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can you get a job in a law firm or law division of a company with no degree, no bar exam?

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Does anyone know if you can get a job in a law firm or a law division of a company without a law degree or having taken a bar exam in any given state in the USA (we live in MA)? What about other countries (such as England?)

The reason I ask is because I'm currently unemployed and have been for 4 years and 9 months in the Boston area, and my degrees are BS and MS in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, and I have 18 years experience as a former software engineer in embedded systems. However, since these free online courses began, I have also taken some law courses as my "humanities" as I practice technical skills, and I did not know if you could then submit your resume / CV to law firms or law divisions within companies and find a job that way. It was NOT my original intent in taking these classes online - I was just interested in further learning about human rights and the associated laws behind them, as I practiced my technical skills.

However, I my last online course ends next week, and I have one pending interview response, and I am wondering if finding a job by submitting a resume to a law firm is even an option - what are the rules about having degrees and any plans to take a bar exam, since currently at my age (49!) I had no intention of getting another degree in law or taking a bar exam, unless of course my employer paid and gave time to do so! So I wondered what the rules are, given I may find myself job searching again next week when my last technical course ends, and the interview I had last week ends in rejection. I also asked about the rules in England, because my husband is English, and it's always a possibility that we end up there someday rather than the Boston area.

Here is what I know in the law area: Justice, International Human Rights, US Constitution and International Human Rights. That's it! I'm not sure if those would qualify me (along with my technical background) to apply for any job in the law field.

Other humanities include micro and macro economics.

Other than that, I've mostly for my 18 years outside BS and MS programmed various types of

embedded systems in C. These free online courses have also enabled me to take courses in other programming languages, such as Android, which includes Java and XML, Python, Artificial Intelligence, Databases, Networks, Ruby on Rails (web applications, introductory). The course I'm finishing next week is a review of my embedded systems things I used to do when I was working.

So if I do find myself job searching again next week, I was wondering the rules that overlap with this course, in US Constitution. Are people such as myself even allowed to submit resumes / CV to law firms and law divisions of companies to attempt to find a job? I suspect no, but thought I'd ask, since this course is ending soon, and I had a dream last night where someone said perhaps you should ask this question in regard to finding employment.

Others have said perhaps going the start up route, if you are not getting hired by already established companies, and that I suppose is an option too, but I think that may be an even more challenging path, where I would need the support of others to assist me, such as my husband who is already an overworked computer science professor! I have seen those types do that though, starting companies outside of being a CS professor or otherwise outside their job within the company at which they work. However, I'm not sure if that would work for our young family either, not to mention you need financial support from the types of people who fund those!

So if anyone knows the answer to the question of someone with no law degree or having taken any bar exam, with entirely technical experience in their background, finding employment in the law field, please let me know!

I already wrote my thank you note to Professor Amar and all his staff and those who answer questions on the discussion forums last week, and at that time, this question had not occurred to me!

In any case, best wishes to everyone! ;-)

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Anonymous · 3 days ago

In thinking about what you posted, have you considered applying to law school? You seem to have an interest in the law and would most likely do well on the LSATs. You sound as if you have a real interest in the law. If you do well on the LSATs, then you should have no problem getting scholarships or grants. Anyway, no matter what you choose to do I wish you well.

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Karen West · 3 days ago



Thank you for your recommendation. No, I have no intention of applying to law school, and my intent is to find employment. I was only asking if it were possible to find employment in a law firm as a means of finding employment, after being rejected in Boston now for 4 years and 9 months. I did once

have a friend though, whose company paid for her to go to law school, and I think she worked in their law department in the morning, went to law school in the afternoon/evening, all paid! However, she first worked for them as an engineer for a number of years. There is no way at age 49 I'm applying to any school, law or any other type of school, and paying for any more degrees. I was simply asking about the rules of employment, since I've been job searching quite awhile. I need an income to plan for retirement at age 49 - so even if offered a grant or scholarship - that does not pay the bills, support my children, nor plan for retirement at age 49! I know some companies, such as the one my friend had worked at, understand that, and paid her full salary and her tuition, etc, but she had worked there for a number of years as an engineer already. I was just asking about law firms for employment - based on my described expertise - not because I plan to go to law school, and I doubt anyone would pay your way when you have not already worked for them for a number of years!

You are correct though - I do have an interest in human rights - and any associated laws - which is why I originally took these 4 law courses while also building my technical skills during my job search. It's great information to know and understand, at a domestic and international level, even if you do not work in that area - it's good to be aware. So if I ever do find employment - I'm sure knowing these things will be helpful at work and also as you make your own decisions about things to support in the world around you. However, thus far, I'm still employed, 4 years 9 months and counting! Hopefully that will change soon. I was asking though, as a path to employment, what the rules are there. When I originally took this class, it was not an intention, and even if it was, I did not know the rules, which is why I asked, in case anyone knows.

