

**UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI**

**COLLEGE OF LAW**

**OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES**

**GUIDE TO  
ALTERNATIVE  
CAREERS**

## **Introduction**

Many law students seek careers in fields other than the traditional practice of law. Reasons for doing so are personal and range from a passion for a particular field or a desire to have a career with a less rigorous schedule than that of a law firm attorney.

An alternative, or “JD Preferred”, career is anything outside of the traditional practice of law found in law firms, government agencies, public interest organizations or the court system. Careers, such as law librarian, court administrator and law professor all generally require a JD. Others, such as financial services, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and compliance officers, may not require a law degree; however, the skills developed from law studies are highly beneficial.

### **In What Careers Does a JD Add Value?**

A law degree can provide an extra advantage in fields which require statutory or regulatory analysis, contract administration, risk assessment, policy development, management, labor relations, personnel, benefits, or mediation, to name a few. Many of the skills learned in law school are directly transferable to other fields. These skills include analysis, advocacy, communication, and research. Even if used in a completely unrelated field, legal training may still prove useful because you offer both enhanced analytical skills and a different perspective for examining problems.

Remember, though, that employers do not necessarily know or appreciate the skills you have learned in law school or how they may be transferrable to a particular job function. As a job applicant, the onus is on you to educate a prospective employer via your resume, cover letter and how you present yourself in an interview. (See Page 6)

## What Types of Jobs Are Available?

Listed below are examples of non-traditional fields in which JD-related skills are beneficial.

### Alternative Dispute Resolution

- ADR Specialist
- Arbitration Administration
- Arbitrator
- Domestic Relations Specialist
- Mediator
- Mediation Coordinator

### Business and Financial Services

- Bankruptcy Analyst
- Director of Regulatory Affairs
- Entrepreneur
- Foreclosure Administrator
- Investment Banker
- Loan Officer
- Probate Administrator
- Property Manager
- Public Finance Consultant
- SEC Compliance Officer
- Title Search Agent
- Trust Officer
- Trust Risk Analyst

### Contracts

- Contract Administrator/Analyst
- Contract Negotiator
- Grant Administrator
- Licensing Manager
- Purchasing Officer

### Court Administration

- Bankruptcy Administrator
- Calendaring Clerk
- Court Administrator
- Jury Commissioner
- Legal Affairs Director
- Pretrial Services Officer
- Sanctions Coordinator
- Settlement Director
- Trust Account Supervisor
- Victim Services Coordinator

### Criminal Justice & Law Enforcement

- ATF/DEA/FBI Agent
- Code Enforcement Officer
- Crime Analyst
- Immigrant Rights
- Inmate Services
- Inspector General
- Internal Affairs Officer
- Investigations Review specialist
- Securities Fraud Investigator
- Seized Property Administrator
- Victim Compensation Officer

### Education

- Director of Legislative Affairs
- Law Librarian
- Law Professor
- Legal Research & Writing Instructor
- School District Administration
- Undergraduate Professor (e.g., Law & Economics, Jurisprudence, Judicial Process)
- University Administration (e.g., Program Director for alumni relations, development, career services, financial services, admissions, student services, etc.; assistant or associate dean)

### Environmental Policy

- Compliance Officer
- Consultant/Policy Analyst
- Director of Environmental Affairs
- EPA Official
- OSHA Specialist
- Regulatory Affairs Officer
- Resources Manager

### Human Resources

- ADA Officer
- Affirmative Action Officer
- Benefits Coordinator
- Civil Rights Analyst
- Ethics Officer
- HR Director
- Internal Affairs Ombudsman
- Legal Career Advisor
- Legal Recruiter
- Professional Standards Administration
- Salary Administrator

### Insurance/Risk Management

- Claims Examiner
- Insurance Issuing Officer
- Litigation Examiner
- Policy Analyst
- Risk Manager
- Workers' Compensation Specialist

### Intellectual Property

- Copyright Examiner
- Corporate Liaison Officer
- IP Director
- IP Licensing Officer
- Patent Administrator
- Patent Examiner
- Trademark Administrator

### International (Federal)

- Asylum Officer
- CIA Analyst
- CIA Legal Compliance Officer
- Customs Officer
- Diplomat/Diplomatic Staffer
- Export/Import Compliance Officer
- Industrial Security Specialist
- Passport/Visa Issuance Officer
- Security Classification Administrator
- Trade Zone Manager

