



CHART A NEW PATH

ALTERNATIVES TO LAW PRACTICE

By Jeremy M. Evans

Many business people hold juris doctor degrees (J.D.), but do not practice law.

There are some jobs that list J.D. degree preferred because the idea of hiring someone with a legal education is beneficial for the company. There are also attorneys and law graduates who become business executives because they love careers focused on management, business development, sales, and relationship development. All in all, alternative careers for individuals with a legal background are more common than the general public may think.

Why earn a J.D. and not practice law? There could be a realization that one likes doing something different beyond the law. It is not for everyone, even attorneys. Travis Clarke with Wasserman in Carlsbad provides some insight on being a law graduate in a non-attorney job:

"I never set out in law school with the ultimate goal of being a licensed attorney. I viewed obtaining my J.D. as a way to further differentiate myself and provide me with another tool to be successful. It got me to where I wanted to be and has helped me excel. Often times people view having a J.D. only through the lens of being a licensed attorney. However, it provides so much more and people shouldn't be afraid to shun the norm and chart their own path in this field."

Another deterrent may be that the examiners at the State Bar of California traditionally issue a difficult exam. Many proponents say a hard test is

necessary to protect the profession. The opposition argues that an easier exam would open the proverbial doors to qualified individuals who just have a difficult time taking exams. California has roughly a 50% bar passage rate, which leaves a host of people in the market who have some experience with the law, have a passion for it and work in the legal industry, but do not hold a license to practice law and wish to do so.

Alternative career paths for law graduates or legally educated individuals often provide a diverse skill set and are welcomed in other professions besides the legal industry. For example, in business,

diversifying your deal-making partners for transactional, litigation or consulting matters (e.g., not just using attorneys) with those who have a legal background will help and one does not necessarily need to be an attorney to be successful. Success should be measured by impact and not necessarily with a license. ¶



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