



# INTERVIEWING GUIDE



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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. THE PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

An interview is merely an exchange of information between an applicant and a potential employer. Simply put, after a review of the applicant's résumé, the employer has determined that the candidate possesses credentials and abilities that match the hiring needs of the organization, and the interviewer wants to know whether the candidate measures up to his or her credentials and will be a good "fit" with the hiring organization. *Therefore, as a candidate, you should also use the interview to decide whether the position truly interests you, and whether the environment is one in which you will thrive and be comfortable.* Preparation and practice are essential to effective interviewing. This Guide is designed to familiarize you with the interview process and help you develop an effective interviewing technique.

### B. SCREENING AND CALLBACK INTERVIEWS

Although some smaller employers do not follow a two-step interview process, and simply invite a candidate for a one-time interview at their office, there are generally two distinct types of in-person interviews: 1) the screening interview; and 2) the callback interview.

1. **The Screening Interview.** This usually takes place through a formal process, either at the employer's office, a job fair or through an On Campus Interview ("OCI") Program. A screening interview may also be scheduled via telephone. See Section D on page 4. The employer picks the candidates who will be interviewed based on the applicants' résumés. Through the *screening interview*, the employer attempts to identify candidates who possess the necessary qualifications and/or skills, and those who exhibit enthusiasm and potential for success with the employer. The screening interview typically lasts 20 to 30 minutes.
2. **The Callback Interview.** If a candidate passes the screening interview, he or she is scheduled for a *callback interview*. These are typically lengthier (anywhere from two hours to a half day), and their success depends upon whether the candidate's personality, work ethic and professional objectives fit in with the rest of the employer's office. Therefore, callback interviews are usually held at the employer's office, where the candidate may meet and interview with numerous attorneys, either separately or simultaneously. Some law firms use a panel style interview (attorneys facing you from across a conference table); whereas others rotate the candidate from attorney to attorney – each interview lasting between 20-30 minutes.

*Lunch is part of the interview.* Lunch may be a part of the callback interview. However, YOU ARE STILL INTERVIEWING! Interviewers want to see how you behave in a social setting, as well as whether they enjoy your company. Express positive aspects of your personality that might not have surfaced previously, such as your sense of humor and any interesting hobbies. But, never let your guard down. Be careful with entrees that can stain your shirt or blouse. Do not order an alcoholic beverage, even if someone else at the table does. Do not order the most, or least, expensive menu item.

### C. BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

The behavioral interview model is based on the belief that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior in a similar situation. The actual format of the interview is still the same however the format of the line of questioning has changed.

1. **Use Examples.** Behavioral interview questions are crafted to discern if a candidate demonstrates not only verbally but by use of example that they possess the established characteristics determined to be critical for a successful candidate.
2. **Move Beyond Evident Skills.** During behavioral interviews employers determine the skills necessary beyond those that are evident on a resume. The questions often begin with phrases such as “Tell me about a time...” or “Describe a situation where...” To successfully navigate a behavioral interview, you must be prepared to discuss specific examples of your behavior that demonstrate the qualities the employer seeks.
3. **Demonstrate Your Skills.** Behavioral interview questions give you the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform the duties and job responsibilities required for a position. It is important to develop your answers and refine your delivery of behavioral interview questions before you interview. See #10 on page 14.

### D. TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

At times, employers may use telephone interviews to identify, recruit and screen candidates in order to narrow the applicant pool and limit the number of in-person interviews. Telephone interviews can also minimize expenses associated with interviewing out-of-town candidates. From a candidate’s perspective, you should conduct the telephone interview in the same manner as an in-person interview, with a focus on certain additional factors. For example, you should:

- Keep your résumé at your disposal for easy reference.
- Have a pen and paper ready to take notes.
- Answer the call in an area that is quiet and without interruptions.
- Preferably do not use a cellular phone to avoid dropped calls or misunderstandings; however, if you must use a cell phone, make sure that it is fully charged and in an area that has good reception.
- Refrain from eating, drinking, smoking or chewing gum during the interview.
- Have a list of accomplishments and points to bring up accessible to review.
- Enunciate clearly and slowly and show enthusiasm for the job in your voice.
- Thank the interviewer at the close of the conversation and ask if it would be possible to meet in person.
- Follow-up with a thank you letter.

