



SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE



CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

1311 Miller Drive
Room A-112
Coral Gables, FL 33146

Ph: 305.284.2668

Fax: 305.284.6213

Email: cdo@law.miami.edu

I. Self-Assessment is Key to Your Success

There are many benefits of engaging in self-assessment in law school. Self-assessment will help you identify interests, values, and skills. During the process of self-assessment you will explore the “must-have” elements critical to career satisfaction. Ultimately, self-assessment will allow you to become the driving force in your career and arrive at your own meaning of success. We hope this guide will help you begin that process.

Self-assessment is an opportunity to look introspectively at several factors that can help determine your career success and assist you in making informed career choices. Typical self-assessment questions will ask you to explore your interests, transferable skills, training, past job performance, workplace values, personality, preferred work environments, ideal clients, income requirements, desired lifestyle, present or future family responsibilities, hobbies, and stress tolerance.

Maximizing job satisfaction is an important element in achieving career success. Some law students come to law school with a clear vision of their ideal career. Other students are considering a variety of career paths, and many are completely open based on the interests they develop in law school. For all law students, taking time at the beginning of your career for self-assessment can mean the difference between enjoying a thriving career and experiencing career frustration as you struggle to find a good fit.

There are a variety of factors that impact workplace happiness for lawyers. Your career satisfaction can depend on your practice area, work environment, geographic location, culture and reputation of your firm or organization, relationships with your boss and colleagues, job resources, compensation, growth opportunities, daily tasks, and control over the type and amount of work you do.

Unfortunately there isn't a crystal ball that will tell you the exact career path to take, but by engaging in a process of self-discovery and increasing your self-awareness you will greatly increase your chances of career success. Self-discovery will involve participating in opportunities to learn more about yourself. Fortunately, you'll have many opportunities to do this in law school.

The purpose of this guide is to help you increase self-awareness by answering the self-assessment questions in this guide. We believe your answers to the self-assessment questions will become the foundation of your professional development and the beginning of a successful career.

II. Choosing a Practice Area

Some students begin law school without having a sense of what practice areas interest them and they're open to following their curiosity as they take law school courses and gain work experience. You may have started law school with a desire to choose a practice area that will enable you to utilize skills you've gained from your academic or work experience prior to law school. Alternatively, you might view law school as an opportunity to do something entirely different. Choosing a practice area that aligns with a topic, idea, or cause you are passionate about is a formula for success.

When you think about practice areas it is important to imagine the corresponding practice setting related to the specific practice area. Can you see yourself in a courthouse on a regular basis? Are you excited by the thought of working with a startup, or do you prefer a traditional law firm setting? Does an academic setting appeal to you, or do you envision yourself in a more nontraditional or entrepreneurial setting?

The chart on the next page contains a list of legal practice areas that will be helpful as you begin to research and identify practice areas that might be a good fit for you. The practice areas are not an exhaustive list, as the practice of law is constantly evolving. As you review the list of practice areas, check off the box next to any practice areas you're interested in, or want to know more about. Once you've identified your top practice areas of interest, you can include them in the Career Action Plan near the end of this guide.

[Practice Area Interest Checklist on Next Page]

