

# No Bar to New Careers

Law students prepare for jobs outside firms  
by Hollee Schwartz Temple

Alternatives

This year, Anna Palmer's entrepreneurial journey came full circle when she returned to the place where her dream took shape: Harvard Law School.

Palmer, who credits a law school course in entrepreneurship and company creation with inspiring her career path, was in class this time as a guest speaker, sharing her wisdom with law students considering similar ventures outside traditional legal practice.

"The training I got in law school put me in a really good spot to start a company and start it wisely," says Palmer, 28, who co-founded the Boston-based Fashion Project with a law school classmate immediately after graduation. The business collects posh apparel and accessories and then sells the tax-deductible gifts on behalf of charities like Dress for Success and the March of Dimes.

## BRANCHING OUT

Changes in the legal job market—and in the overall economy—are compelling new lawyers like Palmer to think creatively about how to put their degrees to work, according to Liz Brown, author of *Life After Law: Finding Work You Love with the JD You Have*.

Brown says the shrinking number of private sector jobs has forced newer graduates to consider a wider range of careers from the outset. Law schools are beginning to recognize this need, she says, starting programs in law and entrepreneurship, law and business or both.

James Leipold, executive director of NALP, says that in the wake of the economic downturn, law schools have increased programming on alternative career options. The shift may be partly due to student interest, but

it also stems from the reality that "a percentage will have to find [alternative careers] because private practice jobs aren't there the way they were."

NALP statistics confirm the trend. In the early 1990s, law school grads jumping right into business and industry careers numbered less than 8 percent. For the past several years, though, that percentage has more than doubled, with about 18 percent of new grads starting their careers in the business arena.

For some recent law school graduates, the contracting legal market may be a blessing in disguise, says Brown, who believes many new JDs would find greater personal and professional fulfillment in business.

"Starting a business is at least as challenging as starting a legal career, but it invokes and rewards a different set of skills," Brown says. "Starting their own business offers them the opportunity to create and develop something they are passionate about, and that fills an important niche."

"Law school is such a great time to explore your options," says Palmer, who chose her final-year courses with an entrepreneurial career in mind. "Start early and go full steam, and try to launch by the time you've graduated." ■



Liz Brown

# To Endorse (or Not)

LinkedIn feature draws some questions  
by Dennis Kennedy

Kennedy on Tech

"Does Dennis have these skills or expertise?"

If you've visited my, or anyone else's, LinkedIn profile page recently, you've been asked this question. For many lawyers, this seemingly simple inquiry has generated more questions than answers.

LinkedIn is the most popular social media platform for lawyers. Most of you know your LinkedIn profile works as an extended form of a resumé or biography. A relatively new feature highlights skills. You can list a number of skills that you have—public speaking, writing, leadership and legal skills like litigation, licensing or land-use finance. This can help you round out the story your profile tells.

However, some lawyers and regulators have gotten hung up on what legal skills are. There has been debate about whether skills are the same as or at least imply the idea of specialty. Some will argue that lawyers shouldn't list legal skills at all.

I feel that if you spend most of your days drafting contracts, it seems logical to say you have the skill of contract drafting.

LinkedIn's use of skills brings us to its endorsements. Those of you who follow discussions of ethical rules will not be surprised that LinkedIn's choice of the word *endorsement* has triggered debate about the ethics of endorsing lawyers for their skills.

To endorse someone on LinkedIn means something like "agreeing that this person has that skill." It's like a little yes vote. It's not a rating or a detailed analysis, just an acknowledgement that you think the person has the skill.

Now, in the LinkedIn world, it's far better to have a recommendation than an endorsement. A recommendation typically