## E. VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Video interviews via Skype or other video conferencing solutions are becoming a common method for screening applicants, particularly for out-of-town candidates. Generally, and to the extent applicable, all rules of a standard interview apply to video interviews including follow-up with a thank you letter. Do not follow-up with an employer via Skype chat.

Additional considerations for conducting successful video interviews include:

1. **Appearance.** Looking the part is extremely important when conducting video interviews. Follow the guidelines discussed in Section III.A.5 of this Guide regarding appearance, and take special care to avoid patterns or colors that may be distracting on video. If you are conducting the interview from the comfort of your home, you may be tempted to take short cuts in this area such as dressing professionally solely from the waist up. Unfortunately, mistakes like this are incredibly common among stories of video interviews gone wrong. Dressing in interview attire from head to toe for video interviews will help you best simulate an in-person interview and put you in the professional mindset necessary to conduct a successful video interview.
2. **Environment.** Ensure that your environment is a well-lit, quiet, and businesslike setting, preferably in a room with a door. Aim light at yourself from the front. Your environment should be free of clutter and personal items to avoid distraction and negative perceptions about your organizational skills. Take note of what is behind you, as this is what the interviewer will see. Blank or neutral backgrounds are best, with an organized desk. Inform others in your environment of your interview and take precautions to avoid background noise such as sudden interruptions, barking dogs, or beeping from notifications on your computer screen.
3. **Demeanor.** As the person being interviewed, it is up to you to engage the interviewer during an interview. This may be a bit more challenging during a video interview so you may be less inclined to smile reflexively and engage your interviewer with facial expressions and nonverbal communication. Thus, it is essential during a video interview to convey enthusiasm by smiling, speaking clearly, and using vocal variety. Getting too comfortable or slipping into a monotone voice often used when speaking by telephone can have a negative effect on your interview. Interviewers may conclude that your lack of enthusiasm indicates a lack of interest in the position. Be sure to keep energy in your voice and make eye contact with the interviewer. Look straight into the camera when you are talking, and avoid the common mistake of looking at your image on the computer screen.
4. **Technology.** As with your email address, your Skype username should be professional. Your username will help form the employer's first impressions of you as a candidate. Be sure to test your equipment well in advance of your interview time. You do not want to realize your internet connection is down a few minutes before your interview. Despite your best efforts, technical glitches may arise in the form of a weak internet connection or interference. If the problem persists, bring it up to avoid miscommunication and the possibility of providing inaccurate answers during your interview. Remain positive and

use the opportunity to demonstrate how you might handle a challenging workplace situation. Perhaps offering to stop the call and redial would demonstrate your problem-solving abilities. Another technology-related point is to be mindful of slight transmission delays that often occur when using video. To avoid speaking over your interviewer pause to ensure that your interviewer has finished speaking before you speak.

5. **Practice.** Practice using the video technology before your interview with a friend, colleague or classmate. On the day of the interview, warm up your voice before the interview by having a conversation with someone, especially if you have an early morning interview.

