

Book Review

A Classic on Non-Traditional Careers

*adapted from a review of the
Fourth Edition by Mimi Chang*

What Can You Do With a Law Degree?, by Deborah Arron, DecisionBooks, 5th edition, 2004.

The continually growing interest in non-traditional legal careers has made *What Can You Do With a Law Degree* by Deborah Arron an essential resource for every career services office. Ms. Arron, a former civil litigator and renowned public speaker and consultant, succinctly articulates the process that every attorney, law school graduate, law student, and potential law student should go through when seeking a career beyond the parameters of practicing law. The book's immense popularity over the years is in no doubt due to its motivational tone and interactive nature. The book is designed to guide individuals through the process of creating a clear career path that accounts for each person's skills and unique interests.

The Fifth edition is divided into seven chapters: "Successful Career Development," "The Roots of Dissatisfaction," "Coming to Terms With Change," "Research," "Being Realistic about Transition," "The Job Hunt," and "Professional Career Assistance." Most engaging are the sections that discuss the importance of accepting one's natural resistance to change and the need for self-assessment. By examining the four main barriers that paralyze lawyers and would-be lawyers from charting a new career path, Ms. Arron illustrates that individuals tend to find reasons to remain status quo if their goal is fueled by a need to escape rather than an attraction to a new goal. Equally important is the book's focus on the im-

portance of self-assessment. The self-assessment exercises contained in the book force the reader to actively participate in the process of designing a tangible framework of what is desired instead of passively absorbing the book's information by floating on vague thoughts of merely wanting something better.

Also noteworthy is the plethora of practical guidance about how to align priorities with realities; translate transferable skills acquired in law school or practice into skill sets that are understandable and useful in a non-legal setting; develop effective approaches to networking and informational interviewing; and overcome employer objections regarding incompatibility.

The reader is encouraged to shed the entitlement mentality that so many lawyers acquire and assume the role of "pursuer" when hunting for alternative legal employment. For instance, Ms. Arron emphasizes the importance of networking and provides tips on appropriate ways to contact and follow up on a lead. In addition, a sampling of marketing success stories in this section drives the point home.

In fact, the book is peppered with personal anecdotes and sidebars filled with tidbits of helpful advice, all of which help keep a reader captivated. By interspersing vignettes about experiences former attorneys have encountered when leaving the law throughout the book, Ms. Arron relieves much of the self-defeating trepidation and isolation practicing attorneys and law school students often feel when considering an alternative legal career. These stories all send

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the same reassuring message that the transition into an alternative career, albeit potentially more arduous than following the well-traveled path of a practicing attorney, is well worth the effort. Moreover, these accounts illustrate that non-traditional legal careers can be more prestigious and rewarding than practicing law, especially when the field is one that the individual is passionate about.

Overall, *What Can You Do with a Law Degree* not only provides sage advice but also leads the reader through every step of the quagmire leading up to a successful career transition. With an appendix brimming with resources and myriad

position titles for specific non-traditional legal career options, this book is a must read for every lawyer or law student who wonders what they can do other than practice law. ■

Mimi Chang is Assistant Director of Career Services at UCLA School of Law. She is a member of the NALP Publications Committee, on whose behalf this review was submitted.