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## Interviewing Tips

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The job interview is a crucial part of the job search process -- it is the stage where decisions are made. For many job seekers it can be a stressful time; but it doesn't have to be. It is important to remember an interview is nothing more than a very focused "conversation." The following suggestions should increase your chances for a successful "conversation."

### Prior to the interview:

- Research the organization. Find out all you can through personal contacts, written materials, the Internet, etc.
- Conduct a self-assessment so you are prepared to articulate your interest in the position and the contributions you can make utilizing your skills and abilities.
- Organize the pertinent materials you will want to take to the interview - extra copies of your resume, writing sample, transcript, list of references, etc.
- Assemble your interview attire. Always dress neatly and conservatively, keeping the interviewer in mind. First impressions do count.
- Reassure yourself. Confidence in your abilities demonstrates to an interviewer that you are the one they want to hire!

### During the interview:

- Relax - be yourself.
- Be honest about your skills and abilities - this is important for both you and the potential employer.
- Show enthusiasm - let them know you are interested in what they do and have to offer.
- Listen carefully - take time to reflect before answering questions. Don't be afraid to say you don't know; but don't do this too often.
- Ask targeted questions; show you did your homework.
- Stress your best qualities and what you could bring to the position in a positive manner.
- Don't leave without them knowing you are interested in the position. Finally, ask what the next step in the process is and when you could expect to hear from them.

### After the interview:

- Send a thank you note reaffirming your interest in the position and provide any additional information you were unable to share in the interview.
- If you do not hear from them after a set time, phone or write to find out where they are in the process.
- If you are offered the position, great! But before you accept, evaluate the terms.
- If you are rejected, don't be discouraged. Take this opportunity to evaluate your job search plan and make any needed revisions.

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## Sample Interview Questions

You should expect to be asked some of the following questions. This will help you to be more prepared and effective when making your responses.

1. Why did you decide to attend law school?
2. In what school activities have you participated? Why? Which did you enjoy most?
3. How do you spend your spare time?
4. What jobs have you held? How were they obtained, and why did you leave?
5. What courses have you liked best in law school? Least? Why?
6. What do you know about our firm?
7. Do you feel your legal education has been good?
8. What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in this field?
9. How interested are you in sports?
10. If you were starting law school all over, would you still attend?
11. What is your rank in school? Is your GPA a good indicator of your abilities?
12. Was your involvement in school activities worth the time you devoted to them? Why?
13. What characteristics do you think a person needs to be a successful attorney?
14. Why do you think you would like practicing law?

15. Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?
  16. Who are your best friends? Why?
  17. Can you take instructions without feeling upset?
  18. Tell me a story.
  19. How did previous employers treat you?
  20. What have you learned from other jobs you have held?
  21. Can we get recommendations from your previous employers?
  22. What interests you about our firm? Why would you want to represent our clients?
  23. What was your record in military services?
  24. Have you ever had to withdraw from a class?
  25. What is your proudest moment?
  26. How long do you expect to work?
  27. Have you ever had any difficulty getting along with fellow students or faculty?
  28. What is the source of your spending money?
  29. Do you have any debts?
  30. Do you like routine work?
  31. What is your major weakness?
  32. Define cooperation.
  33. Are you willing to fight to get ahead?
  34. What area of law interests you? Why?
  35. What job with the firm would you choose if you were given the choice?
  36. What types of books do you read?
  37. What types of people seem to rub you the wrong way?
  38. What are your special abilities?
  39. What do you think the disadvantages of practicing law are?
  40. What have you done that shows initiative and a willingness to work?
  41. Tell me about yourself.
  42. How many hours a day do you think a person should work?
  43. What are your goals?
  44. Do you have any questions?
  45. Why should we hire you over our other applicants?
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### Sample Student Inquires

It is now your turn to ask the questions and you don't want to miss this valuable opportunity by saying, "They have all been answered." You want to ask questions to help you determine if this is a good "fit" for you. It is also your chance to prove to the interviewer that you are the right candidate.

1. What skills are most and least important for an individual to possess as an associate?
  2. How does the firm delegate authority, responsibilities, and assignments?
  3. What specific job duties and responsibilities would I have as a law clerk?
  4. What criteria would be used to evaluate my performance, and how often would I be appraised?
  5. What could I expect to face in the first month, three months, and six months on the job?
  6. If I'm filling a job opening, why did my predecessor leave?
  7. Do you have a job description available?
  8. What would you like the person in this position to achieve in the next six months?
  9. What attracted you to this firm?
  10. What do you find most challenging as a lawyer?
  11. Did you start in your current practice area? If not, why did you switch?
  12. What do you wish you had asked when you interviewed with the firm?
  13. How is your job different from what you expected?
  14. What attracts your clients to this firm? How are you able to retain them?
  15. How long were you at the firm before you had significant client contact?
  16. If you could change anything about your job, would you? If so, what would it be?
  17. How have your clients' needs changed over the last five years?
  18. Where do you see the firm heading in the next five years?
  19. Describe your typical day.
  20. When will you be making a decision, and what is the process?
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### Know What Hiring Partners Have to Say?

