

Factsheet: **Moving on from the law**

You may be considering moving on from the legal profession – perhaps you feel that you are not suited to it or are finding it hard to manage the pressures. LawCare’s aim is to support you through this process and consider your options.

Reviewing the Situation

Before you make the decision to change career, ask yourself some questions:

- ▶ When did you last take time off? Do you need a good holiday?
- ▶ Would you feel differently if you could find a way to reduce the stress?
- ▶ Are you bored? Would a change in specialism or area of practice help?
- ▶ Do you need additional training or support to help you do your job better?
- ▶ If a particular person were to leave your workplace, would you feel differently?
- ▶ Does your organisation know that you are unhappy? Might they be willing to make changes to keep you?
- ▶ Do your skills align with your current career path, and where will that path lead?
- ▶ What would a career change require? Could your education and expertise transfer to a new career?

The Three Levels of Career Change

Job Change:

doing the same type of work in a different setting, such as a more flexible organisation or even just changing to a different department or specialism.

Career Alteration:

utilising your legal skills in a different setting – teaching at a law school, or working as an employed barrister, for example.

Career Transition:

moving to a new career significantly different from the practice of law. This could involve retraining.

Believe in Yourself

The grass isn't always greener elsewhere, and starting somewhere new can be difficult. Remember that you are a well educated and highly trained professional, who is worth employing. If you choose to leave the law altogether, don't feel that the time you spent training has been wasted: your skills will be valuable elsewhere, and they don't obligate you to remain in a job you don't enjoy. And don't make any drastic career decisions if you are depressed or experiencing another mental health concern. Go and see the GP and ensure you feel better before making major decisions about the future.

Careers Counselling

Be your own careers counsellor: give yourself a career “check-up”. Put together a comprehensive and detailed personal history including your professional status, education, employment, professional affiliations, marital and family background and financial needs. Remember to include all of your experiences in practice, including administration, staff relations or finance. Talk this through with someone, or brainstorm on a blank sheet of paper. Your aim should be to evaluate your career goals, clarify your values and priorities, and develop a concrete and realistic plan for changing job or career. There are careers counsellors who can help you identify your skills and strengths.

Some things to consider

- ▶ What are your major and secondary skills, interests and capabilities?
- ▶ What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? Do your own SWOT (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats) analysis
- ▶ What part of your work do you enjoy most? What do you dislike about your job?
- ▶ What do you do for fun? Could any of these lead to a potential job or career choice?
- ▶ Are you prepared to take a pay cut in favour of greater job satisfaction?
- ▶ Are you prepared to re-qualify in another career, with all the necessary cost, study and training that will entail?
- ▶ Has the time come to go it alone in that business venture you've always wanted to try?
- ▶ Would you like to relocate and does that entail a different lifestyle?

Recruitment Agencies

You may prefer to seek expert professional help, from a recruitment agency or professional careers counsellor or coach to get your CV up-to-date and as attractive as possible. You could also explore temporary or contract employment opportunities as a transitional option to get you out of an unhappy situation and to buy you some thinking time.

Tips for retirement

If you are approaching retirement it is worth taking the time to think about how you will spend your time once retired, and making a plan. Many high-achievers working hard find it difficult to make the transition.

- ▶ Allow yourself time to think and reassess. Set new objectives and personal goals.
- ▶ Take steps to redefine who you are. "Ex Partner" or "ex Head of" shouldn't define you.
- ▶ Be ready for business contacts not to return your calls and emails so readily.
- ▶ Don't be surprised if some of the hobbies you were planning don't materialise.
- ▶ Address physical and mental niggles; they might become more than niggles if you leave them.

50 alternatives to working in a firm or chambers

LAW CENTRE WORKER	COMPANY SOLICITOR
ARMED FORCES LAWYER	LEGAL AID OFFICIAL
PROBATE OFFICIAL	MAGISTRATE'S CLERK
CROWN PROSECUTOR	CHARITY LAWYER
LEGAL PUBLICATION EDITOR	LEGAL CONSULTANT
COURT OF APPEAL RESEARCHER	LEGAL RECRUITMENT CONSULTANT
PROFESSIONAL BODY/REGULATOR OFFICIAL	CAB OFFICIAL
PATENT AGENT	LEGAL SECRETARY
GOVERNMENT LEGAL SERVICES	LITIGATION SUPPORT CONSULTANT
REGISTRAR	OFFICIAL RECEIVER
LOCUM	LEGISLATIVE ANNOTATOR
LOBBYIST	TRIBUNAL CHAIRMAN
RECORDER	LOCAL GOV'T OFFICIAL
LEGAL REPORTER	LAW LECTURER
IN-HOUSE LAWYER	LAW FIRM MANAGER/TRAINER
MARKETING/PR MANAGER FOR A LEGAL PRACTICE	PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT LAWYER
COURT OFFICIAL	ONLINE LEGAL ADVISER
MEDIATOR	TRADE MARK ATTORNEY
LITIGATION INSURANCE LAWYER	LAW SCHOOL CAREERS ADVISER
ARBITRATOR	OWNER OF LOCUM AGENCY
CHARITY WORKER	RESEARCHER FOR LAW FIRM
EMPLOYED BARRISTER	PARALEGAL INSTRUCTOR
LICENSED CONVEYANCER	REGIONAL PROFESSIONAL BODY OFFICIAL
COMPLIANCE OFFICER	ESTATE AGENT
LEGAL BOOKSHOP WORKER	COURT REPORTER