PRACTICE AREA INTEREST CHECKLIST

Administrative/Regulatory Law		Family Law	
Advertising Law		Food and Drug Law	
Agency Law		Franchise Law	
Air, Sea & Space Law		Gaming Law	
Alternative Dispute Resolution		Government Relations/Lobbying	
Animal Rights Law		Health Care Law	
Antitrust/Competition Law		Housing Rights Law	
Appellate Law		Immigration Law	
Banking/Commercial Finance		Insurance Law	
Bankruptcy Law		Intellectual Property Law	
Bioethics		International Law	
Business/Commercial Litigation		Juvenile Law	
Civil Rights/Civil Liberties		Labor and Employment Law	
Class Action/Mass Tort Litigation		Land Use & Zoning Law	
Communications/Media Law		Legislative Practice	
Constitutional Law		LGBT Law	
Construction Law		Litigation	
Consumer Protection Law		Migrant Worker Advocacy	
Corporate & Compliance Law		Military Law/JAG	
Criminal Law		Patent Law	
Cyber Law		Prisoners' Rights	
Death Penalty/Public Defense		Privacy Law	
Drug Control Law		Public Interest Law	
Education Law		Real Estate/Property Law	
Elder Law		Securities Law	
Election/Voting Rights Law		Social Security/Disability Law	
Employee Benefits Law (ERISA)		Tax Law	
Employment Law		Telecommunications Law	
Energy Law		Tort & Personal Injury Law	
Entertainment/Sports Law		Trade Law	
Environmental/Energy Law		Trusts & Estates Law	
Ethics		White Collar Crime	
Executive Compensation		Women's Rights	

III. Knowing Yourself

A. The following article is an excellent publication by Beth Woods of the recruiting firm Major, Lindsey & Africa. It is based on an extremely successful presentation that was held at Miami Law entitled, *The 10 Questions You Should Ask Yourself Before Choosing a Practice Area*. With the author's permission we are including the article here because we believe it will inspire self-reflection and help you create a meaningful law career. Although the article is based on law firm practice, the information is relevant to government, public interest, in-house, and nontraditional practices.

A Career Not a Job: Matching Personality to Practice

By Beth Woods, *Major, Lindsey & Africa*

After 15+ years in the legal industry, both as a litigation partner in a law firm and as a recruiter, there is one thing that I can say for certain- attorney job satisfaction is linked directly to practice area satisfaction. As a legal professional, you understand all too well how difficult it is for an attorney to change practice area anytime after the first or second year of practice. The sooner you start working with attorneys and attorneys-to-be on matching practice area to personality, the greater your likelihood of producing happy lawyers.

The Sunday Pit

Monday mornings are very busy for recruiters. We receive a lot of calls from attorneys who spend their Sunday evenings with a pit in their stomachs. The thought of returning to work on Monday fills them with dread. Why is this? After all, these are high-achieving, well educated individuals working at the best firms in the world. Shouldn't they be whistling Dixie to their six-figure jobs every day?

I recently spoke with a junior litigation associate whose story is common and sums up the origin of the Sunday Pit. Between his second and third year of law school, he was a summer associate at a prestigious firm. He worked hard and completed assignments for a variety of partners in different practice areas. Naturally, you would assume that he ultimately took a position in the litigation group because that was the work he enjoyed the most.

Unfortunately, this was not the case. Instead, his reason was firmly rooted in his love of the Chicago Cubs and a fun afternoon at Wrigley Field. As it turns out, the associate had bonded with the head of the litigation department over a good brat, several cold ones and a predictable Cubs' loss. Based on this interaction, the associate decided then and there that he wanted work for this "cool, down-to-earth" partner in

the litigation group. Without realizing it, this decision sent his legal career down a potentially unchangeable path.

Now, don't get me wrong, working with people you respect and enjoy is really important, but it shouldn't define the substance of an attorney's practice. When I asked the associate about the source of his Sunday Pit dissatisfaction, he took a long pause and said, "I'm sick of fighting with people." Now it was my turn to take a long pause and break the bad news. Post recession, the overwhelming majority of law firms are not willing to re-tool attorneys even if the attorney is willing to take a "haircut" in compensation. The moral of the story is clear- choosing an area of law that is suited to one's personality and passion is critical and should be accomplished as early on in an attorney's career as possible.

Know Yourself

The recruiters at Major, Lindsey & Africa developed a unique presentation entitled *10 Questions to Ask Yourself Before Choosing a Practice Area*. We have delivered this information to thousands of law student across the country, as well as to law firms and recruiting professionals. The feedback is overwhelmingly positive and the content surprisingly novel to our audiences. It is axiomatic that attorney satisfaction leads to higher workforce retention. So, we encourage students, attorneys and law firms to start the process of self awareness and introspection early and often.