## II. THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

### A. INTERVIEW PREPARATION

1. **The Employer, the Interviewer and You.** You should set aside a significant amount of time well in advance of your interview date to prepare for a successful interview. Skimming an employer's brochure or website five minutes before your interview does not constitute effective preparation. You should:
  - a. *Learn About The Employer.* Do research, research and more research. Specifically, who is the potential employer? If a **law firm**, then familiarize yourself with the employer's size, structure and areas of practice, community involvement, prominent clients, high-profile cases and current news items. Other information that you may want to research is the employer's diversity policy, the employer's *pro bono* policy and salary ranges. If a **public interest organization**, research the organization, its mission and goals. Visit its website. Public interest employers want individuals who are passionate and committed to public service and their organizations' goals. If a **government entity**, learn about the summer intern program and visit its website as well. The following are sources of information about employers:
    - The employer's website, résumé, brochure or annual report;
    - Internet searches, including Google, LexisNexis and Westlaw;
    - NALP Directory (<http://www.nalpdirectory.com/>);
    - Martindale Hubbell Directory (<http://www.martindale.com/>);
    - FindLaw for Legal Professionals (<http://careers.findlaw.com/>);
    - *Chambers Associate* (<http://www.chambers-associate.com/>);
    - *The American Lawyer* (<http://www.americanlawyer.com/>).
  - b. *Learn About The Interviewer(s).* It is recommended that you review the respective biographies of lawyers who work with the employer (especially the person(s) who will interview you), including where they went to school (undergraduate and law), their practice areas, any publications, professional affiliations, how long he/she has been practicing, etc. If you are returning for a callback interview, ask the recruiting coordinator for the names of the attorneys with whom you will be meeting.

- c. ***Learn about Yourself.*** What do you want the employer to know about you? After carefully reviewing the employer's information, make a list of accomplishments or strengths that make you attractive to this particular employer. Evaluate your strengths, and *think of specific examples that will illustrate those strengths to the employer.* In doing so, do not limit yourself to legal job experience. Many skills developed in non-legal jobs are transferable to the legal profession. However, you must be able to articulate your qualifications in a convincing manner. Rather than telling the employer "I am smart," prove your intellectual ability by focusing on your academic performance and discussing the article you are writing for law review. "I work well under pressure" may not get the point across as well as "I presently work full-time, attend law school in the evenings and am in the top 10% of my class." Similarly, you may choose to emphasize your potential for rainmaking by discussing a previous job in public relations, membership in various professional associations or a position in student government. You also should know your résumé, and be prepared to answer questions about any item on it.
2. **What to Bring to an Interview.** Gather any application materials the employer has requested, such as a writing sample, a transcript or a list of references. Proofread your writing sample carefully. If you are submitting a memorandum from your legal writing class, make corrections as suggested by your legal writing instructor. You can also have one of the law school's Academic Achievement Program Writing Dean's Fellows review your writing sample. See <http://www.law.miami.edu/academic-achievement-program/writing-deans-fellows.php?op=4> for additional information about the Dean's Fellows. Have extra copies of your résumé. Finally, do not bring any unnecessary items into the interview. For example, if you are reading the newspaper while you wait for the interviewer, do not bring it into the interview.
3. **Develop an Agenda and Get Ready to Bat.** Take charge of your own interview. Prepare a five-point agenda before you enter the room, highlighting key points about yourself that you want the interviewer to remember. Such points may include that: 1) you are an excellent writer (be sure to discuss the motion to dismiss you drafted last summer); 2) a foreign language skill (if relevant to the employer); 3) you ran the New York Marathon last year (to show drive and discipline); 4) you are able to work without extensive supervision (with specific examples); or 5) you are committed to a particular city (i.e., family ties, previous work experience in that city, etc.).
4. **Practice, Practice, Practice.** Few people are "naturals" at interviewing. Since interviewing is generally an art, the more you do it, the better at it you will become. However, there are certain steps that you can take to feel more comfortable prior to your actual interview:
  - a. Sign up for a mock interview with an advisor from the Career Development Office ("CDO"). You also can ask an experienced interviewee (perhaps a 3L or an attorney you are already working for) to take the time to interview you and give you feedback.
  - b. Practice your responses to common interview questions with friends, family or in front of the mirror. You can even videotape yourself and then watch to see mannerisms and other things you may not be aware of doing (i.e., are you talking

with your hands too much, making funny facial expressions, looking around and not at the interviewer?).

