

What You Need to Know About Career Transitions

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Most lawyers remain in the workforce for at least 40 years from their mid-20s to 70s. They usually change jobs at least once during their career. Career changes can happen by accident or design. Motivation can include a desire to improve work/life balance, increase compensation, or improve career outlook. The following are tips for a smooth transition at any age, along with links to resources with more information.

Tips

- **Benefits** – consider intangibles like hours, dress code, culture, overtime, remote work, etc.
- **Internal** – try a new role with your current employer to avoid surprises at a different firm.
- **Learning** - make yourself marketable by continuing education and getting certifications.
- **Motivation** – pursue a career change that matches your motivation (e.g., compensation, stress, etc.).
- **Networking** – seek career advice from senior lawyers and confer with family and friends.
- **Employer** - open opportunities by considering a corporate, government, judicial, or non-profit job.
- **Profession** – consider a new profession like consulting, management, mediation, recruiting, or teaching.
- **Risk** - limit change to a single variable; purchase COBRA coverage until new health insurance starts.
- **Search** – check alumni organizations, bar associations, career coaches, job postings, and recruiters.
- **Social** – stay social with former colleagues to maintain friendships and networks.
- **Specialization** – consider popular specializations like business, estate, family, labor, or tax law.
- **Timing** – focus on responsibility in early career, compensation in mid-career, and fulfillment in later years.

Transitioning to a new position requires careful planning to achieve a desirable position. Study alternatives, assess risks, and take time to ensure that a job opportunity is a good fit. Be creative by considering non-traditional employers and positions outside of law firms. For more help, check the resources at the end of this article. Good luck in your new job!

Articles

- [Career Alternatives for Lawyers](#), Canadian Bar Association, Sept. 2014.
- [How to Change Your Practice Area](#), Robert Half, Mar. 12, 2015.
- [How to Make a Successful Career Change at 40](#), Forbes, Oct. 23, 2023.
- [Navigating Career Transitions](#), eSoft, Aug. 1, 2025.
- [How to Navigate Online Job Postings](#), Wall Street Journal, Aug. 6, 2025.

Books

- [Find Your Landing Zone](#), ABA Book Publishing, Aug. 15, 2023.
- [Guide to Law Jobs](#), Thomson Reuters, Sep. 23, 2019.
- [Second Acts for Solo and Small Firm Lawyers](#), ABA Book Publishing, May 8, 2019.
- [Traditional and Non-Traditional Law Careers](#), Thomson Reuters, April 1, 2011.

Checklists

- [Changing Careers](#)
- [Departing a Firm](#)
- [Evaluating an Offer](#)
- [Joining a Firm](#)

Videos

- [Breaking the Cycle of Being Unhappy](#) (ABA)
- [How to Use Legal Job Boards](#) (*Job Success Network*)
- [Lawyer Retirement or Not](#) (ABA)
- [Navigating Your Career](#) (ABA)

Websites

- [ABA](#)
- [JD Careers](#)
- [Justia](#)
- [NALP](#)