

Northern California Small and Midsize Firm Guide: An Introduction

Small and midsize law firms are a significant source of employment for recent law school graduates. According to NALP—the Association for Legal Career Professionals—33% of 2008 law school graduates were initially hired by firms with 2-10 attorneys and another 15% were initially hired by firms with 11-50 attorneys. Unlike large firms who often have formal recruitment programs and consistent annual hiring timelines, the hiring practices of small and midsize firms are much more varied. Students seeking employment with small and midsize firms will most likely find a position through the use of networking, referrals, and job postings.

The Northern California Small and Midsize Firm Directory and this accompanying Guide are designed to provide an overview of the small and midsize firm search. This Guide provides general information on small and midsize firms in Northern California and guidelines and strategies for approaching small firms for employment. The Directory includes a list of small and midsize firms throughout Northern California. Firms are organized by county and each firm is then listed alphabetically with its address, phone number, fax number, website, and practice areas.

Due to the large number of small and midsize firms located throughout Northern California, the Directory is not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of all such firms. Please see “Researching and Identifying Small Firms” in this Guide to learn how to expand your search beyond the Directory. Additionally, the information in the Directory is known to be current as of March 2010. Please note that with attorney movement from one firm to another, some of the firm names, number of attorneys, and practice areas listed within the Directory may have changed. Please feel free to use the Directory as a starting point in your small and midsize firm research, and be sure to double check all firm names on Martindale Hubbell and the California Bar website before sending out any direct application materials. The Career Services Office does not recommend that students mass mail their resumes to all of the firms listed in the Directory. The Directory is meant to be used as a research tool for students to utilize in their own individual, directed job search.

A Note on Alumni: While the Directory does not currently provide information on UC Davis School of Law alumni associated with these firms, alumni information is available through: the Alumni Database on the [King Hall Intranet](#); [Martindale Hubbell](#); the [California State Bar](#); and individual law firm websites. For additional information regarding alumni, please contact Ginger Welsh in Alumni Relations at gwelsh@ucdavis.edu.

The Benefits of Working in a Small or Midsize Firm Environment

While much attention and many online resources are dedicated to the large law firm job search process and market, the reality of the post-graduate legal market is that many students and graduates end up (happily) working for a small or midsize firm. Additionally, in the current economic climate, many small and midsize firms are still hiring as they have not had to make as many personnel adjustments as larger law firms.

The small to midsize law firm environment has been an excellent fit for many of our students and alumni. While small and midsize firms can vary greatly in their firm culture and environment, there are several benefits to working in a small or midsize firm environment. Attorneys working in small or midsize firms report higher levels of responsibility earlier in their careers than their large law firm colleagues, collegial working environments, significant and early direct client contact, flexible partnership tracks, flexibility in work-life balance issues, and opportunities to develop an expertise in particular practice areas.

If you have not previously considered a career in a small to midsize firm environment, we recommend that you contact alumni working in these firms to ask more detailed questions. We also recommend Donna Gerson's book, *Choosing Small, Choosing Smart: Job Search Strategies for Lawyers in the Small Firm Market*. Copies are available in the library of the Career Services Office.

Researching and Identifying Small and Midsize Firms

You have seen a job listing from a small or midsize firm or have a lead on an employment opportunity, but how do you find out more about them? Unlike large firms with the budget to provide high-graphic web pages and glossy firm resumes to introduce themselves to prospective attorneys and clients, many small and midsize firms generally do not have the resources to provide these tools. So how do you learn more about these firms?

General Websites: Even though some small firms do not have web sites of their own, you can still identify and learn more about them via resources on the web.

National, State and Local Bar Websites

National, state, and local websites are excellent resources to utilize to familiarize yourself with a particular legal community and identify small firms and small firm practitioners. All states have a state bar page and most counties have local bar associations. [The California Bar website](#) is one example. This [hyperlink](#) will take you to the section on the bar website that identifies bar websites (i.e. local bar associations like the Sacramento County Bar, specialty bars like those focused on diversity or women lawyers, out-of-state bar associations to name a few).