Thank you for your response! ;-) Best wishes to you, anonymous person who responded to my question!

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[Cornelius T. Ryan](#) · 3 days ago 🔒

Karen,

I am not fully up to speed on the internal workings of law firms. However, they are businesses not unlike other businesses. Larger firms (100+ attorneys or so) have a professional component and an administrative component. Since you don't have a law or paralegal degree, you probably want to target the admin side.

Typically, a large firm has an Administrator to oversee the business functions. The Administrator is commonly a member of the Law Firm Administrators Association. The association usually has a newsletter and monthly meetings. It is not uncommon to find subsections that might include, as an example, a women's group for networking and career advancement.

In short, law firms are big business, especially in major cities. They are always hiring. As far as networking, it is a world unto itself, so look for some guidance and support from someone already in that realm. Good luck!

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Karen West · 3 days ago



Thanks, Cornelius! I'm not sure how my skill set and experience might fit into an Administrative position in a law firm, but you never know. I'll be sure to ask that question if it ever comes up when I run into someone I know in that world, if I'm still looking for a position. Thanks for the information and response! ;-)

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Alec D. Rogers · 3 days ago

Karen,

Today's law firms are highly specialized businesses. Without being a member of the bar, you could not practice law of course, but there may be opportunities in firms in fields such as recruiting/HR, IT, etc. Also, paralegals perform many functions under the supervision of lawyers and do not need to be members of the bar.

With a computer science degree there may be opportunities in areas such as electronic discovery, archiving and retrieval, etc. All of this, once the realm of papers and boxes and paper indexes, has been replaced by scanners and servers.

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Karen West · 3 days ago



I thought that may be true but I have not seen anything advertised as of yet anywhere where a law firm has shown an interest in my skills for their environment. I wrote it to see what type of response or any other experiences others may have had. You never know though so while job searching it does not hurt to investigate as you go. Thanks for the response!

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JoAnne Elizabeth Richardson · 3 days ago

Yes you can. My family owns a law firm, and the elders have often spoken to me about working for them. They want someone who pays attention to detail, and knows how to research material. They also want someone who makes high grades in law. I am a Scientist, I only study law for a hobby interest. If your Dad, Uncle, or Grandfather owns a law firm, just tell them that you want a summer job. If your grades are high enough, you'll most likely get the job.

Does anyone know when the grades are going to be posted.

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Karen West · 2 days ago



I have friends who are lawyers but I almost feel uncomfortable asking someone if their law firm is hiring given I have no experience in that area, but if I saw it advertised somewhere, that would be different, you could submit your resume anonymously if your skills are a match. I was just wondering by asking here on this discussion forum where I took a US Constitution law course, if people who do not have a law degree work in those types of places with other skill sets, just as people work at high tech companies do. Actually my brother does own a law firm, but that is a 5-6 hour plane flight from where I live with my husband and kids! ;-). My husband would never move there I don't think, and I'm not sure I'd be qualified to work for his type of law firm! I do know people do that though, since I see firms around the area who have their names "last-name and son/daughter, etc" type thing, people related in the same firm or business. If I have no job offers next week when life settles down a bit, I'll be entering an aggressive job searching phase, and I thought I'd ask first whether or not to submit to any place that may advertise for a technical person in a law related place, since a few years ago I had 2 different calls from people for phone interviews from law firms where I had submitted my resume to an advertisement, but it did not go anywhere, unfortunately! Thank you for your response! ;-)

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Ellen Marja Wesselingh Signature Track · 2 days ago

Karen, as an electrical engineer why don't you apply for a teaching job in the Netherlands?

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Karen West · 2 days ago



I last visited Holland in May 1987 - eye opening experience and beautiful scenery and great old architecture and country! I had a good friend once who grew up in Holland, and every time she drank too much alcohol, in mid-sentence, she started speaking in Dutch to us, and we could not understand a word she was saying! So I know they are smart/fun people, but no, I have no plans to do anything but possibly someday visit the Netherlands and Europe again when the budget once again permits it! ;-). Thank you for the suggestion though. My kids would tell you - I am the last person on earth who would be qualified to teach - ready to chop heads when they don't get it! Very little patience in that respect. ;-). My husband is a professor and it seems he was born with the knack of having patience and desire to teach students--somehow I was not! ;-). Thank you for your response.

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Rose Ann Farese · a day ago 

I too am interested in pursuing a career in law! This answers my question! what better way to have a job post retirement that is interesting!

I firmly believe the way to keep the mind sharp is to constantly challenge it!

I love the law! never thought I would say that!

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Rose Ann Farese · a day ago 

I particularly like Constitutional law! What better way to really learn how our forefathers forged the greatest country in the world!