### International (Private)

- Aid Development Officer (e.g., Save the Children)
- Business Development Agent
- Commodity Distribution Officer
- Governmental Liaison
- Grand and Donation Manager
- Land Titling and Registration Agent
- Legal/Judicial System Developer (U.N. and Sovereign States)
- Non-Government Organization (NGO) positions
- Program/Sector Chief (e.g. UNICEF, Project Hope)

### Labor Relations

- Industrial Relations Specialist
- Contract Administrator
- Labor Negotiator
- Management Consultant
- Union Consultant

### Legal Administration

- State Bar Administrator
- Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Specialist
- Law Firm Administrator
- Legal Services Program Director
- Jury Selection Expert

### Legal Information & Research

- Archivist
- Law Librarian (School or Private Firm)
- Legal Research (Legal Publications; Law Firm Research Services)
- Policy Research Analyst

#### Legislative Affairs and Policies

- Campaign Manger
- Chief of Staff
- Congressional Affairs Specialist
- Congressional Liaison
- Legislative Assistant
- Lobbyist
- Political Strategist
- Registrar of Voters
- Regulatory Analyst
- Subcommittee Staffer (e.g. Assistant to the Senate Sub-Committee on Foreign Affairs)

#### Real Estate

- Director of Development
- Director of Real Estate
- Land Use Planner
- Leasing Agent/Negotiator
- Title Examiner
- Zoning Coordinator

#### Taxation

- Accountant
- Estate Planner
- Officer of State Dept. Taxation
- Trust Administrator

#### Media & Entertainment

- Copyright Researcher
- Legal Clearance Officer
- Legal Editor
- Legal Reporter
- Sports/Literary/Talent Agent

### **Is an Alternative Career a Good Fit for Me?**

If any of the above job titles – or others – interests you, you may want to do a personal skills inventory (see the Career Services Handbook) and then compare your skills and attributes to those required for success in the field. You may research job descriptions via job listings on company websites or by speaking to someone in the field

You may also find excellent descriptions of the KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities) and work styles required in various job titles at <http://online.onetcenter.org/>

Lastly, you may sign up for the University's Career Links program. The Career Links website is available at [http://career.olemiss.edu/CAN/students\\_faq.asp](http://career.olemiss.edu/CAN/students_faq.asp).

Career Links, a joint effort of the Career Center and the Alumni Association, is an online resource that connects students with alumni and friends of The University of Mississippi who volunteer information and mentorship to students in a variety of fields. Currently, over 500 alumni and friends representing up to 40 industries are listed in the Career Links database.

Career Links can be used to conduct informational interviews with Career Links members to learn more about:

- A particular career field, industry, or employer
- Discuss current career trends and job-related issues
- Get advice about your job search

**Q: How do I access Career Links?**

To participate in Career Links you must visit the Career Center at 303 Martindale to complete a registration card. Once you become a registered member you will also have access to InterviewTak—the Career Center on-campus recruiting management system. Students that are currently registered with the Career Center should use the username and password listed on their registration card to access Career Links via MonsterTrak. For more information, please contact the Career Center, 303 Martindale, (662) 915-7174.

**Assessment Tools**

Access the Career Assessments link on the Career Services website at [www.law.olemiss.edu](http://www.law.olemiss.edu) for free online assessments.

**The Strong Interest Inventory** uses personality traits to determine what type of career will lead to the greatest amount of satisfaction. It matches a person's career interests to the interest patterns of individuals who are happy in their chosen fields.

**The MBTI (Meyers-Briggs)** is a more complex personality-typing assessment that helps determine your personality traits. The results may be useful in finding careers that best match your personality. Both tests are available online for a fee at [www.discoveryourpersonality.com](http://www.discoveryourpersonality.com).

**Salary Statistics**

National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates may be found at [www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_nat.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm). Although this site does not contain a list for JD preferred jobs, you may search for mean and median salaries in various occupational fields.

**Do I Have to Take the Bar Exam?**

Even if your chosen career does not require taking the bar exam after graduation, it is still a good idea to do so for two reasons – the information is still fresh in your mind, and licensing provides you with an additional level of achievement. Career plans change, and having your bar license will increase your options.

**A Different Type of Job Search?**

A formal structure, like on-campus interviews, is often lacking for the alternative job market. As such, networking becomes very important for gaining summer or post-graduation employment (see the Networking section of the Career Services Handbook).