They identified the following personal characteristics as indicators of an applicant's potential success as a lawyer:

- good communicator
- charisma
- team player/consensus builder
- intelligence
- integrity/strength of character
- sincerity
- common sense
- ability to work under pressure
- confidence
- initiative
- self-motivation/self-starter
- enthusiasm

- ambition
- hard-working
- humble assertiveness
- problem-solving skills
- creativity
- good personality
- ability to think on one's feet
- ability to relate to diverse individuals

They made the following suggestions to assist students with the job search process:

- be fully prepared for the interview
- clearly understand what the job entails before accepting the position
- understand it is the student's responsibility to direct their career search - must be career focused vs. job focused
- it is important for students to look good on paper - employers don't have time to sift through poor resumes
- need to determine their "fit" in the organization's structure and work environment
- know what they have to offer the firm
- demonstrate they can quickly produce results
- have an ability to master computer technology
- remember the firm is evaluating how you can perform your tasks, respond to clients, and work with the rest of the team

## The Job Offer

*Accepting a Job Offer is more than Just Saying Yes!*

It is definitely an exciting time; your hard work and persistence paid off. You have received a job offer! Before accepting this offer, there are some factors you need to consider.

<p><b><u>Why are you considering the job?</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pure survival</li> <li>• A positive career move</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Job Duties and Responsibilities</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will you enjoy your daily job functions?</li> <li>• Will your level of authority be satisfying to you?</li> <li>• How will you be evaluated?</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Financial</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gross income</li> <li>• Commissions</li> <li>• Bonuses</li> <li>• Car</li> <li>• Expense account</li> <li>• Retirement plan</li> <li>• Stock options, investment plans</li> <li>• Profit sharing</li> <li>• Severance package</li> <li>• Relocation assistance</li> <li>• Cost-of-living increases</li> <li>• Vacation and sick leave</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Acknowledging Offers</u></b></p> <p>When receiving a job offer, it is recommended you acknowledge the offer in writing. This is a brief letter in which you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank the employer for their interest in you.</li> <li>• Indicate your understanding of the terms for employment (i.e., salary, job title, duties, etc.).</li> <li>• State your interest in the position.</li> <li>• Say when you expect to make a final decision.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Career Advancement</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advancement opportunities</li> <li>• Involvement in professional associations</li> <li>• Pay raise criteria and schedule</li> <li>• Personal tuition reimbursement</li> </ul>	<p>If you have other interviews scheduled, you and the employer should agree on a mutual date for a decision regarding the offer. If the deadline arrives and you still don't have a decision, you can request an extension; however, this is generally not recommended. You need to understand that the employer does not have to grant it, and the employer may withdraw the offer anytime prior to acceptance of the offer.</p>
<p><b><u>Insurance</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical</li> <li>• Life</li> <li>• Disability</li> <li>• Dental</li> <li>• Optical</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Malpractice</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Accepting Offers</u></b></p> <p>Once you have decided to accept, you need to formalize this in writing, again including the conditions of your acceptance. This helps to avoid any misunderstandings about the offer and the position. Once an offer has been accepted, that constitutes a binding commitment. <b><u>Do not renege on offers!</u></b> This is</p>

**Environment**

- Will you like your co-workers?
- Will you like the supervisor's style?

**Job Security**

- Is the career field/practice area growing?
- Is the number of employees increasing?
- Has the firm recently laid people off?
- Will you need to learn new skills to keep your job?

**Stress**

- Frequency of overtime
- Frequency of weekend or holiday work
- Travel demands
- Billable hours, deadlines, or quotas

considered unprofessional and reflects poorly on the law school.

**Declining Offers**

If you choose not to accept an offer, you need to notify the employer immediately of your decision. This allows the employer the opportunity to make an offer to someone else. Again, this should be done in writing. This brief letter should state your appreciation for their interest in you and the reason why you are rejecting the offer. By extending this courtesy, you leave the door open for future opportunities.