Some of what we urge them to consider includes the following:

- **With what do you like to work- people, things, business/money or ideas?**
Some areas which might appeal to those drawn to working with people are Employment, Executive Compensation, Family and Immigration Law. For those drawn to working with things, they might consider Asset Finance, IP Prosecution, Real Estate (Transactional, Finance, Land Use) and Construction. Business/money lovers (think Gordon Gekko) should take a look at areas of law including Antitrust, Bankruptcy, Corporate, Healthcare and Securities Litigation. For those who enjoy ideas, they might consider Administrative, Appellate and Tax Law. The aspiring Academics also fall into this category.
- **Do you prefer to run the show or provide expert support?**
For those who want to be the "Quarterback," they should take a look at Litigation, Bankruptcy, Outsourcing and White Collar Criminal. Typically, these people enjoy change, and are excited by learning something new and the challenge of handling the unexpected. On the other hand, the Special Teams people usually prefer repetition, and find safety in and enjoy being an expert in a particular area. For this group, the following areas might be a good fit: ERISA, Executive Compensation, Immigration and Tax.

- **Do you prefer black and white to gray areas?**

Litigation, Trusts & Estates, Family and Real Estate Land Use are areas that might work for those who enjoy the challenge and creativity required to navigate the gray areas. However, those who prefer concrete answers (the answer “maybe” drives them crazy), should focus on the regulatory practices which tend to have more definitive answers such as Tax, Executive Compensation, Securities (‘33, ‘34 and ‘40 Act) and many of the Corporate areas.

- **Do you mind dealing with emotionally charged situations?**

Another way of asking this question is, “Do you enjoy channeling your inner therapist?” Some practice areas require a greater emotional contribution than others. People who are comfortable hand holding and engaging on the emotional side might enjoy Family, Criminal, Employment, Trusts & Estates and Insurance Defense. For those who prefer a more emotionally neutral practice, they should consider Corporate, Securities, Tax and Commercial Real Estate.

- **How do you handle adversarial situations?**

The associate I referenced earlier would have benefitted from answering this one! This question is not as straightforward as you might expect. Stereotypically, people think of Litigation as being adversarial and this is usually the case. However, Corporate can also be contentious in the negotiation stage. The difference is that opposing parties on a corporate deal have a Union of Purpose. Both sides have the incentive to get the deal done. Whether you are a litigator (adversarial majority of the time) or a deal-maker (adversarial part of the time), the most satisfied attorneys in both of these areas have the ability to leave the “fight” at the office. They advocate vigorously for their clients, but are able to separate themselves from their profession, take a step back and enjoy their families and their lives outside of work.

- **When and how do you work best?**

The “when” of this question does not concern how hard an attorney works. The great majority of attorneys dedicate incredibly long hours to their vocation. Instead, the question goes to predictability of schedule. For those who prefer a more predictable schedule, the following areas might be a good fit: ‘40 Act, Appellate, ERISA, Executive Compensation, IP Prosecution, Land Use, Tax and Trusts & Estates. Where predictability is less important, the following areas might be appealing: Bankruptcy, Corporate (especially M&A), Cross Border Transactional, Litigation and Criminal (including White Collar). The bottom line is that attorneys spend the majority of their waking hours working. Why not do the necessary self-introspection early on in their careers to maximize their chances of job satisfaction?

The “how” of this question turns on the type of relationship that an attorney has with his/her clients. Do they want to be the guard dog chained up outside protecting the house, or do they want to be inside curled up on their owner’s lap? Litigators are the

guard dogs. Their satisfaction comes from problem solving and helping to resolve issues, not from client praise or appreciation. Most trial attorneys will tell you that even when they prevail in a case, their clients are still not happy. After all, no one wants to pay to fight in court, and the attorneys are viewed as a necessary expense. On the other hand, deal lawyers are the lap dogs. They team up with their clients to facilitate the client's goals/objectives. When their deals close, they celebrate together and the attorneys get "deal trophies."