- c. The tape recorder is another valuable resource. Listen to your voice and tone. Also, listen to your answers. The most important thing you can do is to directly *answer the interviewer's question.*

## **B. BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

1. **Be Thorough.** Preparation for a behavioral interview is the same but you will have to be thorough in preparing for behavioral interviews. Your job is to anticipate what skills the interviewer will be looking for, and prepare specific examples that can demonstrate that you possess these skills. You will need to research the employer so that you have an idea of the skills they are seeking and be ready to give specific examples of those skills in the answers you give.
2. **Read Between the Lines.** Individual job descriptions will often spell out some of what the employer is seeking, however, read the listing carefully. Much more is said if you read between the lines. When no posting is available, consider the skills that employers generally seek in their employees then identify past behaviors that demonstrate those skills. Start thinking about examples from each of your past jobs and how you can use them to answer the questions.
3. **Utilize the STAR Method.** The “STAR” method is an ideal way to answer behavioral interview questions. Here are the steps for using the STAR method in behavioral interviews:
  - a. **SITUATION** – briefly tell what the challenge was – *Define the situation or "set the stage."* Example: “Assigned as an account manager to take over an underperforming sales territory – #92 out of 100 districts.” “Asked to work on a family law case where multiple jurisdictions were involved.”
  - b. **TASK** – briefly tell what you had to do to meet the challenge – *Identify the key objective / task to be performed.* Example: “To increase sales 20% and boost customer base 10%.” “Costs in the division were steadily rising, and I was asked to find ways to reduce them.” “Reviewed the facts in the case and researched case law in each jurisdiction with an emphasis on the home state.”
  - c. **ACCOMPLISHMENT** – what you actually did – *Describe the action you took or initiated. This response should illustrate the specific skills you used in completing the task. If you were part of a team, describe what you contributed.* Example: “Conducted a market analysis and customer service survey; developed a business plan that focused on value-added service, sales incentives, and referral bonus program to benefit customers; and rolled out a three-level marketing strategy to implement the plan.” “Summarized each case, applied the facts and presented my findings to partner. Drafted a memo for the court.”
  - d. **RESULT** – briefly tell what the ultimate benefit to the company was – *Summarize the outcome.* Examples: “District ranking improved to #9 in the region within a year; store sales increased 37%; net profit margin per sale

improved 7%; and commercial customer base grew 18%.” “My business plan was adapted for use by all account managers in the region.” “Earned Account Manager of the Year Award.” “The partner submitted my memorandum to the court and the Judge granted in our favor.”

***Remember:*** For every skill and accomplishment you state, you must have an example to back it up!

#### 4. **Sample Behavioral Skills.**

Accountability	Gathering Information	Persistence
Accurate Listening	Giving Compliments	Persuasion
Acknowledging	Goal Setting	Planning
Assertiveness	Honesty	Prioritizing
Asking for Help	Improvisation	Problem Solving
Asking Permission	Initiative	Relating to Others
Attention to Detail	Integrity	Respect
Avoiding Trouble with Others	Interpersonal Skills	Self Esteem
Commitment	Interviewing	Self-Improvement
Communication	Joining In on Events	Self-Management
Concentration	Leadership	Sensitivity
Creativity	Listening	Stress Management
Customer Focus	Management	Tact
Decision Making	Motivation	Teaching
Empathy	Negotiation	Teamwork
Eye Contact	Nonverbal Communication	Time Management
Flexibility	Oral Communication	Training
Following Directions	Organization	Trust
	Patience	Written Communication

#### C. **PRESENTATION**

1. **First Impressions are Important.** As in personal interactions, first impressions are important in professional meetings. Although some interviewers will not make an immediate judgment (except in cases of blatant improper dress or inappropriate and unprofessional behavior), many will make a first impression within the first few minutes of an interview. So, be prepared to impress immediately.
2. **Focus on the Positives.** Avoid bringing up weaknesses or negatives. Put a positive spin on everything that may be considered a negative. Remember, the employer is trying to find out if you have what it takes to get the job done. Your answers should be confident and unapologetic.
3. **Sell Yourself.** The primary question you should focus on is “Why should this employer hire me?” Most people are uncomfortable touting their own accomplishments, credentials, achievements and honors, but you must do this in an interview. Take opportunities to market yourself to your interviewer. For example, if asked a question such as “Tell me about yourself,” discuss 3-4 things you want the employer to know about you.

