

## A THREE PAGE RESUME: IS IT EVER WORTH IT?

**Summary:** *This article explores whether or not a lengthy resume is ever warranted.*



**Question:** I've spent the past three years as assistant general counsel, specializing in contracts and intellectual property, for a multinational company with worldwide sales of \$1 billion. Prior to becoming a lawyer, I was an industrial designer of products, exhibits, and merchandising displays. I'm in my mid-30s, and have practiced law for eight years in both the public and private sectors. I've come to enjoy the "business" of in-house counseling to company executives, but our culture of mostly European top executives doesn't encourage or permit lawyers to act in traditional business roles. I've noticed a trend of more corporate attorneys filling executive positions, and I'd like to make a transition to offering business as well as legal counsel. I know that will never happen at my current company, so I'm ready to begin an earnest job search. My industrial design training has given me valuable manufacturing and marketing experience, which I believe is an important ingredient to the product mix I offer to prospective employers. What I'm unsure of is whether I should pursue an executive MBA to boost my marketability to senior business executives, and should I worry about the length of my resume, which is now three pages: one page law, one page design and one page education and accomplishments. Does my unique career path and salary level (\$100,000+) qualify me as one of those rare exceptions who requires a more detailed resume? — *Roxanne, New Freedom, Pa.*

**Roxanne:** Making the move from corporate law to the executive suite is more common these days. Typically, a career-changing attorney would move laterally at a company that has grown to value his or her judgment and wants to offer expanded responsibilities. Trying to land at another large company in a non-legal position is a real challenge, no different than those faced by all career changers. It's an easier move if you target small companies that need a legal perspective for their business dealings, but you're much less likely to maintain your salary level. The best solution is to have a former colleague or mentor who's jumped ship and can tout your business acumen. Short of that, earning an MBA at a top-tier school is an effective way to change direction. B-schools are packed with JD-degree holders eager to flex their business muscles, but most recruiters will be more interested in your new training than your past experience. Of course, you'll lose earnings over the next five to six years, but you should begin to make up the shortfall soon after. The executive MBA route is less desirable, unless you're chosen a truly noted program with an outstanding track record for placing its graduates (check with the placement office before enrolling). Regarding your three-page resume, don't do it. Instead, tailor your resume to every job opportunity by emphasizing skills related specifically to the position, and downplay or delete experience that isn't relevant. It's more work, but few hiring managers have the patience to wade through your career history. If you must, create a longer CV to hand to interviewers once you've reached that stage.