Profiles in Counselor Contentment

- **Things**- The attorney who slows down every time he passes a construction site in his car. He cannot help but launch into an excited discussion about the intricacies of the site, the materials, the equipment- you name it, he can tell you about it. Follow him home, and his passion is evidenced in tubs full of Legos in the basement. And, no, he does not have kids. The legos belong to him. You won't be surprised to learn that he is happily employed as in-house counsel at a construction company.
- **Change**- The attorney who thrives on every day being different. She has a legal ADD and gets excited with tackling a case about a new area of law or subject matter. In spite of being a French major in college, she knows more about aerial cranes than most construction site foremen. One day she is defending a truck driver in a case involving a fatal accident, and the next day she is representing a well-known boy-band. This satisfied attorney is a commercial litigator in a boutique law firm.
- **Emotion**- The attorney who was a social worker in her previous life. She can't help but find the wounded birds. She is able to listen to her client cry for an hour about his wife who left him for the tennis pro, commiserate and then deliver to him the cold realities of his divorce case. She wins a big case and instead of getting thanked by her client, he asks what she will do now that she won't be billing on his case. She receives a call on Thanksgiving from a battered wife and leaves her turkey dinner and family to go to court to obtain an emergency restraining order against her client's husband. As an associate in a high-end family law boutique, she has found the perfect job which marries her counseling and legal backgrounds (no pun intended)!
- **Predictability**- The attorney who counsels multi-billion dollar corporations on their transfer pricing issues. He is technically superb and serves as a trusted counselor to his clients' in-house counsel. He bills over 2,400 hours/year and works even more than that. His long days are filled with back-to-back client calls, but he has never missed a vacation, a birthday or anniversary celebration or pull an all-nighter. He is superstar tax partner at one of the top firms in the world.

Conclusion

After years of giving the *10 Questions* presentation, the students' reaction still surprises us. Many of the attendees stare back at us like deer in the headlights.

However, we are heartened by the ones who are clearly thrilled as a light bulb goes off in their heads. These are the successful attorneys that we hear from years later who are excited and engaged in their legal careers. Take the time to match your personality to your practice area- you will not be sorry!

About the Author

Beth B. Woods is a Managing Director in Major, Lindsey & Africa's Chicago office where she focuses on representing attorneys in the lateral marketplace. Beth works with attorneys to formulate and execute strategies to achieve their career goals. She is a seasoned trial attorney who brings many years of experience as an attorney to her career as a legal recruiter. Having been both an associate and a partner in a law firm, Beth has a unique understanding and perspective on the practice of law. She understands the personal and professional dynamics of working in a law firm and is able to counsel attorneys to maximize their legal careers. Beth can be reached at (312) 896-8560 and bwoods@mlaglobal.com.

B. Self-Assessment Questions:

i. What insight have you gained about yourself and your career goals as a result of reading the article above?

ii. What motivates you? Does competition inspire you? Do you like to take the winning shot in high pressure situations?

iii. How much do you value recognition from clients and superiors? Do you want to help people on a small scale, or have a huge impact?

iv. Do you work well independently, or do you prefer a more social environment? How much client contact would you like?

v. Are you driven by material gain? How much money do you need to feel satisfied in your career? How important is work-life balance?

IV. Skills Inventory Checklist

The chart on the following page contains a list of 26 factors identified as key predictors of lawyer success in a Berkeley Law report. The 26 effectiveness factors are organized into 8 umbrella categories that demonstrate what lawyers in the research study considered important to effective lawyering. As you review the chart, reflect on your work experience and give yourself a score of 1 to 10 for each umbrella category (*1 being the lowest level of skill, and 10 being the highest level of skill*).

As you complete the exercise remember that law students come to law school with diverse academic and work experiences so current lawyering skills for students will vary significantly. Knowing where you are now is half the battle, and if you believe you have large skill gaps it's important to avoid becoming discouraged. Your self-assessment results will form a good basis to identify your current skill levels, and create a plan to strengthen your skills in the areas you want to develop. Once you have identified your top three skills categories, you can include them in the Career Action Plan near the end of this guide.

