

New York Law Journal



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MONDAY, APRIL 26, 2010

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An **ALM** Publication

LAW SCHOOLS: A Special Report

'Alternative' Jobs

They represent the **range of opportunities** for those with a J.D.

BY KATHERINE FRINK-HAMLETT



Faced with a tepid legal marketplace, law students and recent graduates (whether deferred, downsized or simply dismayed) need to rethink their career strategies to adapt to this brave new world. With significantly fewer entry-

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level associate positions available, now is the time to consider alternative opportunities that may not have initially appeared on your radar screen.

Many attorneys, myself included, entered law school with little to no information about the realities of practicing law or even the range of positions that are available to smart folks who hold the almighty juris doctor degree.

We simply figured that the LSAT was far more palatable than the GMAT (no math); we'd take three years to get a law degree since we basically liked school anyway (better than working, right?);

and, then with a wave of the magic wand we'd start our prestigious law careers at a big, fat law firm making big, fat law dollars (mission accomplished).

Sure, a few of us had a bit more savvy and were eyeing judicial clerkships from day one. And, of course, there were the well-meaning, altruistic students who planned to change the world through public interest endeavors.

But, for the most part, law students have an extremely myopic view of just how far and fast the J.D. can run.

In reality, there are several careers available to lawyers, including recent law school grads, that go beyond the so-called traditional practice of law. Here, three specific areas will be considered: procurement, compliance and legal administrative opportunities.

In addition to describing the substantive functions, suggestions will be provided on how to secure these roles as recent law graduates and whether, as a practical matter, these positions permit a transfer to traditional law practice should there be a desire to switch lanes.

While these careers are frequently referred to as "alternatives," the truth is that they simply represent the range of professional opportunities available to attorneys.

Some, like procurement and compliance, have been around for years. Others, like legal administrative roles, have recently emerged as relatively new careers primarily generated by the 21st century law firm model.

Procurement

Law students and recent grads may wonder what exactly procurement is.

"Procurement is really just a term for how corporations go about the business of purchasing goods and services," explains I. Javette Hines,

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an attorney who is the senior vice president of supplier diversity and sustainability at Citi. Ms. Hines' primary responsibilities are to provide coaching and training to suppliers to make sure that they understand the company's business needs and overall objectives.



In doing so, her role requires that women and diverse businesses have access to corporate opportunities so that the company's suppliers mirror its diverse communities and marketplace footprint. In addition, she acts as a coach and trainer to the company's internal stakeholders to optimize their sourcing strategies.

Like so many attorneys in non-traditional practice areas, Ms. Hines stumbled into her procurement career.

After graduating from law school, she completed a short-term temporary assignment with

the goal of moving to New York to write a screenplay. However, her plan changed when she landed an entry-level opportunity as a software procurement specialist with a major international corporation.

As a recent law school grad, she entered into the procurement world by drafting and negotiating software contracts. Through a series of promotions, various special projects and external career moves, Ms. Hines ultimately obtained her current position.

She emphasizes that understanding "processes and procedures" is critical to success in a procurement function particularly as those procedures pertain to various components and categories of the company's business needs. Additionally, stellar communication skills are paramount to effectively articulate these concerns to suppliers and business leadership.

Ms. Hines encourages law students and recent grads who are interested in further information about procurement to visit the Web sites of the Institute for Supply Management and The Global Sourcing Council to

obtain details about this growing and dynamic area.

And, if you're wondering whether a career in procurement prevents a return to the so-called traditional practice of law, rest assured: you can go back.

Why? Because procurement frequently includes drafting, negotiating and reviewing a wide variety of contracts so it is not a U-turn but more like a fork in the road.

In fact, procurement professionals are frequently tapped by legal departments to manage the negotiations for outsourcing transactions or serve as business and/or government relations managers. By the way, Ms. Hines is still waiting to write that screen play.

Compliance

Like Ms. Hines, Carol Baldwin Moody, senior vice president and chief compliance officer of a major insurance company, found her claim to fame in a so-called nontraditional practice area: financial compliance.

Recognized by Black Enterprise as one of the most powerful African-American women in America, Ms. Moody oversees a team of 175+ employees and is charged with the heady task of making sure that the company's vast insurance operations are in compliance with a multitude of ever-changing state and federal regulations applicable to their financial products.

She warns that it may sound easy, but in reality there could be 60 rules that apply to one product, covering activities ranging from regulatory

approval to required disclosures. This entails meeting with business people and making sure that they are doing their jobs right.

As Ms. Moody emphasizes, "we are a business of trust" and the rules are "supposed to help our customers." As a result, process mapping and design competencies are key skills that any lawyer must have to create and implement compliance programs that make sense for their business.

"Most lawyers do not make good compliance [officers] because we are very conceptual and compliance people have to be process oriented," explains Ms. Moody.

