



# MSLAW Academic Support

## Designing a Career Plan

Excerpted from *Your First Year as a Lawyer Revealed* by Ursula Furi-Perry (Jist Publishing, 2010).

You've assessed your options and considered potential sources of employment—now it's time to create a career plan that you can put into action to help you find that all-important first position. Designing a career plan isn't always easy, but having a concrete plan to follow is extremely important.



Here's one checklist you may find useful when designing your career plan:

- Immediate plans:
  - Immediate goal:
  - Requirements for immediate goal:
  - Marketable skills:
  - Current career/professional interests:
  - Implementing immediate plans:
    - Plans for meeting requirements:
    - Plans for seeking employment:
    - Plans for networking:
    - Five new things to learn in order to further immediate goals:
    - Target completion:
- Long-term career plans:

- Long-term career goals:
- Requirements for long-term goals:
- Necessary steps towards long-term goals:
  - Experience:
  - Professional and skills development:
  - Other steps:
- Implementing long-term plans:
  - Plans for professional development:
  - Plans for honing important skills:
  - Plans for networking:
  - Plans for any transitions that may be required:

### **A Sample Career Plan**

Eve is a new graduate who's interested in transactional law. She has interned at a public interest organization assisting clients with housing issues. Her favorite law school courses were Property, Conveyancing, and Drafting Contracts.

Eve's career plan may look like this:

- Immediate plans: to work in private practice the real estate law field.
  - Immediate goal: to find an entry-level position as a real estate associate.
  - Requirements for immediate goal: pass the MA bar; possess strong analytical, writing, research, drafting and people skills.
  - Marketable skills: strong drafting skills; strong academic record; practical representing low-income clients with housing issues.
  - Current career/professional interests: transactional law.
  - Implementing immediate plans:
    - Plans for meeting requirements: hone drafting skills; explore private practice areas, particularly at small firms focusing on transactional law.
    - Plans for seeking employment: contact my law school's career services office for referrals; participate in formal interviewing; contact attorneys I know who may be seeking a new associate; ask for informational interviews with real estate lawyers.
    - Plans for networking: join a trade association for real estate attorneys; join other professional associations; join my state bar's young lawyers association/committee; keep in regular contact with classmates, colleagues, and professional contacts; attend a seminar, social event, or other networking opportunity.
    - Three new things to learn in order to further immediate goals: 1) how to fill out a HUD financing statement; 2) how to assemble and draft the

documents necessary to conduct a proper real estate closing; 3) learn the basics of representing buyers and sellers of foreclosed properties.

- Target completion: December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Long-term career plans:
  - Long-term career goals: to run my own law firm, focusing on real estate law.
  - Requirements for long-term goals: build experience working in real estate law; learn the ins-and-outs of real estate law and hone the skills required to represent clients in transactions from beginning to end; build up clientele; build up capital needed to establish my own business; build up professional contacts and relationships.
  - Necessary steps towards long-term goals:
    - Experience: work for a firm for 5-10 years as a real estate attorney; find mentors who can impart wisdom about working in the real estate field and about founding my own law firm.
    - Professional and skills development: engage in yearly continuing legal education by attending seminars, reading about changes in the law, and keeping up with the real estate field; seek out business development and marketing training; seek out training on
    - Other steps: pay off student loans and other debts within 5-7 years; save 25% of income for 3-5 years to put towards capital for funding the new law firm.
  - Implementing long-term plans:
    - Plans for professional development: attend at least two CLE seminars per year—one focusing on business/marketing skills, and one focusing on developments in real estate law.
    - Plans for honing important skills: focus on business development and maintaining client relationships; focus on substantive skills.
    - Plans for networking: maintain client relationships; maintain professional ties, including at trade and bar associations; maintain close personal ties with colleagues and others.
    - Plans for any transitions that will be required: business and marketing training; formal training on small business ownership; formal training on money and time management; formal training on human resources and management functions.