

The Abraham S. Ovadia Career Planning & Placement Office

Ana P. Bierman, Assistant Dean

acbierma@fiu.edu

305.348.8376

Introduction to Interviewing & Overview of Fall Recruiting

**INTERVIEWING IS AN
ACQUIRED SKILL**

The Law Firm Hiring Process: Large Firms (100 or more attorneys)

- Have formalized hiring procedures, and a hiring timeline. They hire summer clerks early in the fall, and typically make permanent offers to the summer clerks at the end of the summer.
- Hire on campus, receive résumés and can be contacted directly.
- Specific person in the firm is in charge of hiring – that’s all he/she does.
- Tend to be risk averse when it comes to hiring – rely on factors that have worked in the past, like grades.

Medium Firms (25 to 100 lawyers)

- May participate in job fairs or on campus recruiting, direct contact is very common. They may not have a set hiring timeline.
- May not have a dedicated in-house recruiter, but may have a hiring partner or hiring committee who have additional responsibilities.
- Concern with grades will vary from firm to firm.

The On-Campus “Screening Interview”

- These are “first impression” interviews and are likely to be conducted by an associate or a partner who is a member of the hiring committee.
- Most often will ask questions about academic accomplishments and summer work/responsibilities.
- All employers are looking for candidates that are hard-working, dedicated to the practice of law, easy to get along with and mature.
- The firm needs to have confidence in you!

Possible Employer Checklist

- Communication skills
- Maturity/Poise and interpersonal skills
- Leadership/personal qualities
- Initiative/Knowledge of the employer
- Organization
- Professionalism

Market Yourself

- Employers are concerned about “investing” in a new lawyer who doesn’t work out.
- Lawyers coming on campus don’t want to be blamed for hiring an associate who doesn’t work out.
- Grades may be used as a proxy for a good match – the hiring lawyers can support their decision – grades have worked as predictors in the past.
- Part of your job as an interviewee is convincing the hiring lawyers that you are a low risk hire.

Low Risk Candidates:

1. Are prepared for the interview

- Know the firm's hiring process
- Know who they will be speaking to
- Have up to date information of what's taking place at the firm
- Are familiar with the firm's operations, market niche and corporate culture
- Focus on the employer's needs
- Be prepared to answer the following questions:
 1. Why did you decide to interview with us?
 2. What do you know about us?

Common Employer Feedback on Why an Interview Did Not Go Well

- Student didn't really know why she applied for the position, or how this job fits into career path.
- Student doesn't really know what practice areas (offices, specialties) the firm has.
- Student is not enthusiastic.

Researching Employers

- Firm, agency or organization website
- NALP (National Association for Legal Professionals) Directory
- Martindale Hubbell Law Directory (martindale.com)
- Westlaw or Lexis, Google and other search engines.
- Find out whether faculty members, alumni, or others in your network have worked at the firm or organization.

2. Understand their goal and know their strengths

- Key goal of an interview: make a positive impression.
- Never express concerns or doubts during an interview.
- Make a short list of your strongest points as they relate to the particular firm – they can serve as talking points.

3. Prepare a list of questions before the interview

- Base your questions on your research about the employer – should be direct and relevant
- You need to be sure that you have questions to pose, in case you are asked whether you have any questions – lack of questions may be interpreted as lack of interest.

Questions to Consider Asking

- How will I get assignments? Will my work come from one lawyer? Are assignments randomly given out depending on availability? Can I request work from a specific group/practice area/team?
- Do summer associates receive training/attend presentations?
- Will I be evaluated during my time as a summer associate? What type of feedback is usually given on assignments?
- What do you (the interviewer) like most about the firm? Were you a summer associate? What was your experience like?

Answering Questions

- Don't dwell on the negative – avoid bad mouthing prior employers, schools etc.
- If you interned for a judge or other employer: avoid revealing specific confidential details about cases.
- You must be honest. Avoid even slight exaggerations.

Nervousness

- Fidgeting, moving around, using filler language (“like,” “you know”), inappropriate laughter.
- Think about keeping eye contact, consider clasping a folder to keep hands still.
- A little nervousness can be a plus – adrenaline can be your friend.

Listen During Your Interview

- Avoid the temptation to monopolize the interview – nervousness can make you do this.
- A good lawyer is a good listener – listen to what your interviewer has to say.
- Answer the question that you were asked.

What To Do If You Are at a Loss For Words?

- Rephrase the question – buys time.
- Ask for clarification
- If all else fails – May we return to this question a later time – I seem to be at a loss for a moment...

What to Wear: Men

- Two piece suit (ideal is solid navy or grey)
- Solid white or blue shirt (starched), plain or spread collar, broadcloth or pinpoint material.
- Shoes – lace-ups with leather soles. Belt should match shoes in color and shine.
- Silk tie in a conservative color/pattern
- Socks should match pants in color.
- Briefcase (borrow one if you have to – don't bring a back-pack, or rolling bag)
- Well groomed conservative hair
- Minimal cologne (if any)
- Cover tattoos

What to Wear: Women

- Solid/pinstripe suit in black, navy, gray (pants ok)
- White or pastel blouse in silk or cotton
- Dark mid or low heel leather pumps are ideal. Open toed shoes or sandals are not appropriate.
- Jewelry should be subtle and minimal
- Briefcase or tote – no backpack or rolling bag
- Conservative hair style (feedback – hair on face/eyes can be distracting)
- Conservative nail polish
- Minimal perfume (if any)
- Cover tattoos

What to Bring to an Interview – On or Off Campus

- Updated résumé
- Writing sample
- Law school transcript (unofficial usually OK)
- List of references (2-3 people)

Single Most Important Tip: Show Enthusiasm

- Nothing kills an interview faster than a perceived lack of interest.
- The interviewers need to know that you have a genuine interest in their firm
- Learned as I went along: interviewers are looking for “likeable” candidates – beware of appearing extremely competitive.