It may be easier to find legal employment – as opposed to alternative employment - during your 1L and 2L summers, and those experiences will benefit your job search regardless of where you are seeking work. It is extremely difficult to find any type of job if you have not worked at something during law school, so please plan to do some sort of job search. Additionally, you will find it easier to market your JD to a non-legal employer if you have real world knowledge about the legal field, because you can address the reasons why you prefer non-legal employment.

### **Marketing your JD to a Non-Legal Employer**

Your challenge will be to educate hiring authorities in other professions that the law degree should be seen as a value-adding commodity. Your ability to assess risk, for example, is unique and always in demand in all business settings.

If you are pursuing a truly alternative position, you will have to sell the employer on why he or she should hire an attorney rather than someone specifically trained for the field. In contrast to positions where JDs are required, companies may look upon the JD with misunderstanding or feel that you are over-qualified. You must show how your legal training and personal attributes fit the job for which you have applied. Emphasize your most important skills by presenting results. Businesses are result-driven, and you will be speaking their language.

Alternative employers do not always know what benefits a law school education will bring to them. The hiring authorities may not have been to law school and may not have hired lawyers. You need to show non-legal employers why your training and skills will benefit them. Law school has given you, among other things:

- Enhanced communication skills
- Analytical skills
- Highly-developed research and writing skills
- The ability to assess risk
- Efficient organization and work habits
- The ability to work under pressure in an organized manner

The challenge for you is to translate legal skills into the skills desired by the industry. If you worked in a public defender's office for two summers but now want a career in entertainment, you need to focus the employer's attention on transferable skills, such as your motivation, your ability to deal with all types of clientele, your familiarity with contracts, and your talent for working in adverse conditions.

### **Hybrid-Functional Resumes and Non-Traditional Cover Letters**

Alternative career resumes and cover letters differ in a number of ways. The alternative resume is generally functional, focusing less on education than experience. The cover letter sells you to the employer, so you make sure your cover letter is selling what the employer wants to buy. Instead of selling your legal experience, showcase your pertinent skills and proven accomplishments to which the employer can relate. Do not focus on achievement that cannot be translated into the non-legal field.

#### **The Hybrid-Functional Resume**

Resumes are generally either chronological or functional. The legal resume is chronological, but many businesses prefer a hybrid-functional format. Functional resumes organize experience into skills clusters that illustrate specific accomplishments, rather than showing what you did in each position. However, since most employers do not like pure functional resumes, use a hybrid-functional style. Structure your resume in a skills format, followed by a chronological outline of your work history. The work history section should include job title, location, years and name of employer. The description is not listed, because that information should already be in your skills or experience section. By including a work history section, you give the reader a frame of reference on which to measure your years and level of experience. A sample resume and cover letter may be found on pages 9 and 10.

## The Non-Legal Interview

As stated earlier, you must convince an interviewer that you are interested in his or her company and not in practicing law. Prepare by doing the following:

- **Become fully informed about the industry and the company.** Research websites, newspaper articles, industry specific lingo, blogs and annual reports to ensure that you have a good knowledge base for your interview. Law school students and graduates are sometimes scrutinized more than other candidates on their motives for applying, so you must be fully informed.

This is best illustrated by the following example of a position description at Johnson & Johnson, which includes some very specific lingo and is designed to weed out those “not in the know” –

*J&J services Inc. a division of J&J, a member of Johnson & Johnson's Family of Companies, is recruiting for a Workforce Information Lifecycle Management Specialist, based in the US.*

*The Specialist will assist the WILMa/OM Lead in all WILMa/OM activities for the region or countries that they support. The Specialist will provide support to managers related to the process of adding and updating positions. They will work collaboratively with other WILMa/OM team members across the countries and regions where necessary. They will support the audit process, including all audit reports for WILMa/OM master data elements. The Specialist will work with the Service Center to resolve workflow escalation issues. They will also support the mass change process as required. They will maintain country profiles, including contact information for BBHR and Business Leaders, MRC details and CBA specific details. They will provide support to the region and country leads as needed.*

*The Specialist will assist in leading the retained country cluster or sector for WILMa/OM by providing consultative support to BBHR and Specialist Groups (SGs) in the handling of WILMa processes. Managing the WILMa/OM country team in all aspects of the WILMa/OM activities. Ensuring WILMa/OM country-level policies and procedures are maintained as legal and business requirements changes will be another responsibility of the Specialist. They will ensure the guidelines defined for the organizational structure are followed such as organizational unit naming standards, reporting relationship requirements and dotted-line reporting relationships. They will ensure the organizational structure is kept current as business structure changes. The Specialist will maintain the enterprise structure values as requirements change. They will also be responsible for coordinating mass change requests with the HR outsourcing provider's service center, SGs and BBHR as needed. They will coordinate activities between country cluster and regional WILMa function as appropriate. The Specialist will monitor data to ensure ongoing integrity of employee and non-employee information throughout the lifecycle of individual employees (hire to retire). They will ensure global data standards and common definitions are maintained at the country cluster level. They will also be responsible for managing ongoing maintenance of fulfillment documents at the country level.*

