

By Charles A. Volkert, Executive Director of [Robert Half Legal®](#), a legal staffing service specializing in the placement of attorneys, paralegals, legal administrators and other legal professionals with law firms and corporate legal departments.

## **Conducting a Career Audit**

How satisfied are you in your job? Do you look forward to the start of each workweek? If your answer to these questions is less than enthusiastic, it may be time to conduct a “career audit” – an in-depth assessment of where you are in achieving your professional goals.

Through this process, you closely evaluate your current position to determine whether it’s supporting your short- and long-term ambitions. A career audit helps you define the steps needed to be successful, whether it’s making changes at your present employer or moving on to another law firm.

### **Getting started**

Begin your career audit by identifying what motivates you. Which elements of your job give you the greatest satisfaction? Do you prefer managing people or overseeing projects? Do you enjoy working with partners in the firm or collaborating with staff?

It’s often helpful to write down three of the most interesting projects you have worked on. Consider which factors contributed to your feeling of accomplishment and look for a pattern. For instance, you may discover that you enjoy training and mentoring employees or thrive on intellectual challenge.

Next, think of your perfect job. Envisioning your ideal position – in detail – can give you valuable insights into your career objectives. Would you be in a leadership role? What type of law firm or company would you work for?

### **Developing a strategy**

After you’ve established your professional goals, you’ll want to make sure there are no roadblocks to your success. Start by determining your strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side you might include special achievements or abilities: earning your certified legal manager (CLM) accreditation, knowledge of a foreign language, etc. On the negative, you should list shortcomings such as lacking certain skills needed for a promotion.

Ask a trusted colleague or mentor for feedback as well. Often what we perceive to be strengths or weaknesses are viewed differently by others. Their comments can reaffirm that you’ve selected the right career goal or guide you toward a more rewarding one.

The next step is to look for ways to overcome your professional liabilities. For instance, you might take an accounting course to build your knowledge of budget management. Or you could gain exposure to new technologies by joining a relevant project team at work.

This is also a good time to get involved with professional groups such as the Association of Legal Administrators. Talking to others in your field can help you gain a

fresh perspective on your situation. In addition, you'll expand your circle of contacts and learn about the latest trends in legal administration. Consider becoming involved in association activities, such as serving on a committee or contributing newsletter articles. You'll heighten your visibility in the legal community, which can be particularly beneficial during a job search.

### **Getting the most out of your current position**

If you elect not to change employers after conducting your career audit, there are ways to achieve greater fulfillment in your work.

Begin by adjusting a few key aspects of your present job, if possible. For instance, if you feel overwhelmed because your time is always booked with meetings, try to cut back on the number you attend. Find out in advance the focus of each discussion and determine whether it's essential that you be there. You may discover that a meeting summary will suffice.

Volunteering for new projects can also renew your enthusiasm while broadening your experience and skill set. Proactively seek out challenging assignments; help launch a marketing campaign for your firm or assess next year's employee benefits package. You'll demonstrate to others that you have initiative – a quality that can help you stand out as a candidate for a promotion.

Conducting a career audit can help you jump-start your career and get back on track in achieving your professional goals. Evaluate your skills carefully and then make the necessary changes to enhance your marketability. You'll position yourself for success, whether you're remaining with your current employer or moving on to new opportunities in the legal field.