26 Lawyering Effectiveness Factors with 8 Umbrella Categories

© Marjorie M. Shultz and Sheldon Zedeck

1. Intellectual & Cognitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and Reasoning • Creativity/Innovation • Problem Solving • Practical Judgment 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____
2. Research & Information Gathering	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researching the Law • Fact Finding • Questioning & Interviewing 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____

3. Communications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing and Advocating • Writing • Speaking • Listening 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____
4. Planning and Organizing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning • Organizing and Managing One's Own Work • Organizing and Managing Others (Staff/Colleagues) 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____
5. Conflict Resolution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiation Skills • Able to See the World Through the Eyes of Other 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____
6. Client & Business Relations – Entrepreneurship	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking and Business Development • Providing Advice & Counsel & Building Relationships with Clients 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____
7. Working with Others	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Relationships within the Legal Profession • Evaluation, Development, and Mentoring 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____
8. Character	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passion & Engagement • Diligence • Integrity/Honesty • Stress Management • Community Involvement and Service • Self-Development 	SCORE (1-10) 1=low, 10=high _____

V. Developing Your Skills

The best ways to gain exposure to various practice areas and develop essential lawyering skills are to obtain substantive work experience, participate in professional development programming, and select academic programs that will enhance your career.

A. Work Experience

The Career Development Office (CDO) offers comprehensive services and resources for students and alumni conducting a job search in South Florida or for an out-of-town position. We encourage you to seek personalized job search assistance from one of our career advisors, who all have legal degrees and practical legal experience.

Here are highlights of a few CDO resources that can help you gain practical legal experience:

- **Fall Recruiting Program**

Fall Recruiting consists of programs, job fairs, and other organized hiring opportunities with the private sector, government agencies, members of the judiciary, public interest organizations and corporate legal departments.

- **Spring Recruiting Program**

Spring Recruiting is coordinated by the CDO for employers interested in interviewing students from Miami Law during the Spring semester for summer and post-graduate positions.

- **Externship Program**

The Externship Program offers students practical, hands-on opportunities to work with local, national and international corporations, government agencies, public interest organizations and the judiciary for academic credit.

- **Job Postings**

The CDO maintains Symplicity, an online job search database of current legal employment opportunities for students and alumni. The database is updated on an almost daily basis and is accessible 24 hours a day from any computer. Hard copies of all job postings are available during office hours.

- **Job Fairs**

The law school participates in a number of job fairs throughout the year. Students interested in getting exposure to employers outside of Florida are strongly encouraged to attend these job fairs.

B. Professional Development Programs

Participating in professional development programming offered by the CDO and other organizations on campus is an excellent way to learn about practice areas, and network with attorneys who can provide valuable information about the practice of law. Here's a sample of opportunities:

- **UNetworking**

Miami Law's UNetworking initiative provides students the opportunity to meet and speak one-on-one with attorneys and judges from the local Miami community.

- **Informational Career Fair**

Attorneys from firms, corporations, and government and public interest organizations visit campus during the Spring semester to speak with students about their legal careers. Students can ask attorneys about their career choices, areas of practice, and the general life of a practicing attorney.

- **Mock Interview Program**

Students have the opportunity in the Fall to participate in mock interview sessions with local attorneys to help prepare for on-campus interviews.

- **Student Organizations**

Student-run organizations and publications reflect the diversity of the Miami Law community's academic and practice interests, race, ethnicity and religion, and political and jurisprudential thought. Student organizations are an excellent way to interact with alumni and learn about the legal community.

C. Academic Programs

Miami Law offers a variety of academic programs to help you explore different practice areas and skills essential to becoming a lawyer. Academic offerings include required and elective courses and programs. Here is a sample of academic programs and resources available at Miami Law. This list is not exhaustive. Visit the law school's website and online course catalog for additional programs that will help you develop relevant skills during law school.