Specific Practice Areas and Specialty Firms

If you are interested in practicing a particular type of law, and wish to identify lawyers who practice in that area, you can use local bar websites to help you in this task. Typically these websites have a prompt to "sections" or "committees" or "practice areas". If you click on the respective term, a list will be generated of practice areas and attorneys who are engaged in this practice. As an example, this is a hyperlink to a relevant portion of the [Los Angeles County Bar Association website](#). This is a ready list for you to use for direct application purposes or to use for setting up informational interviews.

Commercial Web Sites:

www.martindale.com

This site allows you to search for an attorney by name, location, practice area, law school or by firm. It is an excellent starting point for identifying small and midsize law firms in the geographic area you are targeting. Similarly, it is also an excellent tool to identify lawyers and/or law firms that practice the type of law you are interested in practicing. While Martindale is not an exhaustive list of private law firms, firms have to pay to be listed, it is very extensive. You can access the site by going to www.martindale.com. Once you are on the homepage, click on the "Advanced" button within the box "Find Lawyers & Firms". On the new page, click on the grey tab that says ">>Law Firms". As you can see, there are a number of drop-down menus. Identify the city, state and practice area you are interested in. Once you have done this, scroll down to the bottom of the page. There is a drop-down menu under the words "Firm Size". When you select this drop down menu, you will be able to limit your search to firms of a particular size. Medium sized firms these days can number up to 250 lawyers! Bear that in mind when you are generating lists of all sizes (from 250 to 1). Once your first list is generated, click each firm listed. Once you have clicked on the firm name, you will see general information about the firm, typically a hyperlink to

the firm website, an opportunity to view the biographies of the attorneys practicing at that firm, in that office, and the actual size of the office. This is an excellent resource for gathering information.

www.findlaw.com

Like Martindale, Findlaw allows you to search by attorney name, practice area and location. There are also links to small firm web sites when available. Additionally, there are links to community boards (immigration, employment groups, family law etc.) Browsing the boards can also give you a feel for the practice area in general and what types of issues concern attorneys in this practice field.

Networking:

Organizations

Probably the best source of information on small firms is networking. Practice-specific organizations are a great way to meet attorneys in the practice area and also a great opportunity to ask about a particular attorney or firm in which you are interested. For example, if you would like to work in a small firm specializing in employment law, find an association devoted to employment law, like National Employment Law Association (“NELA”).

Career Services and Alumni

Visit the Career Services Office as we may have information about a particular firm or know of a student or alumnus who worked there. We may also direct you to alumni who may know about a firm’s reputation or who can connect you with someone else who can help. If you are inquiring about a small or midsize firm outside this area, ask us to contact a law school career services office in that location to help get the information you seek. You can also identify alumni by use the Alumni Directory on the [King Hall intranet](#).

Personal Contacts

Your own personal and professional contacts can be useful sources of information about small and midsize firms. Talk to your career counselor, classmates, professors, friends, former colleagues, and family members about firms that interest you. In addition to talking to your fellow law students, you can also access student employment evaluations on the [King Hall Intranet](#).

Other Resources:

Lexis and Westlaw

You can also search for a small firm’s name in Lexis or Westlaw to review the frequency and types of cases argued by a firm’s attorney. For cases that might not be published (and if you have time), a creative way to find out more about a small firm is to pay a visit to a local courthouse. Pleadings are public documents and if you have an attorney name or firm in mind, ask to see the pleadings. This will help you determine the caliber of the attorney as well as what types of cases they handle.

Legal Newspapers and Journals

Check out local legal publications to find out who’s who in the community and who’s doing what. The Daily Journal, Daily Reporter, and Daily Recorder are excellent places to start. You can also view classifieds for free on [www.dailyjournal.com](#). While the classifieds are designed for practicing attorneys, a lot of information can be gleaned from the listings, i.e. multiple listings and several recruitments could mean that the firm is extremely busy or growing. Contact them—see if they need help.

