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# Navigating Mid-Career Transitions with Clarity & Confidence *for ACC Tennessee*

1.0 General CLE Credit

# Agenda

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- Status of Current Legal Market
- Identifying your “WHY”
- Signs of Burnout
- Preparing for a Transition
- Planning a Transition
- Executing a Transition
- Helpful Resources

# Dynamic Legal Market



## ADP National Employment Report, February 2025

“Policy uncertainty and a slowdown in consumer spending might have led to layoffs or a slowdown in hiring last month. Our data, combined with other recent indicators, suggests a hiring hesitancy among employers as they assess the economic climate ahead.”

Nela Richardson, Chief Economist ADP



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# Why do you work?

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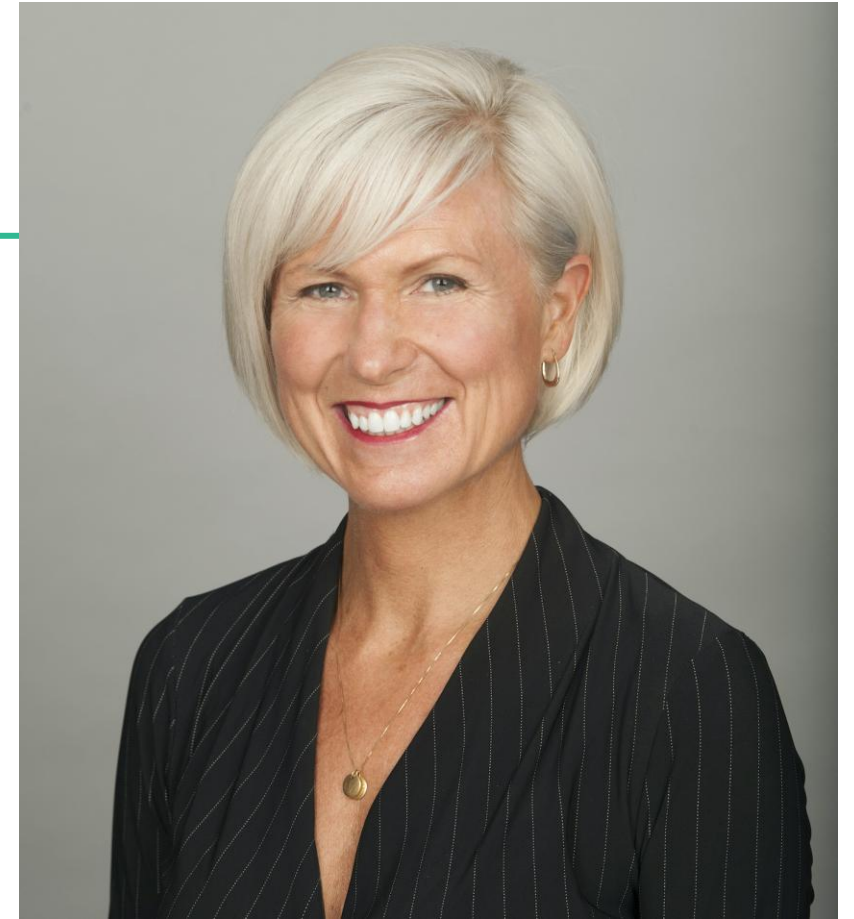
# Why did you go to law school?



# Meaningful Work

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- Work is a common source of meaning (Allan et al., 2015)
- Meaning fuels engagement, which is associated with profitability and productivity
- Better job performance
- Higher job satisfaction
- Greater cohesion among coworkers
- Higher work effort
- Lower stress and alienation at work
- Less turnover



**Anne Brafford**

*Positive Professionals: Creating High-Performing Profitable Firms Through the Science of Engagement (2017)*

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**How do you hope that others will  
describe you – now, next year, 5 years,  
25 years from now?**



# Where can I find meaning at work?

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- Meaning = good fit between your values and your work
- Coherence: make sense of things and how we fit in with them; predictable patterns in our lives

*What's my role in this company?*
- Purpose: future-oriented goals that give our lives direction

*What do I want to do with my legal career?*  
*What will my legacy be?*
- Significance: we feel we matter and we're doing something worthwhile

# If you are contemplating a job change . . .

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- Get to know yourself and your motivation
- Be honest with yourself
- Differentiate b/t your desires and others' expectations
- Spend some time daydreaming
- Research your dreams
- Make a plan
- Be brave and execute
- Exit gracefully; don't burn bridges
- Drink water and get sufficient sleep

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**Why are you contemplating a job or  
career change now?**

# Common Reasons for Job Change

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- Change in priorities or personal circumstances
- Desire for better compensation
- Career advancement
- More flexible schedule
- Laid off / terminated
- Dislike current boss / work environment
- Burned out

# Are you burned out?

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- Working for extrinsic rewards
- Every curveball is a major crisis
- Chronic low energy and exhaustion
- Getting sick more frequently
- Not recharging or relaxing
- Having a sense of inefficacy
- Feeling disengaged and being consistently checked out
- Cynicism is the norm
- Can't let go of perfection
- Too many demands, not enough resources



**Paula Davis**

*Beating Burnout at Work (2021)*

# **Preparing for a Transition: Self-Assessment and Research**



**Anne McKnight**

**Director, Legal Recruiting & Placement**

“As a new attorney, reality and your short-term goals (to land your first real attorney job, to earn enough to pay back student loans, etc.) are often the driving forces behind your early career choices and they may put you on a path. But 10-15 years into your career, those driving forces - along with your options and outlook – have likely changed significantly. Whether you want more money, more freedom, or a new path altogether, take time to figure out and listen to what 2025 YOU needs/wants and boldly seek opportunities that align with today’s goals.”