- **Clinics**
 Clinics offer practical, hands-on lawyering experience, while also helping needy and under-represented individuals and groups in Miami and across the nation and the globe. Clinics offered at the law school include the Bankruptcy Skills Clinic, Health Rights Clinic, Immigration Clinic, Innocence Clinic, Investor Rights Clinic, and Tenants' Rights Clinic.
- **Law Reviews & Journals**
 Working on a law review or journal will allow you to actively participate in legal commentary with timely and relevant scholarly articles, student notes, and comments pertaining to areas of professional legal interest. Law reviews at the law school include the Business Law Review, Inter-American Law Review, International and Comparative Law Review, National Security & Armed Conflict Law Review, Race & Social Justice Law Review, and the University of Miami Law Review.
- **Charles C. Papy, Jr. Moot Court Board**
 Develop trial skills with this student-run, honorary organization that focuses on recruiting and training the finest oral and written advocates.
- **International Moot Court Program**
 In this program students travel around the globe to moot court competitions, some of which are in Spanish. Students interested in a fun and challenging litigation and international law experience are ideal for this program.
- **Litigation Skills Program**
 This program provides rigorous, hands-on training in trial and pre-trial skills. The externship component of the course allows students to apply the skills learned during the course in a live client setting. During these externship opportunities, students may represent clients in criminal and civil matters in court as Certified Legal Interns under the supervision of practicing attorneys.
- **H.O.P.E. Public Interest Resource Center**
 HOPE (Helping Others Through Pro Bono Efforts) provides individualized guidance to help students identify public interest programs, clinics, projects, courses, and opportunities at Miami Law and beyond. The HOPE Fellows Program allows public interest-minded students to create summer dream jobs and work across the globe to effectuate change.

- **Center for Ethics and Public Service (CEPS)**
CEPS is a law school-housed interdisciplinary ethics education, skills training, and community engagement program devoted to ethical judgment, professional responsibility, and public service in law and society.
- **LawWithoutWalls**
In this innovative program students collaborate across institutions and countries and gain invaluable experience and insight into the world of law and business, while developing business, entrepreneurial, investigative research, and team building skills.
- **Startup Practicum**
Students in the Startup Practicum work with new ventures in need of legal assistance. Students handle legal issues that arise for entrepreneurs as they launch their new businesses and organizations.

VI. Career Action Plan

Take a look at your responses to the Practice Area Interest Checklist, Self-Assessment Questions, and Skills Inventory Checklist, and any other feedback and reflection to prepare a Career Action Plan on the following page.

Keep in mind that your Career Action Plan will evolve as you progress in law school and gain new skills and experiences. Remember to work with your career advisor to tailor your job search strategy to your specific goals.

[Career Action Plan on Next Page]

CAREER ACTION PLAN	
TOP PRACTICE AREAS OF INTEREST 1. 2. 3.	NOTES
TOP SKILLS INVENTORY 1. 2. 3.	NOTES
SELF-ASSESSMENT INSIGHTS 1. 2. 3.	NOTES
TOP GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCES 1. 2. 3.	NOTES
SKILL DEVELOPMENT GOALS	ACHIEVEMENT DATE
1.	
2.	
3.	
NETWORKING GOALS	ACHIEVEMENT DATE
1.	
2.	
3.	

VII. Additional Resources

Our hope is that utilizing the information and exercises in this Self-Assessment Guide will be the starting point for continued self-discovery throughout your career. Listed below are additional self-assessment resources in the event you want to go beyond the material in this guide.

1. Law Student Career Assessment
 - a. LawFit: www.lawfit.com

2. Personality Type Assessment (based on Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI))
 - a. Jung Typology Test: www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp
 - b. Quistic: www.quistic.com/personality-type

3. Personal Brand Assessment
 - a. 360°Reach: www.reachcc.com/360reach

4. Strengths Assessment
 - a. Clifton StrengthsFinder: www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/Home/en-US/Index

Updated 1/16

