

KABA

KOREAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA

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Interview with Mr. Benjamin Fink re Job Market for Students and Recent Grads



Mr. Fink is a founding partner who specializes in commercial litigation, trade secret and non-compete law. His firm, [Berman Fink Van Horn P.C.](#) is a general practice firm in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Fink has ample experience in the law firm world, having hired and interviewed numerous candidates for his firm over the years, including in the last few years when other firms were not. He graciously answered the following questions for our law students and recent grads. Thank you Mr. Fink.

How has the legal market changed in the last years, and how has this affected entry-level hiring and/or the way employers hire?

- The legal market has changed significantly in the last 5 years or so. Many companies have become much more fee sensitive and are demanding much greater efficiency, as well as alternatives to traditional hourly billing. Some large companies are no longer willing to pay for entry-level lawyers to work on their cases. This has impacted the hiring of entry-level attorneys at the large firms. We have not had any clients object to our use of entry-level lawyers. We currently have two associates who graduated from law school in the last couple of years. They provide very valuable

assistance on the cases and transactions they are working on and we believe that their hourly rates accurately reflect their level of experience. One of the other big changes in hiring is the use of recruiters. We now usually use recruiters when trying to fill a position, where in the past we did not. That said, we did not use a recruiter to hire the entry-level associates we recently hired. We hired our summer associate for one of the positions and simply posted the other position at the local law schools.

What are some things law students can do to stand out to prospective employers?

- Law students who have experience outside the classroom will stand out more than others. Internships and other activities where the students get real experience are very attractive to small and mid-size firms because they demonstrate initiative and indicate the student has some real-world experience.

Besides grades, what are the most important areas that law students should be focusing on?

- Writing. Excellent writing is one of the most important attributes of a good lawyer.

What kinds of skills should law students develop, besides academic knowledge of the law?

- Excellent writing skills. Interpersonal skills. Public speaking skills.

What advice would you give to a law student who has graduated without solid job prospects?

- I would recommend attending bar activities and networking as much as possible with practicing attorneys. I would also recommend trying to find a government job as those jobs can provide good experience and a good foundation from which to later enter private practice.

What's the best/worst resume you've seen, and why was it so good/bad?

- The best resumes I see are ones that clearly explain the pertinent credentials and experience of the candidate without being cluttered with everything the person has ever done. The worst resumes I see are the ones with typos, the ones with cover letters that look like form letters and the ones that don't seem to give any indication of the candidate having real knowledge about what our firm does.

What's the best/worst interview you've seen, and why was it so good/bad?

- The best interviews are of people who have done their homework and learned about our firm and our practice beforehand and come in with good questions about what we do every day. The worst interviews are of people who appear to be looking for any job and are not focused on what we do and whether it is truly something they are interested in doing. For example, I handle mostly non-compete, trade secret and other unfair competition litigation. It has been many years since I handled any traditional employment litigation (e.g. defending discrimination claims or wage and hour cases). My partner, Ken Winkler, has deep experience in that arena and handles those types of disputes for our clients. Nevertheless, I do still participate in the Atlanta and State Bar Labor & Employment Sections (I will be Chair of the Atlanta Bar Labor & Employment Section this coming bar year). If someone interviews for a position with me and talks about wanting to do “employment law,” they really have not done their homework to understand my practice. Five minutes on our firm’s web-site or on my Non-Compete and Trade Secret blog would show someone that I do not have a traditional employment litigation practice.

How do you think legal hiring will change in the future?

- It is hard to say. I think the current trend of the large firms hiring fewer entry-level associates will continue. Therefore, finding government positions and positions in smaller firms will continue to be the best avenue for new graduates.

Any other comments?

- People graduating from law school today need to be patient. While I realize it is difficult to be patient if you have a large amount of student loan debt, the days of there being a lot of high-paying positions for entry-level associates are probably gone for good. Rather, new graduates will need to work for several years before they begin to see opportunities to earn greater income.