Legal publications can also give you a sense of which practice areas are hot. You can also use them as a resource to find experts in the field—many lawyers are used as sources for articles, may author articles, etc. Drop them a line, let them know you read the article.

The above advice is only a starting point and is by no means all-inclusive. We hope you find these tips helpful in getting you started on finding out more about small firms.

Small and Midsize Firm Hiring Timeline

Small and midsize firms, unlike large firms, tend not to have a single “hiring season.” Instead, these firms generally hire on an *ad hoc* basis as their business models do not allow for the employment of underutilized associates. Because small and midsize firms hire as demand dictates you can approach such firms at any point during your job search to ascertain their hiring needs. Although there is no definite hiring season, there are some general timelines you can follow. If you are applying to a small or midsize firm for a summer associate position, most will look for candidates late in the spring semester. As always, there are exceptions and some firms will look as early as January. If you are a third-year law student looking for a post-graduate position, mid to late spring of your final year is a great time to initiate tailored direct applications to small and midsize law firms. Some smaller firms will hire third-year law students during the academic year while others will wait until November when graduates receive their July Bar exam results. Employers will sometimes, on a contract basis, hire recent graduates who have not yet received bar results.

Regardless of when you apply, it is important to carefully research the firms to which you apply, tailor your cover letter and resume, follow-up with phone calls two to three weeks from the date you send your application, and respond promptly and politely to all correspondence or communication from potential employers.

Hiring Criteria

The success of a job search has a lot to do with how well you market yourself. Although you will initially attract a small or midsize firm with your paper credentials, you will secure that job offer by demonstrating a number of skills that are useful to a smaller firm. The three main traits you want to convey in your application materials and interview are motivation for practicing the kind of law in which the firm engages, intelligence, and strong work ethic. One of the best ways to advocate for yourself is to connect your skills to the needs of the firm to which you are applying. Such connections will make the firm feel that you are interested in working there in particular, not that you are just looking for any old job. Intelligence, both book smarts and social acumen, can be conveyed by highlighting qualities such as excellent written skills, verbal communication skills, organizational skills, advocacy skills, and good judgment. Focus not only on grades but on Moot Court, your legal writing grade, clinical work, externships, and anything else that demonstrates competence. Work ethic is another key characteristic a potential employer seeks. Good ways to demonstrate strong work ethic are by highlighting prior experiences that required long hours and focus, dedication, and attention to detail. Did you work while attending school? Emphasize that type of responsibility to show that you know how to work hard.

Firms can rely on the above as indicators that you will be a good lawyer. However, at a small or midsize firm it is not enough to just be a good lawyer. You will get responsibility as well as higher levels of client contact at an earlier stage than you would at a large firm. Management, marketing, and business development opportunities present themselves earlier in a career than they would at a large firm. As a result, firms look for demonstrated leadership skills and community involvement within the geographic

area. Community involvement is a trait to emphasize as attorneys at small and midsize firms need to constantly network and market their practice to their peers. Participation in Bar Associations is an easy way to demonstrate such involvement. Potential employers will also look for signs that you have the wherewithal to recognize that business development opportunities can arise at occasions as different as a Bar Association event and a conversation at the gym.

Law is a client-driven profession and potential employers want to see that you are attuned to people as these will be your clients. Potential employers will also want to see that you can conform in work and social settings, empathize with others, and treat everyone with respect. One of the easiest ways to demonstrate such acumen is through networking and developing a strong system of attorneys and others who like and support you. If an attorney or firm is familiar with you and your qualifications, they are more likely to look at your application. Again, this is where networking skills will play to your advantage because if a potential employer sees your ability to cultivate contacts they will view you as a budding rainmaker.

