

Make Your JD/MBA Degree Work For You

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In today's world, in-house counsels are increasingly required to display a wide array of legal skills, as well as business expertise. In the last two decades, in-house counsels have evolved from acting as legal administrators to acting as both legal counsel and strategic business partners. As a result, the number of lawyers pursuing dual degrees or business degrees after earning their J.D.'s has increased.

The new breed of lawyers armed with a J.D. and M.B.A. is better positioned to succeed in the in-house world. However, most lawyers tend to fall a little short when it comes to leveraging their M.B.A. Many wonder how to use that degree to open doors that were closed, or how to use it to gain access to positions that seemed out of reach. While earning an M.B.A. is a great accomplishment, the degree alone will not cure all of your professional concerns. Here are some basic steps that will help make your JD/MBA degree work for you.

Start By Updating Your Resume

Of course, the first thing one does after earning a new degree is to include it under the "Education" section of the resume. While this may be an obvious step, it's the "where" and "how" that makes the difference. First, consider adding the degree to the header or profile of your resume. The majority of J.D./M.B.A. candidates are generally experienced lawyers who have their education at the bottom or on page 2 of their resume. By placing it front and center on the first page of your resume, your degree will get you more easily noticed by potential employers.

Next, work through the entire substance of your resume, and make sure to incorporate the business-related skills you've acquired. You need to be able to demonstrate the value you bring to your current and previous positions with respect to your business acumen, skills, and experience. Focus on how you were able to effectively and seamlessly combine legal counsel with business concerns. Sometimes simple changes to a resume change can have a remarkable impact on employers.

Update Your Profiles and Contact Information

While you may want to refrain from including your J.D./M.B.A. reference everywhere, there are certain places where it should appear. Your law firm's website biography should clearly include this information, as should your business cards, and your email footer. You should also consider updating your profile on social media and networking sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and MySpace. Again, making individuals in your network, or those that could potentially become part of your network, aware of your M.B.A. degree is a step in the right direction.

Don't Be Afraid of Using a Little Publicity

While no one expects you to shout it from the rooftop or advertise it in a flying banner, using a little publicity when done tastefully doesn't hurt. If your company already publicizes this sort of thing for internal dissemination, to its customer-base, or to the general public, be sure to take advantage of it. This type of publicity can come in the form of a press release, website update, newsletter etc. Also, be sure to provide your own list of contacts, from your outlook or other contact list, to the department responsible for disseminating the information.

Be Sure to Put Your Degree to Work

While you may have it framed in your office; don't forget the practical value associated with your M.B.A. degree. It's not enough to have gone through the theory, it is now your responsibility to re-assess your current responsibilities and determine ways that you can apply what you have learned to create additional value for your organization. This means bridging your legal advice with your newly acquired business skills. Look for ways where you can add value to a transaction or project applying your M.B.A. knowledge and skills. Of course, you do not want to overstep your role, but to the extent this is part of your responsibilities, step up and provide a business perspective to your legal advice. The manner in which you use your M.B.A. will determine its full value. So, start putting those wonderful skills to work, and make your JD/MBA degree work for you.

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