4. **Always Maintain a Professional Demeanor.** Never let your guard down, even if you feel very comfortable with the interviewer. Professionalism is key.

### III. THE PHASES OF AN INTERVIEW

#### A. GREETING

The greeting sets the tone for the remainder of the interview process. Therefore, there are certain rules which should be followed from the onset:

1. **Be Punctual.** Plan to arrive 10 minutes in advance so that the employer does not have to wait for you, and also so that you have an opportunity to focus your thoughts before you are required to speak. There is almost no excuse for being late that will shake the poor initial impression, unless you have been in an accident or are in the hospital. Get detailed directions to the employer's office - you do not want to be late for an interview! On the other hand, if you arrive too early, then simply wait to enter the employer's office until approximately 5-10 minutes prior to the interview time.
2. **Offer a Firm Handshake.** It is important that you offer the interviewer a firm and professional handshake.
3. **Wait to Sit Down.** Wait until the interviewer invites you to sit down before you sit or choose a specific seat.
4. **Pay Attention to Grooming.** First, be careful with using too much perfume or cologne. A clean and mild scent is recommended, if anything at all.

*Men:* Make sure that your hair is neatly trimmed and combed, and that your face is clean-shaven, except for a well-trimmed beard or mustache.

*Women:* Err on the conservative side when deciding about makeup, jewelry, hairstyle and fingernail polish.

5. **Dress for Success.** Because you hope to convince the employer that you will be a worthy representative of the organization, your appearance is extremely important. If you dress unprofessionally, the interviewer may assume that you will look that way when you meet with clients or appear in court. As an applicant, err on the conservative side. Strive to appear neat, clean and fresh.

*Men:* In most cases, a well-cut black, navy or charcoal business suit, with a crisp, white dress shirt and tie is appropriate. Stick with well-shined black or brown lace shoes or dress loafers (and socks).

*Women:* If you choose to wear a suit skirt, make sure that the skirt maintains a conservative length. Since both pantsuits and skirt suits are considered professional, choose whichever makes you the most comfortable. Opt for leather or suede pumps, avoiding casual sandals or open-toed shoes, even in the summer. Try to wear stockings.

6. **Smile and Establish Eye Contact.** Eye contact is extremely important, especially in the legal profession. Usually, one can determine a person's credibility and honesty by looking into his or her eyes. Refrain from looking down, to the side or at the ceiling, as

an interviewer may decide that you are trying to hide something and are not being forthright with your responses.

7. **Be Conscious of Mannerisms and Posture.** Be careful not to fidget or use your hands excessively or squirm in your chair. Sit up straight and do not slouch.
8. **Finally, Relax.** Since you should have already prepared thoroughly, enter the interview in a relaxed state.

## **B. DISCUSSION**

During this phase of the interview, try to remember that it is simply an exchange of ideas and information between yourself and another human being. It is a conversation between two people in order to determine, **from both sides**, whether this will be a good fit or not.