Perhaps one of the most important things to remember is that you are developing your professional reputation every time you interact with anyone, be they in the legal community or another network. Lawyers communicate with one another and a bad experience with a law student or recent grad will be discussed and, ultimately, will tarnish your reputation. You should exhibit professionalism in every step of the job search. One of the first opportunities you will have to demonstrate professionalism is when you furnish a typo-free and truthful cover letter and resume. Conversely, one of the easiest ways to demonstrate a lack of professionalism is to send a potential employer a cover letter with a typo, a GPA that is rounded up, or an e-mail with sloppy grammar. Professionalism also means that you adhere to timing deadlines, communicate clearly, and respond to all correspondence, even if it is just to thank the potential employer for their time and to withdraw your application. Prompt response to correspondence and calls also shows that you have the ability to maintain strong client relations. This goes back to the business development capabilities; firms want to know that you will be able to attract and retain a good client basis.

Here is a checklist of characteristics to emphasize in your application materials and during your interviews:

- Intelligence
- Strong work ethic
- Motivation for practicing the kind of law in which the firm engages
- Professionalism
- Legal writing (briefs, contracts, legal memos)
- Legal research
- Analysis
- Oral communication
- Business development/rainmaking/client-getting
- Client relations
- Ability to meet deadlines
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team
- Creative thought
- Leadership skills
- Organizational skills
- Management skills
- Interpersonal skills

Networking Your Way to a Small or Midsize Firm Job

Networking is the key to finding and securing employment with a small or midsize firm. While networking is important in any legal job search, many small and midsize firms never post formal job listings, they simply wait until someone they know introduces them to a strong candidate. The concept of networking can be intimidating at first but it gets easier the more you do it. Every one of you already has a network of people with whom you share ideas and obtain advice and direction. The idea of networking is simply to increase and better utilize those contacts.

Start with your existing network and think about who might have useful information and would be willing to help you. Keep them informed of your job search. Examples of people who might already be in your network include:

- Relatives
- Friends
- Former colleagues/work contacts
- Current and former professors (including undergraduate)
- Social Contacts
- Current colleagues/work contacts
- Clinical Program contacts
- Professional/Volunteer Associations
- Contacts through hobbies/sports

Build on your existing network to identify potential employers and opportunities. How?

- Talk about your career goals with others at your law school—professors, staff, and classmates
- Attend programs organized by the Career Services Office and student organizations that will put you in contact with attorneys
- Join your local bar association or specialty bar association
- Reach out to King Hall alumni
- Talk to non-lawyers who likely know lawyers

Informational Interviewing

Identifying potential contacts is only the first step in networking your way to a small or midsize firm job. The next step is actually making contact with the individuals on your list. Informational interviews are a great way to meet lawyers in particular practice areas and gain their perspective and insight about avenues you may want to explore in your overall career development and your immediate job search. Informational interviews are different from traditional interviews in that you are not asking the interviewer for a job. A thoughtful and well-planned request for an informational interview should not be intrusive to the person you contact. Attorneys who enjoy their work are often more than happy to talk with law students and share general career information and contacts.

An email is generally the easiest way to request an informational meeting. You should clearly identify yourself as a King Hall student in the initial contact and explain that you are interested in speaking with the attorney to learn more about his or her practice area and help prepare yourself for a career in that field. Let them know how you obtained their name and contact information. To demonstrate your preparedness and put the attorney at ease regarding your intentions, you can offer a few sample questions that clarify the kind of information you are hoping to obtain. Lastly, invite the attorney to

breakfast, coffee, or lunch or request 15-30 minutes of their time to meet. If you invite them to coffee or a meal, you should be prepared to pay for it.

If you do not receive a response to your initial outreach, wait a week or two and follow-up with a second email or a phone call. If you sense any reluctance from the attorney or do not hear back from them after two contact attempts, do not push the meeting and move on to another contact.

Be sure to come to the meeting prepared. Research your contact the way you would a potential employer and ask thoughtful questions. This is your opportunity to ask questions and gather information in a less formal, and hopefully more candid, setting than a traditional job interview. It is also an opportunity to impress the attorney with your preparation and professionalism and open to the door to future employment opportunities with this attorney and others. Introduce yourself and the purpose of your meeting so that the attorney has a sense of who you are and what you are looking for, then focus on the attorney.

