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Women's Resource Centre

**Preparing for your job search, career
transition and career planning**

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PREPARING FOR YOUR JOB SEARCH, CAREER TRANSITION AND CAREER PLANNING

Whether you are starting a job search for the first time in your new profession, making a career transition or thinking more long-term about your career, the following are preparation steps to put you on the road to success.

Mental preparation checklist for a job search

Here are some things to consider before beginning a job search whether as a law student, new lawyer or paralegal, or seasoned professional:

- Start with the end in mind. Take the time to think about what kind of job you are targeting. What job title, functional roles, and practice areas are you interested in? Any specific organizations you would like to work for? If your ideal job was available, how would you describe it?
- Take time to organize your job search. Outline a strategy and then use your plan to create a weekly list of activities.
- Create a schedule each day for your job search activities. If an interview or networking opportunity comes up, of course you will rearrange your schedule to fit it in!
- Set aside a workspace for your job search. Designate a specific area to use when conducting your job search. This should be an area free of distractions.
- Devote sufficient time to your job search. If you are organized, it should not take eight to ten hours per day. Typically, 15-20 hours per week is enough time with the steps outlined in these resources (sometimes more is needed if you have interviews or networking events that you are attending).
- Recognize that your motivation is going to increase and decrease, depending on the success you are having in reaching your job search goal. Reward yourself for effort, not for results.
- Get the support of a team to help you. You do not have to go it alone in your job search. Ask your family and friends to support you. Use career services offered by professional associations, government employment offices or your law school's career office. Contact your university alumni association. Hire a résumé writer and/or career coach. In the legal profession, there are lawyer coaches who are specialized at working within the field.
- Enlist an accountability partner. Recruit one person to support, encourage, and motivate you in your job search. This can be a friend, another job seeker, or a coach/counselor. (Choose someone who can be objective with you — and constructive about your efforts — when they need to be. That role might be too difficult for a spouse/partner.)

- It can be easier to get a job if you have a job (even if the job is not related to the job you want). This does not always work for everyone.
- If you are having difficulty finding a job in your area, consider relocation. If you live in an area with high unemployment — especially in your practice area — consider whether moving to another city, province or territory would improve your chances of getting hired.

Mental preparation checklist for a career transition

Perhaps you are wondering whether it is time to move on from your current organization or practice area. This checklist will help you decide what is best for your circumstances:

- The first step in making a change is identifying the *reason* or *reasons* why you are considering a change.
- Ask yourself whether the reasons for the change are temporary or something that are likely to permanently impact your current position.
- What do you want your next job to do for you that your current job does not do? In other words, what will be *different* about your next job? Is there anything that you do in your current job that you *do not* want to do in your next job?
- Are you in a practice area that is declining? Consider how you can put your skills to work in a new practice area. Make a list of your transferable skills and how those skills can be used in an area with long-term growth opportunities.
- Figure out whether you just need to change organizations or if you need to change your entire career.
- If you have decided it is time to make a change, plan for what you want to do next before you take any action.
- Inventory your accomplishments and what you have to offer another organization or in a different career path.
- Are there opportunities to pursue your new career path within your current organization? It may be easier for you to make a career shift when the organization already knows you rather than changing careers and employers at the same time.
- Consider if you need additional skills, education, or training to make a successful job or career change. Investigate how to acquire what you need before you make the change.
- Seek the advice of others who are already successful in the area you are looking to break into. Find a mentor!
- Do not burn the bridge at your current job. Give ample notice and offer to train your replacement.
- Get your financial house in order before you act on your job or career change.
- Make sure you are moving *towards* something you want, rather than just *running away from* something you do not like. Take the time to figure out what matters most to you in your career, and make sure your new career aligns with your values and goals (more about this in the guide, [Knowing what you want and developing a list of dream employers](#)).
- As you get closer to making a career change, continue to perform your current job to the best of your ability. Leave the organization in a place you would want to

inherit if you were the new person coming in. Your current employer is likely to serve as a reference for your new job in your new career.

Mental preparation checklist for career planning

Maybe you are thinking about how far you have come in your career and where it is going. This does not necessarily mean that you will be looking for a new job. It may mean deepening your roots where you are. Here are some things to consider:

- If you want to figure out where you want to go next, first start with an assessment of where you have been. Is there a common thread in your career history? Are you using the skills, education, and training you have? If not, why not?
- Set career goals for yourself. Where do you want to be one year, three years, and five years from now? What do you need to do to get there?
- Take time to document your work accomplishments. What was the most important thing you did in your job in the last year? What was the impact of that accomplishment — did you save the organization money, or bring in revenue? Can you quantify the financial impact?
- Look at your relationships with your co-workers, bosses, and those you supervise. Do you need to make any adjustments? Could you strengthen these relationships? How?
- Think about what you would really like your life to be like. If money and time were of no concern to you, how would you spend your days?
- Determine what your #1 priority is (personally) for the next 12 months. What is the one thing you absolutely want to accomplish, or see, or experience in the next year?
- Professionally, what do you want to be different in the next year? What do you want to be doing more of, and how can you get there?
- Ask yourself: Am I doing the things I need to do to get where I want to go?
- Write down what kind of support you need — personally and professionally — to reach the goals you have set for yourself.
- Start an accomplishments journal or file to document your accomplishments.
- Now would be the time to check out the other resources under Excelling at Work, like the [Guide to women's leadership in law firms](#). But first, check out the resources below!

