The Abraham S. Ovadia Career Planning & Placement Office

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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.