

Applying a SWOT analysis to Associate Legal Career Planning:

How to analyze your potential lateral move and make a decision quickly using SWOT analysis — strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.



Why SWOT?

Lateral movement is common for associates in law firms. Associates are often thinking about where to take their career next, but few have a clear picture of what the next step ought to be. The SWOT analysis method quickly provides incredible clarity when examining a legal career move.

Analyzing Switching Firms

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WITHIN EACH ELEMENT INCLUDE:

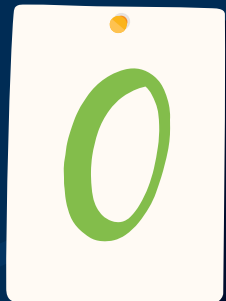
- How is the firm positioned in the practice area locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally?
- How is the firm financially?
- What qualities and values do you look for in a new firm?
- Who are the firms' clients?
- What is the bench strength of the firm in the practice area?
- What is the state of the firm's management?
- What is the firm's culture like?
- How is work allocated to associates?
- How many associates work on a deal?

Associates who drill down on what they value in firms will be better equipped to pursue those that are a true match in desired clients, work, and culture.



STRENGTHS

- > Practice area expertise
- > Strong peer/leader training
- > Established networks & clients
- > Positive team dynamics
- > Market positioning (local to global)



OPPORTUNITIES

- > Leveraged client network
- > Training & development plans
- > Clear career paths
- > Network-building potential
- > Strong team bench strength



WEAKNESSES

- > Skill/training gaps
- > Personality red flags
- > Client development issues
- > Limited deal/work exposure
- > Associate work allocation



THREATS

- > Promotion bottlenecks
- > Internal competition
- > Market volatility
- > Promotion pipeline density
- > Practice area uncertainties