

Diversity and Preparing Your Attorney Resume

By Emily Sanderson



As more opportunities are provided to minority groups in the United States, attorneys must stay competitive among diverse job applicants. Including

experience such as participation in a study abroad program or community service to minority groups on your attorney resume may increase your chances of consideration by potential employers.

The American Bar Association (ABA) has guidelines that require US law schools to commit to maintaining diverse student bodies. Many firms and other legal bodies also encourage diversity in the workplace. Including information about your diversity or interaction with diverse groups on your attorney resume will increase your competitive edge among fellow job applicants.

Minority groups in the United States include those who are in the minority concerning the following areas:

- Race
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Age

- Physical disability
- Socioeconomic status

Although the last three areas are not strictly included in minority status determination, they are often recognized or treated as such.



“The American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar supports diversity in law schools because it is important to providing a well-rounded education for all students,” say Randy Hertz and Jerome Hafter of the ABA in a recent op-ed piece published in the *Wall Street Journal*.

“Accreditation depends upon the quality of education that a school provides. The sole focus of the ABA’s standards is to ensure that quality,” Hertz and Hafter continue. “Diversity in law schools adds educational value, and the council supports a rich law school educational experience by encouraging diversity in ways that are constitutionally acceptable.”

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Many corporations are embracing diversity in a new way as they are realizing that a diverse staff will better equip them for interacting with a diverse clientele.

Include information on your resume about a study abroad venture during law school or about community service that involved working with a minority group. Include your level of proficiency in languages that you speak. Be mindful and aware of the diverse cultures around you because you will most likely work with people within these groups at one time or another.

The concept of "diversity" has of late replaced "affirmative action" and the prior practice of meeting quotas in US efforts to provide opportunities for all groups, minority or otherwise. Each state has enacted different laws to approach the issue of diversity. Some previous laws simply gave preference to a certain group instead of giving everyone opportunities. To level the playing field, Texas, for example, recently enacted a statute requiring that all Texas state universities only enroll students whose high school grades are within the top 10% of their class. (Students also must have acceptable SAT or ACT scores.) By making decisions based on academics instead of other criteria, the schools have been better able to enroll a diverse student body.

In the legal field, where you attended law school and where you served as a summer associate play a big role in your consideration for employment by prestigious law firms, corporations, and judiciaries. Nonetheless, your contributions to the legal field are often determined by one person: you. Do your best to achieve good grades in school, and work hard to build your career. If you really have something to offer, don't let anything keep you from achieving your goals. Stay focused on your goals despite distractions or other obligations, and build the life that you desire.