Consider versions of the following questions:

- How did you get your current job?
- Tell me about your career path up to this point?
- How do you spend your time on a typical day?
- What qualities and experience do you think are important in this practice area?
- What are greatest rewards and greatest challenges in this field?
- If you could do it again, would you choose the same path for yourself? Why?
- Is there anyone else in this field you would recommend that I speak with? If so, can I use your name as the person who referred me?
- Do not ask for a job!** It is not appropriate in an informational interview.

Follow-up with a thank you note! Let them know how they were helpful to you.

Materials for a Small or Midsize Firm Job Application

When applying for a job on a direct application basis with a small or midsize law firm, a carefully crafted cover letter and resume are required. When responding to a job listing, pay specific attention to additional documents that may be requested, such as a writing sample. References are usually only requested after an initial interview. What follows are our recommendations and general advice for each of the documents. Please consult with a counselor in the Career Services Office for additional information and specific feedback on any of the requested documents.

Cover Letter: The most effective cover letters are individualized. You can't find much to say in a cover letter unless you are targeting places where your experience, credentials, and demonstrated interest would be pertinent. Mass mailings can be a drain on your resources, and the lack of positive response can be depressing. Generally, we advise that you do careful research, and write to firms that really interest you and that are a good match for your skills and experiences. Your cover letter should indicate a strong preference for the kind of work done by the firm, and if possible, a preference or connection to the geographic area where the firm is located. A cover letter template and sample cover letter are included below for your reference.

Resume: Employers report spending approximately 30 seconds reviewing resumes, so it is imperative that your resume looks professional, is easy to read, and presents the most relevant information for the

employer's practice. List all relevant work experiences (volunteer or paid), coursework, research, writing and professional affiliations and association memberships.

Writing Sample: An ideal writing sample is between 5 and 10 pages long and demonstrates strong, concise legal writing and legal analysis. If you are uncertain as to which writing sample you should provide to an employer, please consult with the Career Services Office for guidance.

References: Employers typically expect a list of two to three references. Ideally, one of those references should be a law school faculty member, and one should be a former supervisor who can address your work quality and work ethic. Include each reference's name, title, employer, address, phone number, and e-mail. If it has been some time since you asked someone to serve as a reference for you, check in with them to update them on your job search status and/or to let them know if they should be expecting a call from a prospective employer. Always make sure your references have a recent copy of your resume.

Cover Letter Template

Your street address
City, state, zip code

Date

Mr./Ms. Individual's name
Title
Employer name
Street address
City, state, zip code

Dear (Ms. or Mr.) Last Name:

Paragraph 1: State basic information about yourself (your status in school), why you are writing, what you are seeking, how you learned of the organization or position. If you are writing at the suggestion of someone who knows the addressee, this is a good place to say so. Draw attention to your knowledge of the firm. You can also state your ties to the geographic area or why you want to practice in a particular city/state.

Paragraph 2: Spell out exactly (through examples) how your experiences, skills, and education fit the position and can benefit the employer. Use the position description (if you have one) to give you guidance to focus this paragraph.

Paragraph 3 (optional): Should be used only to describe further what you can bring to the position. It is an extension of the theme of paragraph two.

Paragraph 4: Indicate that you are enclosing your resume (and any other application materials). Reiterate your interest in the position. Thank the reader for their attention and consideration. Say that you are looking forward to hearing from the potential employer (or that you will follow up with them) and provide a phone number and e-mail address where you can be reached.

Sincerely,

(Your signature)
Your name (typed)

Enclosure(s)

Sample Cover Letter

225 West Ames Street
Los Angeles, CA 94115

September 1, 2009

Mr. H. Scott Smith
Smith, Goodpaster & Thied
123 Sidley Square
Los Angeles, CA 94115

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am a second-year law student at the University of California, Davis School of Law, and I am writing to inquire about a summer law clerk position with your firm. As a native of Los Angeles, I am committed to returning to Los Angeles to practice law upon graduation.

