

Hays reports working as an in-house lawyer can amplify legal career horizons

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According to the leading specialist recruitment consultancy, Hays, although recruitment activity has been affected by the downturn and slowed in the legal market as a whole, there are still opportunities for high calibre in-house lawyers. The market for interim roles, for example, is relatively buoyant and this route offers an excellent way to gain relevant experience as an in-house lawyer.

Lawyers need to be prepared and focused given the tougher market conditions. Strong technical skills and a track record of advising clients, either through prior permanent in-house or secondment experience, is a definite plus. Given the current climate, jobseekers can stand out by updating their skills in certain areas of legislation. "It is definitely worth brushing up on areas such as employment law, restructuring and insolvency work, and we would advise jobseekers to do so as these areas will be experiencing an upsurge in activity over the next 12 months," noted Nick Creed, Business Director at Hays Legal.

He continued, "The downturn is throwing up some good interim opportunities to cover absences, such as maternity leave".

Jobseekers must make sure that they are well prepared as competition for roles is intense and they must be very clear about the reasons why they are applying for a particular role. There should be a strong focus directed on the interview process, as thorough preparation will set applicants apart and ensure a better chance of securing a role. Keeping an open mind and not having preconceptions about a particular industry sector is also important.

"It's as much about the people you are going to be working with as the actual industry itself," explained Nick, "so keep your options open and explore available opportunities in sectors you may not have otherwise considered."

Moving to an in-house role from private practice is another viable option and one where transferable skills, such as customer relationship management, will prove beneficial and facilitate the transition. In-house lawyers (<http://www.hays.com/legal/>) are involved in many different aspects of strategy, which not only requires a solid understanding of the business but also the communication skills to strip down often complex legalese.

While prior experience is an advantage, any previous in-house exposure will be advantageous. Asking for a secondment to a client, if working for a law firm, is one way of gaining experience. "This can be an invaluable stepping stone, even if it is just for three months, as you are cementing your understanding of what an in-house lawyer actually does on a daily basis. The key is to keep your private practice experience as broad as you can." Advised Nick.

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Note to Editor:

About Hays (<http://www.hays.com/index.aspx>)

Hays Legal is part of Hays plc, the leading global specialist recruitment group and specialises in legal jobs (<http://www.hays.com/legal/>) including legal secretary jobs (<http://www.hays.com/legal/LegalSecretary/>) and paralegal jobs (<http://www.hays.com/legal/Paralegal/>). Hays is market leader in the UK and Australia, and one of the market leaders in Continental Europe. On 30 June 2008, the Group employed 8,872 staff operating from 393 offices in 27 countries across 17 specialisms.

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