

How To Accelerate Your Post-Attorney Career Transition

By **Janet Falk and Evgeny Efremkin** (April 8, 2025)

After reductions in force and a steady drumbeat of firings at many federal agencies in the past few months, newly unemployed federal attorneys may seek roles in the industries they previously regulated or oversaw. Likewise, lawyers in private practice who seek a more manageable work-life balance may eventually look for employment in the sector of their clients. In either case, these attorneys may consider a nonlegal role.

But regardless of whether you work in public service or in the private sector, as a professional seeking to transition to a nonattorney career, you will encounter skepticism from executives regarding your possible hire as a nontraditional candidate.

Every professional considers their industry to be highly complex and competitive, creating barriers to entry for someone who appears to be a newcomer.

One way that attorneys might confirm their future contribution in a nonlegal role is to speak and publish on timely subjects in a specific industry. Whether employment, healthcare or telecommunications, there are multiple publications, conferences and podcasts where you, as an observer, may share your insights and be noticed as an authority by potential peers and employers.

Not only will you showcase your skills and industry knowledge, you will distinguish yourself from other (traditional) competitor candidates who are not similarly promoting their expertise.

This article explores opportunities for thought leadership and how to leverage speaking and writing to accelerate a post-attorney career transition.

Identify your industry knowledge.

First, you'll want to consider the top issues that were the focus of your legal advice so that you can demonstrate that you have your finger on the pulse of the industry. Compose an overview from the perspective of an industry insider on the current status of big-picture issues, such as:

- Which companies in the specific industry are growing, and how;
- Will consolidation continue, slow down or accelerate;



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- What is the mix of bank loans, activity in the capital markets, venture capital and nontraditional loans to finance growth;
- How will changes in interest rates and currency affect sales operations;
- When will newly enacted regulations kick in and how will they affect the industry; and
- How have companies addressed privacy, security and artificial intelligence issues.

As you consider these issues, speculate on the future, taking into account the upside, the downside, the risks and the opportunities on the topics that will most resonate with your potential employers.

Identify outlets for speaking and publishing.

Next, consider contacting the organizers of the national and regional industry conferences and trade shows you attended in the past. Plan to reach out also to the companies that create webinars attended by members of the industry.

With these targets in mind, you might propose a panel discussion on one or two of the big-picture topics you previously identified. Indicate your interest in speaking or moderating. Further, offer to recruit other participants, so the host organization finds your suggestions even more appealing, as the session is made to order.

Likewise, identify podcasts that focus on the industry by searching podcast directories and looking for the names of industry executives via services that aggregate podcast programs, such as Spotify or Apple Podcasts. If the vice president of an industry-leading company was a guest on a certain show, then you probably want to speak there, too.

When you contact the host of the podcast, indicate that you enjoyed the host's conversation with a certain industry executive about Topic A, but that you also noticed the discussion overlooked Topics B and C, and that you are prepared to discuss these and related issues, if they are interested.

As for writing, you probably subscribe to several industry publications and may even have spoken with a reporter or two in the past. When you review the latest issues, note whether or not the journal or newsletter welcomes articles from contributors. Publication websites often list editorial guidelines.

Having confirmed that the publication accepts guest submissions, develop your pitch. It's best to contact the appropriate editor with a paragraph of three to five sentences that outlines your idea, followed by a few bullet points of how you will prove, disprove, explore or show the consequences of your idea. If the pitch is accepted, make sure you know the editor's desired word count and any other submission guidelines and preferences.

Also consider partnering with a co-author. Having an industry player as a co-author will likely give you additional credibility and authority in the eyes of the editor.

Finally, remember to take advantage of social media. For instance, you might develop a LinkedIn newsletter, with articles of up to 125,000 characters. On a more frequent basis, write shorter discussions as LinkedIn posts up to 3,000 characters. Ensure these posts provide actionable advice and timely information for readers.

Work your network.

You probably know that many positions for professionals are not advertised and candidates may not be sought by executive search professionals. Instead, companies may undertake informal searches. Accordingly, attorneys looking to move beyond a legal services role should ramp up their networking activity.

You might start by compiling lists of people that you know through various activities, such as:

- Colleagues from law school and former employers;
- Contacts at companies that your agency investigated or regulated;
- Opposing counsel in a transaction or litigation;
- Current and former clients; and
- Contacts at the bar association or industry organization where you are a member.

Consider sending a note to update them on your current activity and your interest in a career transition. Once they respond, it may be helpful to review their LinkedIn profiles to identify specific individuals or companies with whom they are connected. You may further thank them for their note and ask for an introduction.

For example, you might reach out to an attorney who represented a company in an investigation, case or transaction and who now serves as in-house counsel at a competitor's business. You could email this contact a referral bio, a paragraph of three to five sentences, that summarizes your professional skills or achievements, plus your interest in a career transition. Having this concise narrative in hand can make it easier for your contact to introduce you to the person you have asked to meet.

Having secured that introduction, you might take the opportunity to share your perspective on the industry in a manner that conveys your knowledge of timely issues and your eagerness to put those insights to work. As the conversation progresses, you may prepare to ask for another potential contact at the company or in the industry, thereby adding to your network.

Put it all together.

Let's consider a hypothetical example to help visualize what these steps might look like in action. Imagine that after spending eight years at a financial regulatory agency, an attorney realizes he wants to transition into a more strategic business role within the fintech industry. Of course, despite his deep knowledge of financial regulations and compliance, he may face skepticism from industry executives about his ability to contribute outside of a legal capacity.

To overcome this challenge, he can leverage his expertise by writing and speaking on key industry topics. He could launch a LinkedIn newsletter focusing on the intersection of financial regulation and fintech innovation, perhaps breaking down complex regulatory changes into digestible insights for business leaders. His articles might analyze topics such as how new banking regulations could affect fintech startups and how cryptocurrency companies can navigate compliance challenges while scaling.

Recognizing the potential of speaking engagements, he might reach out to organizers of fintech and financial compliance conferences and propose panel discussions on regulatory trends affecting fintech startups, such as a panel discussion on anti-money laundering compliance for crypto mixers. By moderating panels featuring industry leaders, he can expand his network and demonstrate his ability to translate legal expertise into strategic business insights.

As his visibility grows, he might be invited onto a fintech-focused podcast to discuss the role of AI in financial compliance. His insights on the future of digital banking might catch the attention of a fintech startup's CEO, who, after a series of conversations, might offer our former government attorney a role in the C-suite, allowing him to solidify his career shift from a legal adviser to a business leader influencing company growth.

This strategic visibility might help him bypass the skepticism traditionally faced by attorneys transitioning out of law — and ultimately, enable him to land the career shift he envisioned.

Promote your success.

As the hypothetical above shows, this kind of strategic visibility can help attorneys overcome the skepticism of potential employers and ultimately enable them to pivot into a nonlegal role.

It's common — and increasingly accepted — for professionals to shift industries, especially post-pandemic, so take heart and actively share your insights to be seen as the ideal candidate in your new field.

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