- **During the interview, you will be asked why you are not following a legal track for your career.** One of the main concerns of non-legal employers is that a JD will use the job only as a time-killer until something law related comes along. The best way to deal with questions about your motives is to address them directly, e.g., “I am interested in your company, rather than

practicing law, because the .....aspect of this business fits perfectly with my background and interests. For example, I.....”

- **Why should an employer hire you rather than someone specifically trained in the field?** If you have training or experience in the field, you can spin your law degree as an amplifying factor. If you are not trained in the field, it is absolutely necessary to showcase your skills and experience in a manner that addresses what the employer wants and needs.
- **Lawyers are problem-makers, not problem solvers.** Explain how your legal training is an extra bonus, that you have been trained to assess risk and to inspire confidence. Give direct examples of how you helped an employer avoid a problem or reassured a client. Refer to your JD as your graduate degree and place more emphasis on your personality and skills.

**SAMPLE HYBRID-FUNCTIONAL RESUME - Experienced**

**LOUISE GOLDEN**

762 White Ash  
Oxford, MS 38655  
(601) 234-5555  
golden@netdoor.com

**EXPERIENCE**

**City Planning:** As Assistant City Planner for the City of Houston, the seventh largest metropolitan area in the U.S., developed open space and recreation initiatives for a 24-square mile area encompassing 950,000 people. Managed yearly budget of \$725,000 for public awareness campaign. Handled development plans for 47 construction companies and reviewed filings to determine compliance with municipal regulations. Created population growth scenarios used by the City of Houston in formulating the 2005-2010 Master Plan.

**Financial:** Responsible for 61 personal investment accounts ranging from \$2500 to \$9700, an aggregate of \$255,000, as an Assistant Financial Consultant. Performed quarterly performance reviews on all assigned accounts and, on request, made suggestions to clients for adjustments. Audited accounts to ensure compliance with state and federal tax regulations.

**Legal Analysis:** As Law clerk in the civil division of a metropolitan county, researched statutory law to determine viability of proposed 555-until development. Reviewed in excess of 50 zoning, natural resource and pollution plans to assess their legality. Wrote over 80 criminal motions in two summers of work. Researched the US Supreme Court decision in US v. Stokes and drafted 17-page memorandum distributed to over 90 attorneys.

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Foster County Attorney's Office**, Foster, MS

*Law Clerk* (Civil Division, Summer 2008, Criminal Division, Summer 2007)

**BancCorp South**, Jackson, MS

*Assistant Financial Consultant* (May 2004-August 2006)

**City of Houston**, Houston, TX

*Assistant City Planner* (August 2002-May 2004)

**EDUCATION**

**The University of Mississippi School of Law**, Oxford, MS

Juris Doctor May 2009

Relevant Paper: "The Tax Consequences of Acquiring Native American Lands"

**The University of Memphis**, Memphis, TN

Bachelor of Arts, Finance, May 2002

Masters Thesis: " An Economic Analysis of High-Occupant Vehicle (HOV) Lanes in Urban Counties in Tennessee"

**SAMPLE COVER LETTER**

**LOUISE GOLDEN**  
762 White Ash  
Oxford, MS 38655  
(601) 234-5555  
golden@netdoor.com

May 15, 2009

Mr. William L. Johnson  
Assistant Director  
Center for Urban Studies  
555 Apple Way  
Jackson, MS 48493

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Please accept my application for the Policy Analyst position advertised in "The Clarion-Ledger." I offer combined training in the fields of finance and law, as well as the proven ability to meet goals and work collaboratively.

My advanced training in two relevant disciplines has given me experience in approaching policy decisions from both a fiscal and a risk management perspective. I have hands-on experience in government organization and policy and budget analysis, as well as project management. My rigorous legal training has enabled me to analyze cases and statutes and apply their relevance to various situations. Additionally, my class work has given me the ability to examine policy goals within the framework of statutory regulations.