The work that your firm performs on behalf of criminal defendants is of particular interest to me. This past summer I worked as a clinical intern for the UC Davis Prison Law Clinic. In this position, I interviewed incarcerated clients, researched various criminal law and procedure issues, and drafted and filed various motions. Prior to law school as an undergraduate at UC Irvine, I worked part-time for a criminal defense attorney, where I organized files, served subpoenas and assisted at witness interviews, hearings and trials. I am confident that the relevant practical skills I gained from these experiences make me a well-qualified candidate for a summer law clerk position with Smith, Goodpaster & Thied.

I have enclosed my resumé for your review. I will be in Los Angeles during the week of November 22nd and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you at that time, if possible. I can be reached at 555-555-5125 or by e-mail at sdowd@gmail.com. Thank you for your consideration of my application. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

[signature]

Steven P. Dowd

Enclosure

Strategies for Successful Interviewing

Between you and the job you seek lies a dialogue (or several), heavy with risk and potential both for you and for your prospective employer.

Interviews vary in setting (on campus, in the office); in purpose (school year, summer, or post J.D. position); in type (preliminary screening or final decision making); in kind of firm (size, practice area); in length (20 minutes to a full day); in format and style.

Your interviewers may be charming and skillful at drawing out your accomplishments, abrasive and abrupt, or sit almost silent as they stare at you. You may be feeling confident or terrified, you may already have several offers or fear you'll never find employment and repay your loans.

Whatever the differences amongst interviews for law jobs, however, there are many commonalities. These tips are intended to help you prepare as preparation is the key.

Know What You Want:

(Or, at least, do enough "inner research" to sound as though you know.)

- The work you seek.
- The skills you want to use and those you want to develop.

Know the Employer:

- Talk to fellow students, alumni, family, friends, and other attorneys.
- Research. Read any materials available online and in the Career Services Office.
- Consider what the employer wants and needs. What traits, skills, expertise would be an asset in a person hired?
- Assess the fit. Do you have a chance? Are you qualified? Do you want a chance? Do you like what you've learned so far?

Know Your Selling Points:

Take stock of your assets. Think of specific examples of when and how you have demonstrated:

- Your skills and talents.
- Your temperament and style. Unlike large law firms, where you may not know all of the attorneys in your office, small and midsize firms are more intimate. Everybody knows everybody. Emphasize your belief in teamwork.
- Your accomplishments and achievements.
- Your enthusiasm, interest, commitment, diligence.
- Your ability to work independently (small and midsize firms can often give you a great deal of responsibility early on (unlike their large firm counterparts). Let the interviewers know you can handle it, you welcome it, and that you do not need hand-holding.

Accentuate the Positive:

You may encounter tough questions, but they won't be so hard if you anticipate them and they aren't surprise questions. Interviewers want to know if you can think on your feet and keep your cool. Good lawyers are confident, and capable. They analyze problems and address them directly. Try to act like a good lawyer in the interview.

If grades, a career change, a gap in employment, an unsuccessful summer clerkship or other concern might be detrimental to you in an interview, plan now how you will address it. The best policy is to be calm and matter-of-fact. Be honest but brief. Don't pour out your self-doubts or your complaints. Unfortunately, anything negative you say about a bad boss or an unfair instructor is likely to make you look bad. Give reasonable, believable answers. Always keep in mind what the employer seeks. Emphasize the positive and/or your plans for improvement.

Were you constructively busy during a gap in your employment history? Say how. Did you decide on law only after several years in another career? Convey that this was a considered choice, and how your previous experience will prove an asset. Were your grades disappointing? Talk about where you have improved, where you did best, what your new plan of attack is. Don't dwell on causes such as personal problems. Employers seek attorneys who can perform even in difficult circumstances.

