



## Functionally Formatted Resumes Are Very Effective for Some Legal Career Shifts

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The following is a case study of a mid-level career Legal Authority client regarding the most effective format to use for her resume. Her name has been changed.

Janice Castella is presently a contract administrator for a healthcare unit in a Fortune 500 company. During her seven-year tenure, she pursued a law degree at night, and she credits her schooling for her promotion two years ago.

Although she finds fulfillment in her present position, Janice desires to earn more income. Janice signed up with Legal Authority to benefit from our targeted mailing and resume crafting service.

Janice's targeted mailing has included law firms and companies with in-house counsel within her East Coast community. We prepared a functional resume for her with two cover letters, one targeted to law firms and one for corporate counsel positions.

I recently spoke with Janice. The following is a list of questions she had, along with my answers.

### **Q. What is your opinion of the effectiveness of the functional format for my present job search?**

A. When approaching law firms, legal candidates should be careful to emphasize what companies or firms they have worked for as well as where they went to law school. This is the main information that hiring firms are looking for. That information alone will tell them a lot about a candidate. Candidates who have worked for mostly law firms would do best to stick with a detailed, chronologically formatted resume.

A functional format, however, is appropriate for a candidate like you since you have worked in a corporate environment and have the benefit of working for a significant Fortune 500 company, which you will want to emphasize in your cover letter. A functional format provides an excellent way to summarize your relevant work experience for the position that you are seeking.

Functional formats do raise flags to potential employers at both law firms and companies hiring in-house counsel, and they will look for holes in your work history or other problems. However, since you have a consistent and strong work history, which is well displayed on your resume, you shouldn't have a problem.

### **Q. In law school I worked with estate planning and family law. Do you think I would be more likely to get a position in these areas or in healthcare?**



A. I think you would do best to emphasize your healthcare experience, particularly because of your master's-level education in this profession as well as your work experience. If you desire to pursue a practice in estate planning or family law at a law firm, you will probably need to find a large firm that serves both healthcare law and estate planning clients. In your job interview you can market yourself to them as a potentially dynamic strength to their healthcare practice and then negotiate in the early hiring stages that you would like to spend part of your time gaining exposure to these other areas by interacting with the related practices within the firm.

**Q. Should I do a separate resume for in-house from the one I prepare for firms? Particularly in listing the projects I have worked with, I have been told that firms would like to see the entity that funded the project, whereas in-house counsel employers would be more interested in seeing the name of the specific project.**

A. If possible, prepare one resume that includes both sets of information. Within your experience section we can develop a set of sub-bullets that list the name of the project first and then the name of the government agency that funded the work, separated by commas. Both sets of information would be of interest to both firms and in-house counsel employers. By placing the information in an easily accessible, consistent format, the information is easy to review.

**Q. Am I more likely to get a position as an in-house counsel or with a firm?**

A. If you think you have something to offer in each type of office, then it can't hurt to send your resume out there. You never know what kind of response you will get, although you can do your best to prepare documents that will be acceptable to the audience you are submitting them to.

The corporate work that you have been doing in your present employment, although not categorized as such, certainly carries a lot of similarities to an in-house position since you work with compliance and risk management. By getting a position at a firm at this point in your career, you would probably experience a pay reduction for the first year or two, and you would most likely be competing with recent law school graduates for a position. However, if you are willing to deal with the long hours for a confined period of time, the work will give you more options later in your career.

## **Conclusion**

Janice has done some additional research regarding the format of her resume as well as some networking. The general counsel of her brother's company has offered to review her contacts to see who he knows. By including an additional method in her job search, Janice has increased her success rate, and I am confident that she is on the road to success.