

*This article is one of a series of articles based on interviews with **Keith Wetmore** and **Joanna Herman**, MoFo alumni who are now recruiters at Major, Lindsey & Africa (MLA), a leading global legal recruiting firm.*

Keith served as Chair and Chief Executive Partner of Morrison & Foerster for the last twelve of his 35 years with the firm. He joined the partner practice group of MLA in January of 2017.

Joanna was previously an associate in the product liability litigation practice of the firm from 2004 – 2013. Joanna focuses on in-house placements at MLA and has been actively recruiting since 2013.

Resumes and Social Media Presence in Job Searches

By Jessica Hernández

In this third article in our series, Keith and Joanna share advice on resume content and the relationship between job search materials and a candidate's social media presence.

Tips on Resume Content

Keith and Joanna commented on several common mistakes they often see in resumes.

Mission Statements. Keith and Joanna agree that a purpose or mission statement is unnecessary on a resume because it tends to be aspirational as opposed to descriptive. Information typically conveyed in a mission statement – such as explanations of the type of position the candidate is seeking, or why he or she is looking to transition – is more appropriate for a cover letter.

Dates. It is critical to keep relevant dates on your resume. Leaving them out (as senior candidates tend to do) can be confusing to the reader. Experience should be listed chronologically. After 10 years into a legal career, legal experience should move to the top of the resume, and the educational experience to the bottom.

Grades. Grades are generally not necessary so long as a transcript is available (and transcripts are indeed often requested, even up until partnership on the law firm side). Grades and rank on a resume are not necessary for a graduate of a top law school; however, if a candidate attended a very small or lesser-known law school, grades and rank become more important. Both Keith and Joanna agree that it is unnecessary to list grades from college or earlier.

Honors and Distinctions. Certain honors and distinctions are worth noting. For example, a candidate should indicate if he or she was on law review. However, Keith and Joanna advise removing older distinctions, such as those received in high school. Keith adds that partners should avoid listing “Super Lawyer” on their resume, since that designation is considered to be based more on popularity and not necessarily considered an honor.

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Know the Content. Joanna stresses that candidates must be prepared to discuss anything listed on their resume. She recalls how, years ago, she interviewed a candidate who listed “Watching Top Chef” as an interest. When Joanna asked about the show, the candidate knew nothing about it. It was an immediate red flag. This kind of misstep would be particularly egregious if it pertained to a candidate’s work. You obviously should not mention your work on a class action lawsuit on your resume, for example, if you are not prepared to discuss it in detail.

Flexibility. Note that you should vary your resume, as appropriate, to emphasize aspects of your expertise that are relevant to the job descriptions for the positions to which you are applying. As Keith put it, “If you have a vanilla resume and you are applying for a job that’s more butterscotch, you would want to elaborate on any butterscotch experience that you may have.”

Sending Out Resumes

Your resume is a representation of who you are; it is essential to retain control of how it is viewed, and by whom. First of all, you may not want your current employer to know that you are looking for a new job. You also don’t want to dilute your market value — your self-promotional ability to market yourself in the marketplace or in your network. Finally, you don’t want to appear desperate by having your resume in too many places. You want to appear as if you’re only considering certain positions based on valid, considered criteria. For these reasons, before sending a resume to a recruiter, candidates should seek assurances that the recruiter will not share their resume without their permission.

It is also important for candidates to keep track of which recruiters and employers have received their resume.

In a law firm search, if two recruiters have sent your resume to the same firm, it could lead to a dispute. For instance, consider the scenario in which one recruiter sends a resume to Firm X and nothing happens. Then, at a later point, MLA presents the resume more compellingly to the right person in the organization, and the organization wants to hire the candidate. This might lead to a fee dispute about whether the fee belongs to the first recruiter or MLA (which could have an impact on that candidate’s success).

Avoiding this scenario is one reason why, in the law firm context, it’s usually best to work with just one recruiter. Working with one recruiter is also more effective because that recruiter can help you evaluate alternatives and make sure you’re presented at the right place at all the firms in which you are interested.

For a different reason, Joanna stresses that in an in-house search it is also extremely important for you to keep track of which recruiters and employers have received your resume. Since each recruiter has his or her own exclusive searches, no one recruiter will know all the places to

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which you have applied. You will want to work with multiple recruiters to have access to many opportunities, and therefore only you will be able to track where your resume is being sent. In this context, it is still very important to be discerning on which opportunities in which you are expressing interest by submitting your resume. Again, you want to appear as if you are considering positions that are a good fit for you, given your background and experience.

Partner Searches

In partner searches, resumes often do not play a role. For the initial presentation of a lateral partner candidate, firms are generally not focused on the type of information typically found on a resume, which will, at any rate, be verified in due course. Firms focus more on the description of what the candidate does for a living, for whom did they do it, whether or not any of those clients are ready to move with the candidate, etc. Recruiting a partner is more of a strategic business pitch as opposed to a purely a talent search. Recruiters typically source this information with a combination of LinkedIn and the firm bio.

Additionally, practically every firm has some version of a “lateral partner questionnaire,” and almost all of them ask the same questions, which cover the information typically found on a resume.

LinkedIn and Social Media; Relationship to Other Job Search Materials

If you are in the job market, you should have a robust LinkedIn profile with a professional photo that clearly explains what you have done and who you are. Your LinkedIn profile should be searchable by key words that are germane to your experience and relevant roles in which you may be interested. For example, if you are looking for a compliance opportunity, you should be sure to utilize the word “compliance” somewhere in your profile.

Keith underlines the importance of making sure that your LinkedIn profile, resume and other job search materials are internally consistent and work together. It is also important to ensure that, if you have different versions of your resume, they are all in concert with what’s written in your LinkedIn profile. He has observed that candidates are sometimes more forthcoming on LinkedIn than they are on their online bio or even on their resume. Because information is presented differently in these varied formats, it’s important to make sure that if you are finessing something, you are finessing it everywhere.

For example, a website bio doesn’t spell out how many law firms a candidate has worked for. On LinkedIn, Keith has observed that candidates are often forthcoming about, say, the fact they’ve moved firms five times. But the fact is that there are not hard-and-fast rules about LinkedIn the way there are for resumes. While candidates should always be truthful, they should bear in mind that a LinkedIn profile is essentially a marketing piece. Omitting some years on LinkedIn is easier to do than on a resume. Keith explains, “LinkedIn should be viewed as advocacy rather than just securities law disclosure, which is the way a lot of people approach it.”

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Joanna also underlines the importance of stressing your core areas of expertise on LinkedIn, instead of only highlighting job transitions. While Keith and Joanna do not believe in putting a purpose or mission statement on a resume, on LinkedIn they both advise having a bit of narrative that includes those key words, such as “Experienced in-house lawyer with expertise in regulatory compliance and IP prosecution.”

Keith notes that candidates often forget that an online presence can be used against you as easily as for you. So someone can, for example, use your online presence to disqualify you from a position if they want to push another candidate. Be sure to think about your online presence critically.

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