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# Self Assessment - Goals and Priorities

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- What do you expect or want out of work or your job?
- What do you want to accomplish through work?
- What are your current priorities?
- Do you currently have any restrictions?
- Do you anticipate that these priorities or restrictions will likely change soon or at some point in the future?

# Self-Assessment - Strengths

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- What are your strengths?
- VIA Inventory of Strengths, 16 Personalities, Myers-Briggs, StrengthsFinder
- [authentichappiness.org](https://authentichappiness.org)
- 6x more likely to feel engaged with your work
- Higher level of positive emotions → higher work satisfaction and productivity

# Self Assessment - Preferences

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- What energizes you?
- What type of work do you most enjoy?
- What environment suits you best? (e.g. extravert or introvert)
- What about your current job do you wish you could change?

# Homework

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- Describe your 3 most satisfying work experiences.
- What does success mean or look like to you?
- Best Future Self Exercise
- Write your own obituary.

# Make a List and Research

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- Make a list of those jobs you think you would enjoy; don't edit yourself
- Make a list of 5-10 people whose jobs you admire
- Why do these jobs appeal to you?
- Talk to people who are in these jobs; find out what they do all day, how much money they make, how they entered the field or got their current position, etc. (and be ready for it not to align with your expectations)
- How would these jobs meet your objectives for Work and address your priorities?

# Leveraging Latitude Podcast

 **Leveraging Latitude**

EPISODE 16  
**Finding Purpose & Fulfillment Outside Traditional Legal Careers**



FEATURED GUEST  
**Juanita Ingram**  
Attorney, Author, Actress, and reigning Mrs. Universe

 **Leveraging Latitude**

EPISODE 12  
**Legal Recruiting Today**  
& The Value of Being Brave (and Intentional) in Your Career Assessment



FEATURED GUESTS  
**Cynthia Moon**, Director of Legal Recruiting & Placement at Latitude  
**Joan Blackwell**, Director of Legal Recruiting & Placement at Latitude

 **Leveraging Latitude**

FEATURED GUEST  
**Lisa Ann Cooney**



Senior Vice President,  
Chief Legal Officer and Corporate Secretary at Day & Zimmermann

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FEATURED GUEST  
**Stacy Bratcher**



Senior Vice President  
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FEATURED GUEST  
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Director,  
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## Robin White

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“When considering a mid-career transition, reflect on your daily tasks and note what energizes you versus what drains you. It is difficult to be successful and happy in a role that doesn’t align with your interests or passions. Once you understand where your strengths and energy lie, focus on intentionally, authentically, and strategically strengthening your personal and professional connections—because once you know the path you want to pursue, those connections will often be the source of your next opportunity!”

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# **Planning for a Transition: Identifying Stretch and SMART Goals**

# Make a Plan

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- Identify your Stretch and SMART Goals

**Stretch:** Ambitious, elicits excitement, not achieved with small or incremental changes

**SMART:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timeline; these goals steer focus in right direction and keep you motivated

- What would it take to make it happen?
- Do you need more or different education/degree?
- What is stopping you? What obstacles can you anticipate?

# Carol Dweck, *Mindset* (2006)

## The Power of YET



[https://www.ted.com/talks/carol\\_dweck\\_the\\_power\\_of\\_believing\\_that\\_you\\_can\\_improve#t-608530](https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve#t-608530)

# **Executing a Transition: Be Kind, Be Brave, Stay Curious**



“Be honest about what your priorities are and assess any opportunities through that lens. If you think you might have a match, don’t let fear of change become a roadblock.”

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## Cynthia Moon

Vice President, Legal Recruiting & Placement

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# Execute

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- Talk to a recruiter (don't want until you are burned out or have one foot out the door)

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- Clean up your LinkedIn profile and other social media
- Tailor your resume for the job for which you are applying
- Don't let "failure" (or the fear of it) keep you from putting yourself out there . . . again and again
- Practice interviewing
- Assess opportunities wisely

# Drivers of Attorney Work Satisfaction / Loyalty

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- Compensation (but not necessarily the most important factor)
- Feeling appreciated and recognized at work
- Culture of physical and mental wellbeing
- Opportunities for professional development and clear path to promotion
- High quality of legal work
- Flexibility
- Sense of belonging (and freedom to be authentic selves)
- Likeable colleagues / boss
- Collaborative work environment
- Mentors



# And always . . .

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- Know yourself, your strengths and your value; consider all when making career choices
- Don't let others define success for you
- Work hard and be helpful, but not to your detriment
- Look for meaning and the “good stuff”
- Take care of yourself and your people
- Cultivate and invest in positive relationships (in and outside of your work)
- Tap into available resources (e.g. ACC network, recruiters, mentors, outside counsel, podcasts)

# Candice Reed

- Executive Vice President & Partner, Latitude
- Adjunct Professor, Thriving in the Law, The University of Tennessee College of Law

Candice assists in-house managing attorneys and legal ops leaders meet the demands of their business clients, without burning out their existing team or blowing their internal budgets, by connecting them with experienced legal professionals who choose to work on an engagement basis. She previously served as Chief Ethics Officer & in-house legal counsel at Ceridian Corporation and Comdata, where she oversaw operational ethics compliance worldwide.

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