The 1L Job Search: A Marathon, Not a Sprint

The following is great advice from the lawyerist.com, a blog about law firm marketing, practice management, career development, law school success and how to start a law practice.

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Creating a career path is a marathon. Searching for a 1L summer job in November can be a distracting, time-wasting sprint.

The sprint

The sprint is governed by NALP. According to the National Association for Law Placement (NALP), first-year law students may apply to employers beginning December 1.

The sprint is for a limited number of jobs at large law firms. Based on the assumption that employers are eager to receive them, thousands of 1Ls send resumes to law firms on December 1st. Very few of these resumes are even considered because 1Ls don’t have a grade point average in early December.

Here’s the problem with the “sprint”: every minute you spend applying to firms is a minute taken away from studying for final exams. What’s more important - vying for a potential opportunity or knowing you did everything possible to get good grades.

The marathon

Ideally, managing your career is like managing a marathon. A smart candidate who will become a smart lawyer develops and nurtures a wide-ranging team consisting of:

1. Law school career services, alumni relations, faculty mentors, and alumni;
2. A professional network built in person and through social and professional networking; and

3. A growing constellation of friends and family.

Expect to have many conversations with your career advisor and other team members because you are building a set of relationships and learning about new opportunities. You are not on a blind speed-date.

The marathon timeline for 1Ls includes:

1. Schedule an appointment with a career advisor to:
   - Get to know your Career Services team.
   - Allow career advisors to get to know you and provide you with valuable resources and information.
   - Share your interests, goals, and plans. You may change your mind as often as you change your socks, but you must share that information or your career advisors cannot assist you. Telepathy is not a job search tool.
   - Get winter break activities and events on your calendar. These include bar association networking receptions and holiday parties.
   - Learn about 1L summer opportunities and the spring recruiting calendar.

2. Create your resume. Be prepared when someone says “Send me a resume,” add law school to your current resume and have it reviewed by Career Services. During Thanksgiving, poll your friends and family for the names and contact information of lawyers and other professionals who you will contact after finals.

3. After finals, check back with Career Services and identify one area of law or non-traditional career path that interests you enough to read about it for two hours. If you are still interested after this research, ask Career Services for the names of two people who work in that area. Call them. Job shadow them. Observe what they do. Listen to what they say. Evaluate what you have learned. Repeat as necessary throughout law school, until you find something that might make you want to get out of bed and go to work.

Do not expect to get a job or to create a lifetime career plan in your first meeting with Career Services. Creating a career path requires time, effort and diligence.

After final exams, take a break. A real break, with good friends, good food and fun. Read a novel. Play video games. Go to the movies. You'll begin the next semester energized and refreshed, ready to tackle classes and your career exploration and job search.