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Anonymous · a day ago 

Hi Karen, I am sorry to hear that you have been looking for work for so long. I do not know much about law firms. But I think their need for non-attorney staff seems to go up based on their size with larger firms employing clerks and secretaries. I would think that some of the larger ones may have a need for general IT assistance or a clerk that has computer experience. Have you considered sitting down with the HR departments of a few of the biggest firms you can find? Maybe they could use you one day a week for general IT?

You may also want to consider government IT work, including city, county, state and university. They also have many legal and law enforcement related agencies that may interest you.

Best of luck to you!

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Karen West · a day ago 



Thank you for your response! ;-) I did once see advertisements come in a few years ago on my software engineering job listings, and they were from 2 different law firms in the Boston area. One of them called me at that time for a one hour phone interview, and that was before I had taken any of these 4 law humanities, or any of the other online humanities in economics, or any of the numerous technical skill courses. They called me at that time based on the skill set I had when I had first lost my job, but that phone interview did not go anywhere.

It was for a full time position to assist an attorney to go through copyrighted code of some kind.

Anyway - none of the law related courses I've taken are in that area. I simply became interested in human rights and you can see that those are the courses I chose to take in the law area out of my own curiosity (Justice, International Criminal Law, US Constitution, and International Human Rights). I suppose the type lawyer that most technical people become who go into that new profession are usually patent attorneys, or so I've heard anyway, but I've taken no courses in that area, but focused more on the human rights issues. I got inspired to learn more on that when the Edward Snowden disclosure came along at the end of my first law humanity in Justice last year, eavesdropping, privacy verses protection from terrorism, etc, but it's not my area of expertise--just an extra humanity I added last year as I filled the rest of my time building my technical skills that the experts tell me are most likely to help me find employment the most quickly. However, as this course ends, I thought I'd ask on the discussion forum, given my aggression for my job search will increase starting next week what the likelihood of finding employment in the job listings might be with my technical background in this world of law too, since I once had a phone interview with a law firm I had applied to in the job listings a few years ago, some attorney who was using a tool called "black duck" for copy right investigation in code (which I know nothing about actually!)

I honestly do think the experts whom I've spoken to (recruiter types) are correct in that my skill set would be in highest demand in the high tech industrial world, but given all the articles going around lately, and also because I was once called by a lawyer who needed a technical person to assist them, I thought I would inquire here on this discussion forum before it ended, an appropriate place I thought, since if still unemployed next week, my time will be more free to be aggressive in my job search, and I was curious to here the responses here on this discussion forum before I do that.

So thank you all for your recommendations and responses to my questions about employment and my best wishes to you! ;-)

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[Elizabeth Harkins](#) · [an hour ago](#) 🔒

Have you considered patent law as a paralegal? My brother-in-law has had a successful almost 25-year career as a patent paralegal in the area of biomedical technology. He has a BA in biology and worked for a couple of years as a high school teacher before going into patent law without any law experience, just his knowledge of biology and general science. I would think you could get into patent law in the computer and intellectual property field, especially in an area like Boston.

If you specifically want something more human rights related, I can't say how readily you could make that jump, but you might be able to get a foot in the door by going the patent route.

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Bruce Paynter Signature Track · an hour ago 

If I am not mistaken, I believe that within the patent application scheme there is a position called "Patent Agent." One can qualify as a patent agent either by being an attorney, or by having a qualifying degree in any of a number of technical subjects. For example a degree in chemical engineering might possibly qualify. In addition, I think that one has to pass a hundred multiple choice examination with some minimal score such as 70.

Once one became a registered patent agent, I imagine that it would be possible to work either for a law firm doing patent work, or for a company that was interested in applying for and maintaining its own patents, or as an independent agent.

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Karen West · in 5 minutes 



Thank you all for your suggestions! I am not familiar with being a paralegal secretary, although I know my aunt now retired chose to be one for many years. I'm not sure of her educational background since she raised 5 kids before getting that position. However, I'm sure it is a fun job for some people and could be a great way to get your foot in the door but I'm not so sure it would be a good role for me, but I don't really know exactly what's involved in their position in modern times, whether or not my very technical background would be a good fit for being a paralegal secretary.

Also, a patent agent, I do know that many of my friends and family members who went on to become lawyers all have that title when they became lawyers. None of them work in human rights professionally but perhaps follow it on the side as many others do.

For me at age 49, the goal is to find employment that is a good fit for my technical background, and I asked the question here since next week my job search will become more aggressive again, and a few years ago, late in 2011, I mentioned I had been given a one hour phone interview by a Boston attorney for a position to assist her in digging through code looking for copyright marks in certain sections of reused code, that type of thing. She used to work for the company that made that tool (black duck or something like that, I forget), but went onto become a lawyer in a different firm who used that tool instead, and called me about helping her. However, that did not go anywhere, and it was 2.5 years ago!





I was just curious as this course ends to ask these questions, since my job search will become more aggressive starting next week when time permits.

Thank you for your responses! ;-)

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