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## LAW

### Recruitment Field Offers Alternative Path

Much has been said in recent months about the disparities between male and female lawyers. Reports by the American Bar Association and Catalyst, the New York City-based nonprofit research and advisory organization working to advance women in the professions, have indicated that women lag far behind men in

both pay and decision-making positions. Fortunately, for all the dissatisfied female lawyers in the tri-state area, there is an alternative: the world of legal search.

Although many people attend law school across the U.S., they don't all decide to become attorneys. In fact, some students lacking any inclination toward the sciences or still undecided in their career paths may choose law school as a way to mark time until ultimately making a decision about their future.

Following the traditional legal model, female law school students often accept clerk positions with state or federal courts or summer internships with large law firms. But for many women, especially those who are not in their mid-20s, traveling this route on their way to becoming a lawyer can be filled with adversity. There are still no real pipelines to senior management positions for women in various law firms throughout the country. Furthermore, the hours of backbreaking work aren't always appealing for those who plan to have a child or already have one.

The Catalyst survey, which included the responses of male and female graduates of top law schools who completed studies from 1970 to 1999, found that of the 1970s' graduates, only 30 percent of women versus 51 percent of men who began their careers working for a law firm were still employed by one in 1999. In the case of many women, the long hours necessary to succeed can be hazardous to one's family life. And, despite the advancements of many qualified women in the legal profession, the glass ceiling just keeps getting higher and higher.

But there is an alternative to the traditional path followed by many female attorneys after completing law school. It's called legal search and it gives women the opportunity to balance work and family, while potentially earning lots of money.

Four years of law school can pave the way for success in the field of legal recruitment. Since law is such a complicated profession, the knowledge acquired in law school can catapult women into a different class of legal recruiter. For example, it is one thing to be familiar with the term "insider trading" and quite another to understand the complexities of 10(b)c security regulations when trying to gauge the experience of a prospective candidate for a position that a law firm needs filled in a particular field. In fact, trained and former lawyers staff many of the top legal search firms in the country.

Excellent attorney placement consultants, however, venture a few steps beyond that important knowledge and understanding of the law to incorporate good salesperson and counselor skills into their jobs. In dealing with a law firm, one must dig down to truly understand its practice.

As for the interviewee, a well-trained consultant must understand her past and present activities in order to formulate a lucrative future plan. Consultants should also be sure to incorporate the interviewee's personal goals and family considerations into the job search.

As one's attorney placement consulting business grows, so do the professional lives of the lawyers placed. A consultant may start off in the legal recruitment business by placing associates in law firms. But eventually, as those lawyers climb up the corporate ladder, a good consultant may begin placing partners and facilitating mergers and acquisitions, much like the big investment banks do today.

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