

STARTING A NEW CAREER IN THE MIDDLE OF A ONCE IN A GENERATION PANDEMIC

When I decided to start library school in the early fall of 2019, I had no idea that, a year later, I would be coming up on my final semester jobless, unsure of whether I could find a new position in time to make my rent and student loan payments, as well as facing a deadly pandemic. Despite the uncertainties I faced, I can confidently say from my current perspective that I made all the right choices.

I decided to “change careers” as a law school graduate who found traditional legal work to be unsatisfying. Based on the advice of a dear friend and law librarian I met in law school, I made the leap and enrolled in Indiana University’s two-year MLIS program. I continued to work full-time and believed I was on my way to a career I could be excited about. I even managed to snag an interview with a law firm in February of 2020 that was looking for someone *like me*. Then COVID-19 hit. The law firm I had applied with, faced with the uncertainty of the growing pandemic, was operating under an indefinite hiring freeze and the small company I was working for decided to close its doors the following July. I was in limbo. I started scrabbling for contract work to get by and continued my course work full-time hoping for a miracle.



I got my wish in November. The law firm reached back out to me about the position I had set my sights on. They still wanted me, and I could start in January! I accepted their offer and jumped into the brave new world of all digital onboarding, and remote only training. The pandemic was still raging, and this process was new to me and my new employer. The HR team was flexible, and I only went to the office once to pick up my firm issued hardware and badge. I was very lucky that my new team had been remote long before the pandemic and was used to having team meetings via video conference from their various office locations. The team seemed to have made the transition from attending these meetings at the office to doing it from home rather easily.

I attended video training sessions with each of my new teammates, read the written training documents I received via email, and focused on trying to absorb a lot of new information very quickly in a format that I had never experienced before. I was surprised at how seamless the whole process was (at least from my perspective). I didn’t get the benefit of having lunch with my new supervisor or receive in-person training from co-workers flying in to walk me through my new responsibilities, but I did feel almost as supported as if they had. The best part was how each of my new co-workers made it clear to me that they were only a phone or video call away if I was struggling. I have weekly meetings with my supervisor in addition to our team meetings where we discuss our ongoing projects.

Since I started, we’ve grown even closer- getting to know each other’s children (two or four-legged), started a department-wide virtual book club, and discuss our forays into new hobbies and new products we’ve tried. While COVID-19 has had an incredible impact on the world including multi-state shutdowns and a heartbreaking loss of life; the pandemic has not reduced the ability of a well-built and managed team to welcome and support new employees, even those who made the leap of changing their entire career during a once in a generation pandemic.

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