

What Can You Do With Your Law Degree?

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What can you do with your law degree? The answer is “anything you want.” The law degree is a valuable credential. To obtain it required dedication, commitment, effort, intelligence and other readily transferable skills and abilities. In addition to “the law” you learned to “think like a lawyer”, that is, to analyze, to present persuasive arguments, to write in a cogent manner, to organize your thoughts, to consider various opinions, to critique and to learn to apply rules, laws, and systems to varying factual situations. You learn to read in a unique way, to quickly gather a lot of information and make sense of it. You are remarkable, unique, highly intelligent and able to learn. The law degree is just an education and a credential, just like any other education and credentials you may have. What you do with those depends on you.

The better question would be “what do you want to do now with your law degree?” This is a question that can be asked throughout your life and career. It is a normal part of growth to make changes. This process of change takes place throughout life and is best kept up with. The first challenge is to find out what you want.

We at LAP can help you enter a process of exploration to find out what might be the next thing for you to do. We can help you find out what you want? What do you value? What are your interests? What skills do you have? What type of personality traits and preferences do you have? What turns you on? As billionaire busman Malcolm Forbes said “the only career advice of any value is to do what turns you on”.

Obviously, a career change is not a decision to be taken lightly, so it is vitally important that time is taken to consider all of the options and an emotional reaction to a particular set of circumstances does not lead to throwing away all of the years of time and energy invested in achieving qualification and a career.

If you are feeling particularly distressed or frustrated at present, perhaps over a recent incident, or you are suffering from stress, depression, or a similar illness, then take time to recover, or calm down, before making any hasty choices. LAPBC has information available on stress, depression, bullying and other topics, which may help you.

The first place to look is: are you taking care of yourself, are you in the process of developing your well-being? Let’s look at the. What does well-being mean? How can you develop and thrive in all aspects of who you are? This is the first step of assessing your current career path and of career development.

Then you can look to external factors if you are dissatisfied with your current job there are three levels of changes you could consider.

1. The first is job change, or doing the same type of work in a different setting, which is the least radical move. A change of specialism or firm, for example.
2. The second is career alteration, or utilising one's legal skills and background in a different setting – teaching at a law school, or working as an industry solicitor, for example.
3. The third is career transition or the pursuit of another career significantly different from the practice of law. This could well involve retraining.

The process of self-exploration is a set of skills that can be learned. To “Know Thyself” is important in order to create a healthy, happy, fulfilling life. It is also the first step in making a career choice. Once you have determined what you want you would then need to do some research and find out what opportunities there are, or that you could create, that suit you.

If you are practicing as a licenced lawyer there are numerous options open to you. There are many, many ways to practice law and probably more if you put your mind to figuring out how it would best suit you. There are many ways to use your education, skills, abilities and credentials in productive fulfilling ways. The law degree is an excellent credential in business, in politics, in the not for profit sector, as a speaker and as a writer. Again, we at LAP can help you focus your thinking and examine the many alternatives.

Once you find out what you want to do and find some opportunities to do it, you next have to sell your ideas. This can include creating a resume, writing letters or preparing a business plan, a project plan, or even a job description. The world is changing and that means there are opportunities to do things that currently don't exist. You have the ability to vision, plan, and make those things happen.

Now comes the part in which you go out and begin to ask for what you want, perhaps over and over. This is stage at which your ability to commit and to persevere become a big asset. At this last step, making things happen, most people need some support.

At LAP we offer support by counsellors, by peers and in groups. We have an “Options for Lawyers” workshop the third Wednesday of every month at 12:15 at the LAP office in Vancouver. Keep your eyes out for our workshop “What Can You Do With Your Law Degree?” Check out our website at www.lapbc.com or call us at 604-685-2171. V



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