

Finding the Right Law Firm Fit— How to Use Career Profiles

Provided by **Akin Gump**
STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP

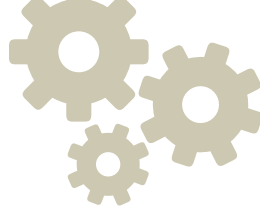
Organizing your criteria for choosing a law firm is like drafting a research memo. You need to sort through a lot of information and decide what will best support the argument you are making to the reader—in this case, you.

So, it's time to figure out your priorities. What do you really want from your career? Your answer will help you decide what information should get the most weight in making your decision.

Below are brief descriptions of seven career profiles. Take a look and see which ones sound like you. This is the time to be honest with yourself.

What's right for your moot court partner, your journal editor or your older sister may not be right for you.

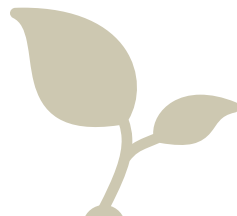
The Thought Leader



GOAL: Doing work that challenges and inspires me.

If the work itself is what drives you, you may be a Thought Leader. Before committing to a firm, make sure it has lawyers and clients with experience in your area of interest. Thought Leaders want to learn as much as they can as fast as they can. Choose a firm that will support your passion and encourage your efforts to build your practice and your profile within the legal industry.

The Entrepreneur

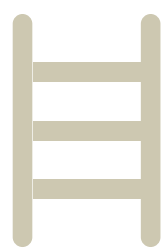


GOAL: Building a law firm and shaping its direction.

Entrepreneurs are constantly looking for ways to build a better mousetrap—and now is an exciting time for law firms to do just that. With the growth of artificial intelligence, alternative fee arrangements and automated project management, the law firm where you work tomorrow may look very different from the one where you interview today.

Entrepreneurs may be drawn to small or mid-size firms with the idea that they offer more room for growth in a rapidly changing legal industry. But large firms that are flexible and committed to innovation and adaptation offer excellent opportunities for Entrepreneurs to build their practices.

The Ladder Climber



GOAL: Making partner.

Partnership is the holy grail for many law grads. The potential rewards are great: prestige, respect, interesting work, and a certain amount of financial and job security. Successful Ladder Climbers tend to excel at strategic thinking and building relationships with colleagues and clients. If this is the road for you, make sure you're comfortable with the firm's management structure and values, and with your future partners.

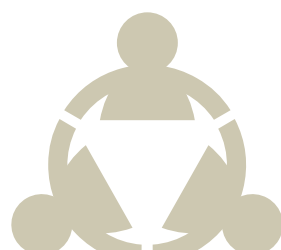
The Humanitarian



GOAL: Contributing to the world.

You may have decided to attend law school because you want to make a difference, and you may think this is not something you can do in a large law firm. In fact, you can work for a large firm and still have a positive impact on the world. Many law firms make substantial commitments to pro bono work and community service, and encourage their lawyers to participate in both. Firms may also have billable clients that are pushing the boundaries of medicine, pioneering renewable energy resources or financing infrastructure in developing countries. If clients are having a positive impact on the world, so are those who work for them.

The Team Builder



GOAL: Finding a “work family.”

Team Builders are drawn to law firms that value collegiality and collaboration. You thrive when working with dedicated mentors. You excel as part of an industry or client team that puts client outcomes ahead of individual recognition. Because you are a good listener, you understand what makes clients and their businesses tick—so you may become a prized ally and business counselor as well as a legal advisor.

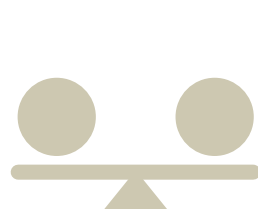
The Explorer



GOAL: Positioning myself for the next job—and the one after that.

Committing to your first job for the rest of your career is sometimes a hard concept to imagine—there's so much out there to experience. As an Explorer, you need to make connections and build your resume. Look for ways to impress future employers, including firm alumni and current clients. If your firm offers options like client secondments, stints in foreign offices, teaching opportunities or even sabbaticals, you may be able to explore to your heart's content without ever looking for a new job. In addition, make sure your firm provides a strong foundation of formal training and hands-on experiences to help you develop your skill set.

The Balancer



GOAL: A manageable lifestyle.

You're ready to work hard, but the office isn't all there is to life. A favorite avocation, family commitments or having enough “me time” are important. Many firms offer options that let you advance in your career and still maintain a balance between work and life. And if equity partnership is not your goal, you may find opportunities to do interesting work without the demands of being a business owner.

The Next Step

Now that you've read the career profiles, rank them in order of which ones sound most like you. In Part 2 of Finding the Right Law Firm Fit, we'll show you how to use your profile to get the information you need to find the right law firm for you.