

Law

▲ Job market tight, but there are ways to find the good jobs

MORRISTOWN, N.J. (AP) — With over 35,500 law school graduates this year and fewer jobs for them, prospective new recruits need an edge to land jobs, says a partner of a New Jersey law firm.

Find out what law firms are looking for, advises Clyde Szuch, managing partner at Pitney, Hardin, Kipp & Szuch, one of the country's largest law firms. Some factors cited by Szuch:

- **Academic performance.** Being in the top quarter of your graduating class improves your chances, though firms will consider any student in the top third. A nationally recognized law school is a positive factor, but many firms find well-qualified applicants at law schools with good regional reputations.

- **Academic experience.** Your choice of law school courses should be consistent with the kind of law you want to practice. Early specialization is a strong selling point, says Szuch.

- **Writing and speaking skills.** Writing well is essential. Many law firms require a writing sample to evaluate the candidate's logic and comprehension. Being articulate is as important as writing well.

- **Other work experience.** You've got an advantage if you've had summer legal jobs between terms. Taking a year to serve as a judicial clerk is a good way to increase your chances. Experience in other fields also is useful; for example, a student with science or



engineering background can be valuable to a firm with environmental practice.

- **Geography.** Geographic preference is a strong factor, especially for firms located outside big cities like New York, Chicago or Los Angeles.

- **Practice areas.** The "hottest" practice area now is environment specialization, according to Szuch. Litigators also are in demand.

- **Business background.** Firms value the law school candidate who can develop good business contacts or shows ability to sell the firm's practice. Getting new business is essential for a firm's survival, so the candidate who shows initiative in this area has an edge.

- **Commitment.** The legal profession considers itself a service industry. Law firms look for students willing to commit time, energy and enthusiasm to their clients.

- **Administration.** Law firms need candidates who can grow into managers of cases, projects, associates, support staff and otherwise share administrative duties of running a firm. Line of succession is a greater consideration than ever before, Szuch says.

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