Resources

New to the Profession

- *The Unspoken Rules: Secrets to Starting Your Career Off Right* by Gorick Ng
- [How to Find Your First Job as a Lawyer!](#)
- [Becoming In-house Counsel: A Guide for Law Students and Recent Graduates](#)
- [Young Lawyers International Program](#)

Career Transition

- *Reinventing You* by Dorie Clark
- *Out of Practice: Exploring Legal Career Paths in Canada* by Amy Kaufman and Leann Beggs
- *Futureproof Your Career: How to Lead and Succeed in a Changing World* by Shaheena Janjuha-Jivraj & Naeema Pasha
- *The Creative Lawyer: A Practical Guide to Authentic Professional Satisfaction* by Michael F. Melcher
- [Changing career direction](#)
- [Changing Legal Practice Areas? Here is Everything You Need to Know](#)
- [Legal Professionals, Here's How to Change Your Practice Area](#)
- [Time Served: How Long To Commit Before Leaving A Job](#)
- [How to Know If It's Time to Change Practice Areas or My Job](#)

Career Planning and Development

- [Career Planner Workbook for the 21st Century Lawyer](#)
- [The Associate's Guide to Creating a Portfolio of Accomplishments](#)
- [How Unappealing: An Empirical Analysis of the Gender Gap among Appellate Attorneys](#)
- [In Their Own Words: Experienced Women Lawyers Explain Why They Are Leaving Their Law Firms and the Profession](#)
- [21 Day Grit & Growth Mindset Challenge](#)
- [The Grit Project](#)
- [Career Advice: Guidance for Every Step of Your Career Journey](#)
- [Women in the Workplace 2022](#)
- [Advance Your Legal Career](#) by Delee Fromm
- [Continuing Professional Development Requirement](#)
- [Osgoode Professional Development](#)
- [Professional Development for Young Lawyers](#)
- [Ontario Bar Association](#)
- [Women Lawyers Forum \(OBA\)](#)
- [The Canadian Bar Association](#)
- [Women Lawyers \(CBA\)](#)
- [The Advocates' Society](#)
- [Toronto Lawyers Association](#)
- [Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association](#)
- [South Asian Bar Association of Toronto](#)

- [Iranian Canadian Legal Professionals](#)
- [Albanian Canadian Lawyers Association](#)
- [Canadian Hispanic Bar Association](#)
- [Peel Law Association](#)
- [Ontario Trial Lawyers Association](#)
- [Canadian Association of Black Lawyers](#)
- [Black Female Lawyers Network](#)
- [The Hamilton Law Association](#)
- [Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers](#)
- [York Region Law Association](#)
- [Women's Law Association of Ontario](#)
- [The Sudbury District Law Association](#)
- [Working Group on Lawyers and Real Estate](#)
- [County of Carleton Law Association](#)
- [Essex Law Association](#)
- [Hellenic Canadian Lawyers' Association](#)
- [Association of Chinese Canadian Lawyers of Ontario - FCCP](#)
- [Halton County Law Association](#)
- [Durham Region Law Association](#)
- [Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers](#)
- [Korean Canadian Lawyers Association](#)
- [The Law Office Management Association](#)
- [The Middlesex Law Association](#)
- [The ADR Institute of Ontario](#)
- [Peterborough Law Association](#)
- [Indigenous Bar Association](#)
- [Family Lawyers Association](#)

Job Search

- *The 2-Hour Job Search: Using Technology to Get the Right Job Faster* by Steve Dalton
- *The Job Closer* by Steve Dalton
- [Job seeking](#)

Law Students

- [Opportunities for Law Students: The Legal Excellence Program](#)
- [Career Options for Law Students](#)
- [Recruitment Procedures for Summer and Articling Positions](#)
- [Explore Clerkship Opportunities](#)
- [LAO Programs for Law Students and Articling Students](#)
- [NALP Canadian Directory of Legal Employers](#)
- [NALP Resources](#)

Internationally Trained Lawyers

- [Prerequisites for Admission into Ontario](#)

- [Internationally Trained Lawyers & Graduates](#)
- [ITLNCA Networks](#)
- [Becoming a Practising Lawyer in Canada](#) and [National Committee on Accreditation Options](#)

In-House Lawyers

- *Breaking Through: Tales from the Top Canadian Women General Counsel* by Kirby Chown and Carrie Mandel
- [ICW Universal Competency Profile For In-House Counsel](#)
- [The In-House Edition](#)
- [Women General Counsel of Canada](#)
- [What I wish I'd known: moving in-house](#)
- [How to Succeed as an In-House Lawyer: Three Tips on Career Development for the Inside Counsel](#)
- [Checklist for Personal Development for the In-House Legal Team](#)
- [Canadian Corporate Counsel Association](#)
- [Canadian Corporate Counsel Association - Ontario Chapter](#)

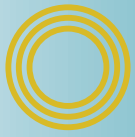
Government Opportunities

- [Public Service Legal Careers in Canada](#)

Paralegals

- [Ontario Paralegal Association](#)
- [Canadian Association of Paralegals \(CAP\)](#)
- [National Association of Legal Assistants \(NALA\)](#)
- [National Association for Legal Support Professionals \(NALS\)](#)
- [American Association for Paralegal Education](#)
- [American Bar Association \(ABA\) Standing Committee on Paralegals](#)
- [American Alliance of Paralegals Inc.](#)

Now that you are mentally prepared, check out the next guide: [Six things to do to start your job search](#). You will want to check out this guide even if you are engaged in a career transition!



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