1. **Maintain Eye Contact.** The earlier rule applies throughout the various stages of the interview.
2. **Refrain From Bashing Yourself and Others.** Your focus should be on the experiences and skills you obtained from a position, rather than about any personal dissatisfaction with yourself, a previous employer or school. Never bash or badmouth your school, a professor, a particular job or a previous employer.
3. **Know Your Résumé.** Be prepared to talk about everything on your résumé and in your writing sample (if submitted).
4. **Be Assertive-Not Arrogant & Do Not Dominate an Interview.** Assertiveness and decisiveness are admirable qualities to convey, but arrogance and self-absorption are not. The line between them is thin. Try to strike a balance between providing thorough information so that the interviewer may evaluate you, and having a pleasant two-sided conversation. Be assertive but not arrogant, engaging but not overwhelming, relaxed but serious and professional.
5. **Be Upbeat, Positive and Enthusiastic. Show Your PERSONALITY.** No matter what your qualifications are, you will not interview effectively unless you establish a positive rapport with the interviewer at the outset. To do this, maintain a sincere and enthusiastic demeanor. Be an active listener, responding to the interviewer by occasionally nodding your head or interjecting relevant information when appropriate.
6. **Do Not Interrupt the Interviewer.** In your nervousness or anxiousness to make a point, do not speak over the interviewer or interject in the middle of his or her dialogue. Also, keep in mind that there may be interruptions during an interview. If the interviewer needs to take a call, answer a question, or even rush the interview somewhat, rather than be frustrated or disappointed, quietly observe and make a mental note of the organization's atmosphere.
7. **Do Not Raise Personal Issues or Crises.** A potential employer does not want to hear excuses for problem areas in your résumé or background. The employer wants to see that you have thought through both the question and the situation itself. Focus on the positive.

8. **Deal With Difficult Questions and Be Responsive, Not Evasive.** Be ready to deal with tough questions. Questions such as "*Did you receive an offer from the firm you worked for last summer*" or "*What did you like least about your first year of law school*" can catch you off guard if you're not prepared for them. If asked about grades and your GPA is less than stellar, simply acknowledge the question (respond quickly and distinctively), and quickly move to a strength, rather than a weakness. Be responsive and then indicate perhaps that your GPA has consistently improved each semester, or that you received an "A" in LComm. Questions such as "*Did you enjoy your first year of law school*" or "*Where do you see yourself in five years*" should not provoke a one-word answer. Rather, answer each question by relating an anecdote that highlights a skill or a quality you possess. Take the time to review the questions in Section V below and practice your answers ahead of time.
9. **DO NOT Bring up Salary Before the Interviewer Does.** Ask relevant questions about opportunities for advancement, not money. Salary should not become an issue until a firm offer has been made.

## C. CLOSING

1. **Thank the Interviewer.** Shake hands and always thank the interviewer for his or her time.
2. **Ask When You Can Expect to Hear Back.** You may re-emphasize your interest in the position, and inquire about the timeline for making a final decision.
3. **Request a Business Card.** Prior to leaving, be sure to ask for a business card from each interviewer. This helps you to remember names and proper spellings, and will assist you in the future when writing thank you notes.
4. **Take Notes.** Immediately following each interview, take notes on specific information discussed and/or general impressions of the potential employer. This will assist you when writing thank you notes, and also when making a final decision.

## IV. AFTER THE INTERVIEW

### A. EVALUATE THE EMPLOYER

Take notes immediately after each interview. Record your impressions of the organization, as well as the people you met, while they are fresh in your mind. Also, make a note of any additional information the employer requested, such as a writing sample or a transcript. When you are weighing your options, be sure to revisit your strengths, your lifestyle preference and your long-term goals. If you can think on your feet and enjoy people and conflict, a litigation firm may be the place for you. If you prefer to research independently and enjoy writing, appellate practice may be more appropriate. If you went to law school because you wanted to help underprivileged groups, an advocacy organization or civil rights firm may be the place for you. With respect to lifestyle choices, do you need flexibility in your life? Do you want to have children (or do you have them already) and expect to take an active role in their lives? An employer that requires constant travel and high billable hours may not be right for you.

## **B. WRITE THANK YOU NOTES**

A thank you letter reaffirms your interest in the position and expresses your appreciation to the interviewer for taking the time to consider you. If you interview with more than one person, send individualized (not the same) thank you letters to each person with whom you met. You may view samples of thank you notes in the CDO Cover Letter and Thank You Letter Guide in the CDO Resource Library or online at <http://www.law.miami.edu/career-development-office/pdf/2014/cover-letter-thank-you-letter-guide.pdf>.