**Finally, notify the Professional Development Office of all job offers!**

Adapted from *The Wizard of Work*, Ten Speed Press, 1995

**Letter Requesting an Informational Interview**

13205 Pressmont Lane  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

November 1, 1998

Mr. George Striker  
Black & Blue  
9800 Market Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Mr. Striker:

I am a second year student at the Indiana University School of Law - Indianapolis and interested in working in the field of sports law. Professor Greenberg told me last week that I would really benefit from your expertise and knowledge.

I hope you will be able to take time out of your busy schedule to give me some advice. I will follow-up this letter with a telephone call to inquire about setting up a convenient time to meet. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Gerald Carter  
(317) 378-6963

**Questions You May Want to Ask An Interviewer****Summer Associate/Clerkship Programs**

- What type of supervision and responsibilities are given to summer associates?
- How many participants does the firm anticipate having in its summer program?
- What is the relationship between the number of people in the summer program and the number of associates hired each year?
- To what extent does the summer program involve activities other than pure research?
- Do summer associates receive an evaluation of their work?
- What type of training program do you provide?

**Outside Activities**

- What type of outside activities do the lawyers participate in (local Bar, clubs, athletics)?
- How does the firm feel about pro bono work?
- Is continuing legal education permitted or expected by the firm?

### Try To Find Answers To The Following Questions Before Accepting An Offer

- What is the firm's general character and atmosphere? Is it friendly or formal?
  - What is the firm's future? Is it getting and keeping people of high caliber?
  - Have there been any significant split-ups in its history?
  - Are the firm's lawyers persons in whose legal ability, judgment, and standards you will have confidence and pride?
  - Are the firm's lawyers persons you will enjoy working with?
  - Are the firm's organization and administration systems sound and apparently running smoothly?
  - What is the relationship between younger and older lawyers in the firm - the channels of communication (formal and informal), the degree of contact and formality?
  - Is the locality a good place to live and work? Does it have cultural and recreational activities, citizen interest, and convenient, attractive residential areas with good schools?
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### Questions Not To Ask The Interviewer

- Don't ask about salary in the initial interview with any firm or legal employer. There will be time enough to ask about that later when they make you an offer.
  - How hard do associates have to work? If you want to find out the answer without asking, there are other ways. Try to schedule any second interview with a firm or agency during the late afternoon. The chances are you'll still be there at 6:30, and you can see for yourself how busy the place is. Another way to find out is to ask a young associate (during the second interview) or perhaps an especially pleasant first interviewer, "How would you describe the life of a young associate at your firm?" Hopefully, they will bring up the subject voluntarily.
  - Do young associates have to attend a lot of mandatory social activities? An important question, but don't ask it. Again, hope it comes up in a second interview.
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### Questions Interviewers Think Candidates Should Be Asking

- What might I be doing in my second week?
- What kind of responsibility would I have?
- How do entry-level associates progress through the office?
- How much direct client contact can I expect to have during my first and second year?
- Are associates assigned to one partner or are they part of a pool of associates available to work with a number of different partners?
- What kinds of opportunities are available for someone who wants to work on a special project?
- How long does it normally take for a new associate to be able to participate in a trial?
- How do attorneys get channeled into different practice groups -- or into working relationships with particular partners or particular clients?
- How is work assigned?
- What is the structure/management style?
- How is your summer clerkship program structured?
- What types of projects do summer associates work on?
- How are summer associates evaluated?
- How is feedback provided during the summer?
- How do summer associates get their assignments?
- How many offers did you make to summer associates last year? How many of those students accepted?
- What kinds of opportunities for training and guidance are available to new associates?
- To what extent are partners involved in educating associates?
- To what extent do attorneys have a chance to direct their own professional development?
- How are entry-level associates supervised?
- Feedback is an important part of an attorney's development. How does the firm handle this?
- How will this firm help me become the best lawyer I can be so that I can contribute in the long-term to our clients?
- Which of the firm's practice areas are expanding?
- What types of new areas does the firm want to move into?
- What are the firm's priorities?
- Tell me about the long-term stability and vision of the firm.
- Does the firm expect to grow in the next five years, and, if so, what type of growth is anticipated--i.e., more new associates, more lateral hires, new offices?
- How have you seen your own practice evolve?
- What types of outside activities (bar-related and other) are your lawyers involved with?
- What is expected in terms of participation in professional organizations?

- What is the firm's policy on pro bono and community activities?
- Why do you like being a part of this organization?
- Why did you choose this firm?
- What do you think sets this firm apart from other firms of its type?
- How do you find the quality of life within the firm?
- How would you describe the personality of the firm?
- How many of your clients are long-standing, institutional clients? How have you been able to maintain this relationship?