Emphasize the areas where you have had success, especially to counter questions about grades: substantial work experience, success in Moot Court, leadership in extracurricular activities.

line? Relate your tangible accomplishments rather than simply describing yourself with adjectives of self-praise. How have you demonstrated qualities such as perseverance, stamina, ability to relate to clients of diverse backgrounds?

Schedule a Mock Interview with a Career Services Counselor:

Every career counselor in our office is a former practicing attorney. We have all interviewed candidates for employment. Consider using us for your "test run". The selection process is subjective. Interviewers select people they like and enjoy. If you meet their minimum criteria, chemistry becomes a major factor. Merit alone does not determine the outcome. Also, keep in mind that interviewing is stressful for the interviewer, as well as for you. The interviewer must make good recommendations or decisions out of a series of tiring and time-consuming encounters.

Following an Interview:

Send thank you notes to everyone you met. Make them unique. Mention something that came up in your conversation. Reiterate your interest in the firm. Lasting impressions are important. Let them know that you are appreciative of the time they took to meet with you.

Salary negotiation for Small and Midsize Firms

Salary is the key component to be negotiated when considering an offer of employment with a small or midsize firm. In order to prepare for this negotiation, the first thing you must do is research the small or midsize firm market to determine salary range.

Research Resources:

Every year the Career Services Office compiles salary information from exit surveys given to the graduating class. Oftentimes a salary range can be gleaned from this information. Just contact Career Services and ask to speak with a counselor who can help pull this data.

NALP also has a variety of different resources online pertaining to salaries. The website is www.nalp.org. The Career Services Office also has NALP publications that address the topic of compensation. They include the *Associate Salary Survey*, *Jobs & J.D.'s: Employment and Salaries of New Law Graduates*, and *Starting Salaries: What New Law Graduates Earn*. These publications are on reserve. Speak with Kimberly Thomas if you would like to access them.

In our resource library we also have a wonderful book entitled, *Choosing Small, Choosing Smart: Job Search Strategies for Lawyers in the Small Firm Market* by Donna Gerson. We have several copies of the book which you can check out.

Findlaw also has salary information and links to discussion boards at <http://jobs.findlaw.com>.

Looking at classified ads in legal publications can also provide salary information; www.dailyjournal.com is a good place to start.

Critical Factors to Incorporate Into Your Research Efforts and to Bring to the Table:

Key factors to be considered and weighed when preparing for the negotiation include: geography, firm size, practice areas, and work responsibilities. If you have additional educational experience outside of your law degree (i.e. an MBA or an LLM), this too can benefit the final salary you come away with. Judicial clerkships also add value to you as a candidate. Maintaining internal salary equity is another concern for the employer, as is the nature of the market (seller's or buyer's) and by the interest level the firm has for any given candidate.

Once you have determined the appropriate salary range for firms of the size you are considering, you then need to ask yourself, "How much can I afford to live on?" which will give you the bottom of your range. Sometimes employers will start off low, but will raise the salary after a "probation" period has passed—say 6 months later. This is a point to be bartered. Remember, if the experience will be a good one and you like the people with whom you've met, think long term not short term. If you can afford to wait 6 months for a higher salary, negotiate that term, and accept the offer.

In Addition to the Base Salary, What Other Compensation Should I Consider?

Other components for which to negotiate and which are huge parts of the overall compensation package are healthcare benefits, bar dues, professional fees, parking fees, and vacation. Maternity or paternity leave, likewise, is something to look into. Ask around, talk to alumni, talk to friends and attorneys at similarly sized (and located) firms. See what compensation packages are like elsewhere. You can then bring that information to the table and discuss it in a substantive way.

Reaching the Compromise:

You may not be able to get all of the things you want. Try and remain flexible. If they are willing to give a little, perhaps, you can give a little bit up too. Remember: think about what you really need vs. what you want. Create a budget, speak with the Financial Aid Office, and perhaps speak with an accountant.