## **C. FOLLOW-UP WITH THE EMPLOYER**

Occasionally, an interviewer indicates he or she will get back to you within a given time frame that is not met. A follow-up phone, letter or e-mail (if appropriate) can clarify the status of your application and can demonstrate your continued interest in the position. Of course, repeated and persistent telephone calls or e-mails will cause the opposite effect and likely lessen or negate your chances for an offer.

## **V. QUESTIONS DURING AN INTERVIEW**

### **A. QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED BY THE INTERVIEWER**

#### **1. Personal:**

- How would you describe yourself?
- Why do you think you will succeed as a lawyer?
- Why should we hire you? Is there any reason why we shouldn't hire you?
- When are you available to begin working?
- What are you looking for in a firm/corporation/nonprofit organization?
- Do you prefer to work independently or with supervision?
- Is there a question you came prepared to answer that we did not ask you?

#### **2. Law School:**

- Why did you decide to go to law school?
- Why did you choose the University of Miami School of Law?
- What was your favorite class? Least favorite?
- Who is your favorite professor? Why?
- Should we be concerned about your class rank/grades?
- Why are you not on a journal?
- What activities did you participate in?
- Are you involved in any activities outside of law school?
- Do you find it hard to manage your time between school and work?
- Has law school prepared you for the practice of law? If so, how?
- Have your ideas of being a lawyer changed since law school?
- If you weren't in law school, what would you be doing right now?

3. **Previous Jobs:**
- How would a previous employer describe you?
  - How did you get your last job?
  - What did you gain from that experience?
  - How do you function in a fast-paced work environment?
  - Describe the ideal and least effective supervisors you had in the past.
  - What problems have you encountered in previous jobs?
  - What is the most interesting job you ever had?
4. **Commitment:**
- Have you decided what city you would ultimately like to settle down in?
  - Why did you sign up for an interview with this firm/organization?
  - What do you know about our firm/organization?
  - Who else are you interviewing with?
  - Why do you want to live in City X?
  - Do you have family in City X?
  - What do you consider to be a positive work environment?
  - What practice area do you see yourself in?
  - Are you interested in doing *pro bono* work?
  - What are your salary expectations?
5. **Goals:**
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
  - If you weren't in law school, what would you be doing right now?
  - What long-term satisfaction do you expect to obtain from a legal career?
  - How do you expect to balance work and personal life?
  - What personal goals are you seeking through a legal career?
6. **Ethics:**
- How do you feel about lawyers advertising or soliciting clients?
  - Is there any type of work you would not feel comfortable doing at our firm?
  - How do you think your ethical standards compare with others in your law school class?
7. **Public Interest/Government Employers:**  
(in addition to the questions above, these employers may raise the following):
- How do you expect to manage your loan burden?
  - Can you commit this amount of years to this organization?
  - Are you interviewing in the private sector?
  - How committed are you to serving the underprivileged?
  - Why do you want to serve the poor?
  - The vast majority of our clients speak Spanish. Are you fluent in Spanish?
  - What hours do you expect to work here?
  - What are your long-term plans?

**8. Public Defender's Offices and State Attorney's Offices:**

In addition to the questions above, these employers tend to ask questions regarding knowledge of criminal law and procedure, ethics and law. They provide at least one hypothetical situation and might ask candidates to deliver an opening or closing statement. They want to know that students can think on their feet.

**9. Offensive/Illegal Questions:**

Certain questions, such as relating to family background or national origin, marital status or plans, age, disabilities or sexual orientation are illegal; others are offensive or inappropriate. Unfortunately these kinds of questions may be sometimes asked. Spend some time thinking about how you might want to respond if you were to encounter them. Please consult your CDO advisor with any questions.

