & Practices Act case in state court it isn't going to be very relevant to the type of work performed in a Boston firm's litigation department. However, federal RICO cases very well may be relevant. Therefore, examine the type of work you are doing, and imagine how the skills you are learning will be able to aid a Boston firm in the future.

2

You too can have your job search questions answered by the Legal Eagle. Please send any questions to asktheeagle@legalauthority.com. If your question is chosen and published in our next issue, you will receive a free SOMETHING!

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