I have demonstrated my analytical abilities in various circumstances. While working as a law clerk for the civil division of the Foster County Attorney's Office, I regularly researched proposals and drafted memos about wide-ranging topics, such as commercial zoning and sub-surface water rights. My ability to analyze problems and find the best possible solution was critical to the successful performance of my job.

My diverse training coupled with my work experience assessing policy implications would allow me to be immediately effective as a policy analyst. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss how I would add value to the Center for Urban Studies.

Sincerely,

Louise Golden

**SAMPLE HYBRID-FUNCTIONAL RESUME - Student**

# Marjorie Barnes

9931 Sargasso Terrace  
Oxford, MS 38655  
(662) 555-6313  
[MarjiB@aol.com](mailto:MarjiB@aol.com)

## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

### ENTREPRENEURIAL

- Designed, published and promoted 35-page marketing Web site.
- Established, managed, and sold lawn service consisting of 20 clients.
- Founded and maintained car detailing service responsible for 25 clients.

### INTERPERSONAL AND TEAMWORK SKILLS

- Entrusted to process confidential employee records such as salary changes, vacation/absenteeism reports, and performance appraisals.
- Interacted with a wide variety of personalities while scheduling meetings/appointments and making travel arrangements for executives.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SALES SKILLS

- Delivered excellent customer service and utilized excellent organizational skills to arrange and coordinate special events that include weddings, receptions, and holiday parties, as well as everyday lunch and dinner planning.
- Oversaw daily sales operations at country club.

### MANAGERIAL AND SUPERVISORY SKILLS

- Proven multi-tasking abilities by scheduling and supervising staff, consisting of kitchen workers, bartenders, and food servers while functioning as clubhouse assistant manager at country club and simultaneously serving as pool manager and swim instructor.

### LEGAL ANALYSIS

- Researched statutory law to determine viability of proposed 555-until development.
- Reviewed in excess of 50 zoning, natural resource and pollution plans to assess their legality.
- Wrote over 80 criminal motions in two summers of work.
- Researched the US Supreme Court decision in US v. Stokes and drafted 17-page memorandum distributed to over 90 attorneys.

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

**Foster County Attorney's Office**, Foster, MS

*Law Clerk* (Civil Division, Summer 2008, Criminal Division, Summer 2007)

**Blue Ribbon Technologies, Inc.**, Tupelo, MS

*Administrative Assistant*, May 2004-August 2006

**Bellringer Buffet**, Memphis, TN

*Server*, June 2004 – December 2004

**Golden Bear Country Club**, Memphis, TN

*Clubhouse Assistant Manager*, CA, 2/02 – 8/04

## EDUCATION

**The University of Mississippi School of Law**, Oxford, MS

Juris Doctor May 2009

Relevant Paper: "The Tax Consequences of Acquiring Native American Lands"

**The University of Memphis**, Memphis, TN

Bachelor of Arts, Finance, May 2002

## ALTERNATIVE CAREER WEBSITE RESOURCES

Below is a sample of some standard resources.

Remember to access the “Careers” section on individual corporate websites, for example Michelin - [www.careers.michelin-us.com](http://www.careers.michelin-us.com), Johnson & Johnson - <http://www.jnj.com/connect/>, to name just two.

Also remember Google. You can Google “alternative careers for lawyers” and will get over one million options.

Business Directory of Business Contacts and Company Information - Jigsaw is a prospecting tool used by sales professionals, marketers and recruiters to get fresh and accurate sales leads and business contact information. Good research tool for company information. Must register, but it’s free.

[www.jigsaw.com](http://www.jigsaw.com)

Career Center on [www.vault.com](http://www.vault.com)

Findlaw – This site requires registration but is free to use. It focuses on all law careers, but includes listings for jobs in non-traditional areas, such as ADR and court administration

<http://careers.findlaw.com/>

International and US jobs with Thomson Reuters: Thomson Reuters is a global leader in providing essential information to the world's businesses and professionals in Law, Financial Services, Tax & Accounting, Media, Healthcare and Scientific Research.

<http://careers.thomsonreuters.com/>

Occupational Outlook Handbook

[www.bls.gov/oco](http://www.bls.gov/oco)

Political Jobs in Washington, DC

[www.rcjobs.com](http://www.rcjobs.com)

*Wall Street Journal* classifieds. This site is free to subscribers of the WSJ and can be accessed for a fee by non-subscribers. Focus is on executive level jobs.

[www.careerjournal.com](http://www.careerjournal.com)