**10. Behavioral:**

- Tell me about a specific time when you remained calm during a stressful situation.
- What do you consider your greatest weakness? Strength?
- How do you work under pressure?
- How do you handle a challenge?
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about a time when you went beyond the call of duty to ensure that a job got done.
- Give me two examples of ways you minimize stress in your life.
- Describe a time in which you were faced with stresses which tested your coping skills.
- How do you handle a tight deadline?
- Everyone has failed to meet a deadline at one time or another, when has this happened to you?
- What was the biggest mistake you ever made and what did you learn from it?
- What is the greatest obstacle you have faced in your life?
- What is your biggest failure?
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Describe a specific time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Have you been in a situation where you didn't have enough work to do?
- Give an example of how you worked on a team.
- When working on a team, what role do you take, and why?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your actions by understanding their individual needs or values.
- Have you handled a difficult situation with a supervisor? How?
- Tell me about a time you successfully worked with a difficult co-worker to complete a task.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a very upset customer (client/classmate).
- Tell me about a time when you had to speak up in a setting to ensure your opinion was heard.

- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
- What method do you use to schedule your time?
- Give me an example of a time when your schedule was interrupted by unforeseen circumstances. How did you handle it?
- Describe your writing sample and why you chose to submit that piece.
- Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make within the last year.

## **B. QUESTIONS YOU MAY ASK**

Part of maintaining an upbeat and engaging tone will require you to ask a few questions as well. Do not, however, shoot from the hip. Carefully select questions ahead of time to avoid giving the impression that you did not do your homework, or that you are not interested in working with that particular employer. Questions such as "*What are the firm's practice areas?*" or "*Do you ever work weekends?*" will not be well received. Some sample questions are:

- Does the summer program have a mentor system?
- How are assignments distributed during the summer?
- What type of supervision and evaluation are given to a summer clerk?
- How many participants does the firm/organization/corporation expect to have in its summer program?
- Are offers extended by a particular practice group?
- What percentage of summer clerks is typically offered positions with the firm/organization/company?
- How fast are you growing?
- What are the criteria for advancement as an associate?
- Are attorneys involved in outside activities (local bar associations, *pro bono*, etc.)?
- What is your *pro bono* policy?
- How are new attorneys trained? Are there formal in-house training programs?
- Are new associates encouraged to attend outside seminars?
- How soon does a new attorney have direct client contact?
- What are the firm's expectations for future growth?
- Why did you (the interviewer) decide to associate yourself with this firm/organization/company?
- Describe a typical day for you.
- How would you describe the structure of the firm/organization?

## **C. QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD NOT ASK**

Any question that you could answer yourself through simple research should not be asked. Do not raise problem areas in your applications by posing questions that can wait until an offer has been made (i.e., "*I'm getting married in a year - is it ok if I take a two-week honeymoon to Paris?*"). You should also avoid asking questions about salary, benefits, billable hours (i.e. how hard do you work?) or vacation and leave policy at this juncture.

## **VI. TOP 12 REASONS PEOPLE DO NOT GET HIRED**

1. Candidate demonstrates a lack of integrity or honesty in person or on paper.
2. Candidate's application materials contain grammatical or typographical errors.
3. Candidate lacks motivation, enthusiasm, does not answer the questions asked and appears generally apathetic.
4. Candidate lacks genuine interest in the city or the employer.
5. Candidate is neither articulate, nor engaging and fails to make eye contact.
6. Candidate is unprepared, and lacks basic knowledge about the employer and/or the interviewer.
7. Candidate is arrogant and more focused on the money and prestige than on the work expected of him or her.
8. Candidate exhibits irresponsible behavior, is too "laid back," or reveals tendency to "goof off."
9. Candidate does not handle criticism well and is quick to criticize or blame others (such as a former employer) rather than accept responsibility.
10. Candidate lacks social awareness or knowledge of current events.
11. Candidate lacks confidence or poise.
12. Candidate has a wimpy handshake.

**Good Luck Interviewing!**

