**For Workplace Satisfaction, Lawyers Should Ignore Ads and Law Students Should Ignore On-Campus Interviewing**

(This article is adapted from a posting made by Ron Fox to the [Counsel Connect](http://www.counsel.com/) On-Line Seminar on Career Alternatives for Lawyers in June, 1997.)

We would certainly hear from big firm associates in droves if we were to offer "concrete job opportunities with real employers" as you requested. We would also hear from small firm associates, solos, corporate counsel, law professors, DA's, law students and many other lawyers both employed or underemployed. Let me try to explain why they might expect such advice and why it isn't going to be offered.

Fourth in the list of aspects of the law school experience which divert students from satisfying legal careers (after inadequate preparation of students to practice law, limited presentation of legal practice options and unjustifiable high cost to attend which puts students heavily in debt) is the on-campus interviewing system. While it brings a few prestigious employers to where students are and offers some high paying positions, these employers practice in a limited number of commercial areas representing a small segment of the population, usually large businesses. Students, however, sometimes believe these firms represent the entire world of employers when, in reality, they are but a tiny segment of the employment market for lawyers. The heavy investment of career office staff, the aura of "prestige" and the pervasive assumption that these are the "best" places, blind students to the urgency of FIRST recognizing their values and goals and exploring their options. If they had done so, many would have realized that the positions they are interviewing for are brutally in conflict with the legal path they envision for themselves. They could have predicted with certainly that taking such a position would lead to personal dissatisfaction, anguish and unhappiness.

For years I have recommended the elimination of on-campus interviewing at law schools. Unfortunately, though not in the interests of law students, it is likely to be maintained partly for the benefit of the law firms where influential alumni/ae practice but also primarily for the self-interest of the law schools. One of the criteria used by the US News and World Report in its annual ranking of law schools is "placement success" defined as the schools which funnel the most students the quickest into the largest firms at the highest salary. The last US News and World Report ranking I bothered to look at did not have as a criteria "which law school best prepares students for the practice or law" or "which one best helps students find positions consistent with their personal goals and the fundamental values of the legal profession."

The worst long term effect of the on-campus interviewing program is that lawyers who had participated in this process as students wrongly conclude that those who have openings place ads in writing or somehow publicize an opening. Only a small percentage of openings appear in legal newspapers or law school newsletters or are known to executive search firms. Few find their work by responding to ads. For that reason, the resume should be given little emphasis. As Richard Bolles states, in What Color is Your Parachute, "My conversations with job-hunters, over the years, have convinced me that there is a passionate belief in resumes that is out of all proportion to how often they in fact ever get anyone an interview for a job. A resume is something you should never send ahead of you, but always leave behind you." This book as well as What Can You Do with a Law Degree by Deborah Arron describe in more detail how to search for work. You should also review the article in this column entitled [Taking Control - How to Search for a Satisfying Position](file:///column/column13.html).

Most important of all - for those who hope for a workplace that will give them satisfaction, there is only the slightest possibility they will see the position consistent with their personal values and professional goals publicly posted.

In addition, not everyone should be looking for a job. Some lawyers should be going out on their own and starting a law firm, a business, or a non-profit. None who have chosen this path could have found their work through an ad. They started their own as have more than half the lawyers in private practice - solos and partners. None of them prepared a resume and forwarded it to anyone in order to find a position. But there are, in fact, jobs as associates, partners, vice-president and deputy director out there - thousands of openings for lawyers in law firms and other settings. But most lawyers should ignore any process which promises "placement". YOU SHOULD NEVER BE PLACED! Affirmatively choose what you want to do and then look for a place where you can do it.

How do you do that? Since positions are not advertised in writing, you have to learn how to find them. That is the basis for much of what is being discussed in our articles - the need to examine your values, interests and goals and look at the consistency between them and the wide range of options. That is the reason to read books about career planning and to consider consulting with professionals in that field. "Spending time and money on counseling endeavors" is not, as was implied in the message, intended to be a frivolous intellectual exercise disconnected from finding work. It is a serious process to be undertaken by lawyers genuinely interested in taking control over their careers - those truly motivated to find satisfying positions where they can use the skills they want to use, work with people with whom they want to work and help those they want to help.

Listen to E. F. Schumacher as quoted in The Reinvention of Work by Matthew Fox (no relation, unfortunately) "How do we prepare young people for the future world of work? ... We should prepare them to be able to distinguish between good work and bad work and encourage them not to accept the latter. That is to say, they should be encouraged to reject meaningless, boring stultifying, or nerve-wracking work in which a (person) is made the servant of a machine or a system. They should be taught that work is the joy of life and is needed for development, but that meaningless work is an abomination."