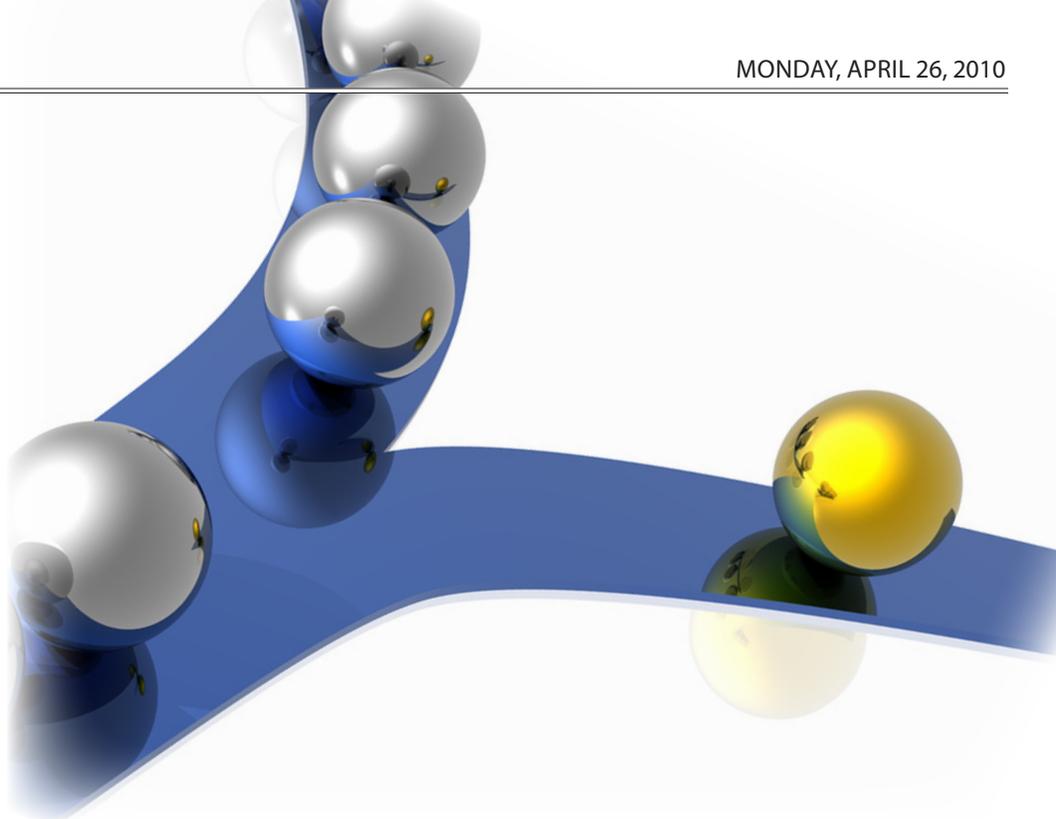
She further emphasizes that a good compliance professional is a solution finder because at the end of the day, businesses do not sell compliance, they sell financial products.

Ms. Moody recommends that law students and recent graduates who are interested in seeking compliance opportunities take the time to learn what regulators are talking about, especially the "hot topics." And, she suggests visiting the Web site of the Securities and Exchange Commission to assess the risks of greatest concern to the commissioners.

Once you get your foot in the door, she encourages compliance professionals to seek out process mapping courses to improve their data analysis and processing skills.

Also, if you become associated with a broker-dealer, it is extremely advantageous to obtain extra designations like Series 7 and Series 24 licenses.

Joining a legal department from a compliance role is a no-brainer.



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From a recruiting perspective, a candidate's compliance experience is highly coveted and frequently a stated requirement or a strong preference.

For example, when asked whether she, as a compliance professional, could transition back to traditional legal practice Ms. Moody responded, "I could easily become general counsel of a company."

Law Firm Administration

While law firms may have limited associate opportunities, there may be opportunities in administrative areas such as professional development and diversity.

Stay flexible in your approach, be willing to look beyond the obvious, and just hang in there. There is a place for you; it's simply a matter of time.

Maja Hazell is the director of diversity and inclusion at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson and her role is broadly focused on diversity as she helps firm management chart a course of business as it relates to the firm's culture.

Ms. Hazell explains that "diversity issues show up everywhere:" human resources, recruiting, marketing, etc.

It's her primary responsibility to work in a collaborative fashion to synthesize these various firm functions around diversity and inclusion. In some cases this may entail working with the firm's diversity committee or interfacing with professional development.

Before considering a move to the administrative side, Ms. Hazell suggests developing skills to obtain an understanding of what it means to run a successful firm.

If you have practice experience, consider working with administrative, partner and recruiting committees to become involved in firm strategies and problem solving.

As a law student or recent graduate, entry-level positions like recruiting assistant or coordinator are realistic stepping stones that will allow you to transition into a manager's or director's role.

Ms. Hazell warns, however, that you may face an uphill battle in convincing a potential employer that

you are genuinely committed to an administrative career.

Also, unless you have prior practice experience, returning to traditional law practice may prove difficult so you'll probably want to keep your bar licenses up to date as well as taking on pro bono opportunities.

And, as with all career moves, Ms. Hazell emphasizes that it is "all about who you know."

In addition to procurement, compliance and legal administrative opportunities, there are a host of careers that recent graduates can consider, ranging from contract administration to legal publishing.

Even in this challenging market, a law degree can provide meaningful career opportunities for law students and recent grads.

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