

Do You Have The Little Something Extra To Go In-House?

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If you want to take your legal practice in-house, you need to be prepared for a challenging job search ahead. While corporate legal departments and companies have increased their hiring in recent months, there are just as many applicants seeking positions. When legal departments are selecting from a large pool of qualified applicants to fill their job openings, they will want to see that little something extra from candidates.

Do you have the little something extra to go in-house? What is that little something extra? It is business experience. We are not talking about the traditional “business experience,” attorneys have in terms of representing companies and understanding their business. Companies want the kind of business experience that sets candidates aside from all the candidates that are applying for the same position.

Having industry-specific business experience is basically a requirement for any senior-level in-house counsel position. In other words, companies are looking to hire attorneys who have practiced as in-house counsel in their specific industry, or who have specialized in private practice in the representation of companies in their field. The bar has been set high with companies looking for true legal specialists in their industry; not just someone who has dabbled in the field.

Having worked in a specific field prior to attending law school can greatly improve a candidate’s standing among the other candidates for an in-house job. For example, if you are a construction attorney, companies will likely be more responsive to your application if you also worked as an engineer or architect. Also, having expertise in a niche area of the law can also open a lot of doors, such as having excellent FDA (Federal Drug Administration) experience. That will allow an attorney to effectively target positions with pharmaceutical, medical device, or cosmetic companies. Finally, possessing an M.B.A. can also set you apart from the rest of the field. It will bolster your credibility of being able to understand business matters.

Today, companies are no longer just looking for generalists or jacks-of-all-trades. They are seeking attorneys with a specialization that makes them stand out from the crowd. So if you don’t have that little something extra, your in-house job search may never get off the ground.