

Book Review: Practice Perspectives: Vault's Guide to Legal Practice Areas

BY: Tina Brooks | June 25, 2013 at 4:26 PM **TOPICS:** book reviews, book review

Rachel Marx Boufford, ed., *Practice Perspectives: Vault's Guide to Legal Practice Areas* (Vault.com Inc., 2013), 196 pages. ISBN: 978-1-58131-895-1, \$29.95 (PDF).

While *Practice Perspectives: Vault's Guide to Legal Practice Areas* provides some insight from lawyers on their respective legal practice areas for those interested in starting or switching legal careers, too much of this already short title is devoted to full-page advertisements for firms and legal products. An academic law library or law school career services department might consider this title, but the amount of included advertising makes it difficult to recommend, even at its relatively low price point.

As stated in the book's introduction, this guide is intended to inform law students, pre-law candidates, and practicing lawyers interested in a lateral move about the legal career options available to them. The book consists of interviews with lawyers from 22 different practice areas, including Antitrust, Bankruptcy, Intellectual Property, Real Estate, and Tax. The interviews are organized alphabetically by practice area; there is also an index with the names of lawyers interviewed and another index for the firms each lawyer works for. While the number and variety of topic areas seem appropriate, the interviewees are mostly partners from AmLaw 100 firms, which is under-representative of the legal career opportunities available in these practice areas.

The depth and specificity of the information provided varies by interview. One to four lawyers are interviewed in each practice area, and each lawyer is asked an identical set of questions about the specifics of their practice. The questions cover the types of clients and cases they work with, what a typical work day or work week is like, trainings and classes they would suggest to others, factors that influenced their decision to practice in their current area of law, what they like best about their current practice, and the greatest challenges they face in their practice area. The lack of specificity is partially due to the format; all of the interviews are one to two pages, which is not enough space to allow the interviewees to thoroughly answer the questions posed. This leads to occasionally vague answers; variations on "the best thing . . . is the variety of the work. . . . The most challenging aspect . . . is the same as the best thing about it—the variety of the work" are common without much further explanation. However, many of the lawyers do provide more enlightening comments about their work and experiences. For example, a bankruptcy attorney, asked how he decided on his practice area, lists aspects of his summer jobs that he did and did not like, and he felt that financial restructuring and Chapter 11 work was the best combination of what he liked with the least amounts of the type of work he wanted to avoid. (p.17-18) A real estate attorney explains how it was less the practice area than the type of work environment that suited her personality and career advancement opportunities that attracted her to her current firm. (p.133-134) This level of candidness is much more beneficial to the intended audience; it allows them to compare their own preferences and interests to those of the interviewees.

Unfortunately, while the content has the potential to be valuable, the biggest drawback of this book is actually the lack of content. In the PDF version of the title reviewed for this post, there are 41 full-page ads for law firms, Vault.com, and other legal products, and there are 22 blank pages (one before each practice area). In addition, there are 33 pages that are blank except for a pull quote from the preceding interview. As a result, only a little more than 50% of the book's pages present substantive content. It is possible that this would be less frustrating in print, but scrolling past all of that in a PDF file made it glaringly obvious how little content there actually was.

While some of the content of this title is of interest to its target audience, the too-short interviews and over-abundance

of advertising make it tough to recommend. However, for those looking for first-hand information about practicing at top firms in the covered practice areas, this is could be a decent purchase at a low price point.

Tina Brooks is the Electronic Services Librarian at the University of Kentucky Law Library in Lexington, Kentucky.

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franklin.runge@uky.edu

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