



## Back to Law - Case Study



Michal Freeman-Shor

In 2007 I took a career break from my role as Senior Corporate Solicitor at Fasken Martineau in London to bring up my son. The long hours my job entailed were not compatible with being the hands on mother I wanted to be.

After an eleven year career break I am now a Senior Corporate Associate with the law firm Gardner Leader LLP, based mainly in their Maidenhead office. It took me nine months of applying

for roles before I secured the position.

I have been a UK qualified Solicitor for 7 years, plus 2 years as a qualified foreign lawyer (Israeli qualified). I grew up in Israel as a descendent of educated WW2 survivors from the Ukraine, and after my national service I chose to study Law at Nottingham Law School because the laws in England and Israel are very similar and it allowed me to travel and refine my English at the same time.

During my career break, I focused on investing in property to provide an income which enabled me to shift my focus to voluntary roles including acting as a director of a Synagogue for over four years, running a not-for-profit charity shop and a business and law lecturer.

After my career break, my first port of call was the Law Society's website where I enrolled on the returners' course. I also renewed my practicing certificate and enrolled on Central Law Training, Central Law Training International and MBL Seminars (all of which are independent course providers) which related to my area of practice.

I found learning resources on the websites of firms such as Addleshaw Goddard, Allen and Overy and Slaughter & May as well as The Financial Conduct Authority, the London Stock Exchange, the Information Commissioner's Office (GDPR), the Law Society and the SRA, the Financial Times, the Gazette and the Lawyer. These allowed me to identify topics to learn or refresh previous knowledge on. I also created my LinkedIn profile and contacted old colleagues and some old clients but while they were enthusiastic, no doors opened.

The Law Society Returner weekend was a fantastic confidence boost for me at a time when I needed it most. The speakers were informative and supportive and I was energised and full of motivation to find a job as a solicitor.

Returning to the law has been a difficult journey. I used half of my days learning and getting up to date with the law, and half applying for roles and speaking to recruitment consultants. Feedback was bleak from recruiters: most were not interested in someone not currently employed and placed no value on the transferrable skills I had acquired and my enthusiasm for social media, business development, networking and marketing.

I applied for over 70 roles, rewrote my CV several times and received some rejection letters within seconds of applying. On several occasions when applying online I was unable to submit my CV because I could not complete all the boxes - for example because I was unable to provide a current salary.



Determination and resilience are essential as a returner and I finally met two very proactive recruitment consultants who managed to generate some interest with firms and I continued to network as much as I could. I was accepted on the Addleshaw Goddard Return to Law program which helped me to gain relevant recent experience and regain confidence in my abilities. It was whilst undertaking that program, that I accepted a role as a senior corporate solicitor at another fantastic, forward-looking law firm, Gardner Leader.

After such a long time out - the first week was challenging: I had to juggle training with work and also raise my profile within the firm. It was exhausting but after a week I established a routine which works for me - I take regular breaks and have healthy snacks. I now feel invigorated and content and am very happy that I made the move. I am heading up some exciting corporate deals and discovered my old instincts are as sharp as ever and my additional experience gives me a competitive edge.

My transition was made easier because Gardner Leader embraces diversity and inclusion and everyone is eager to make my integration a positive one. The team is supportive and friendly and I enjoy being part of a good team again. I am privileged to advise interesting companies on some great transactions and love finding practical solutions to my clients' challenges.

My tips for a successful career transition back to the law for other returners are

1. Be proactive and persistent and treat the nay-sayers (including your own self-doubt) as 'white noise'
2. Surround yourself with positive friends, family and connections who will support you
3. Don't believe recruiters who fob you off due to a lack of recent/relevant experience: they are only interested in making a quick buck. Find a recruiter who cares and is willing to promote the benefits you bring as a candidate to their clients, even though you don't tick all the boxes
4. Never give up on your dreams and aspirations

I am now a Back to law Ambassador for The Law Society empowering and mentoring returner solicitors and it is great to share insights and ideas from my own career journey to help others.

#### *Newbury Office*

White Hart House  
Market Place  
Newbury  
Berkshire  
RG14 5BA

#### *Maidenhead Office*

First Floor  
7 Frascati Way  
Maidenhead  
Berkshire  
SL6 4UY

#### *Thatcham Office*

Winbolt House  
The Broadway  
Thatcham  
Berkshire  
RG19 3HX

T : 01635 508080  
F : 01635 521341  
[gardner-leader.co.uk](http://gardner-leader.co.uk)