

University of California, Berkeley

School of Law

The Art of Interviewing:
An Interactive Workshop
November 2012



Today's Agenda

- I. PowerPoint presentation: types of interviews and top tips for effective interview preparation and follow-up (40 minutes)
- II. Q&A session (10 minutes)
- III. Mock interview “rounds” within small groups (50 minutes)
- IV. Summary discussion and advice (10 minutes)

Today's Key Theme:

Practice Makes Perfect!



It is never too soon to begin preparing for interviews.

Key Considerations

Qualities Employers Seek in LL.M. Candidates

- Demonstrable ties to the country in which the employer has business interests
- Specialization in a specific area of law
- Excellent educational background
- Relevant work experience
- Good command of English

With practice, you will be able to clearly articulate during an interview the unique skills and qualities that make you a great candidate for your target employer.

Key Considerations

Factors that Determine Successful Interviewing

- Strength of your resume
- English-speaking skills
- Preparation for the interview
- Professional appearance
- Professional demeanor
- Polite follow-up



Types of Interviews

Informational Interviews

- 15-20 minute brief discussion over the phone or in person; important for networking; goal is to make connections and gather information.

Screening Interviews

- 20-30 minute introductory interview with one or two interviewers over the phone, in person, or at a job fair; goal is to get a call-back interview.

Call-Back Interviews

- Typically last 2-3 hours (may include lunch, dinner, or a reception – less formal, but still part of the interview) with 4 or more attorneys; takes place at the employer's office; goal is to get an offer.

**Research, preparation, and rehearsal
are important for any interview: you
only have one chance to make a great
first impression!**



The “Rule of 3”

- 3 points to convey about your background, interests, and qualifications during the interview... no matter what!
- 3 questions to ask each interviewer at the end of each interview.
- 3 types of materials to bring to each interview: fresh copies of your resume, English writing sample, and transcripts, clearly organized (paper clips) in a folder or briefcase.

Preparing for an Interview

Step One: Do Your Research

- **Research Yourself:** Know every line of your resume; be prepared to describe your career path and how your background, skills, and interests make you a great candidate (to focus, remember the “Rule of Three”).
- **Research the Employer:** Use CDO resources and the firm’s Web site to learn more about the firm’s structure, culture, practice areas, offices, etc.
- **Research the Interviewer(s):** Use LinkedIn, Martindale, and the interviewer’s biography on the firm Web site (if available) to become familiar with his/her background and practice area, and to learn whether you have a professional affiliation in common.

Preparing for an Interview

Step Two: Practice, Practice, Practice!

- Consider the sample interview questions in this presentation and other CDO resources; prepare bullet point outline of your responses.
- Rehearse your answers in front of a mirror or a classmate.
- Schedule a mock interview with a CDO career advisor to receive constructive feedback on your interview performance.

Remember: YOU ARE NOT ALONE!



Your CDO career
advisors are here to help
you through every step
of the interview process!

The Most Common LL.M. Interview Questions

- Tell me about yourself (in 30 seconds).
- Why are you interested in [employer]/[practice area]/[office location]?
- Why did you decide to study in the United States?
- Why did you choose to pursue an LL.M. degree?
- What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
- Can you describe a complex or challenging project and how you handled it?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What would you like to know about [employer]?

“Do You Have Any Questions for Us?”

At the end of most interviews, the interviewers will ask whether you have any questions for them. This is the perfect opportunity to learn more about the organization, the practice group, and the interviewer's background and expectations!

Be Prepared: Many candidates fail to rehearse these questions, and they are caught off-guard during interviews (which reflects poorly on their overall presentation)!

Sample Questions to Ask an Interviewer

- Why did you decide to join [employer]?
- What do you enjoy most about your practice?
- Is there anything you would change about your practice?
- How do you envision your practice group developing in the next 5 years?
- How are work assignments allocated to international associates?
- What is the evaluation process for associates?
- What skills do you think are most important for this position?
- When do you expect to make a hiring decision?

How to Handle Difficult Questions

- It is perfectly acceptable to pause briefly to consider an answer.
- To create time to think about your answer, say “that is a good question,” or repeat the question out loud while considering a response.
- If it is a question about a weakness or a difficult situation, think about how you “fixed” the problem or came up with a solution. Avoid focusing on your feelings. Your goal is to seem self-aware, proactive, and a problem solver.
- Think critically about your background: anticipate difficult questions and practice your responses beforehand (mock interviews).

Topics to Avoid During the Interview Process

- Salary and/or bonus expectations
- Vacation policy
- Hours expectations
- Attitude: “What can you do for me?”

While these issues may be important to your decision, they should be raised only after you have received an offer. If you have any questions about these sensitive matters, please speak with a CDO career advisor.

Tips on Making a Good Impression

- Be on time (10-15 minutes early)
- Dress in formal interview attire
- Be courteous to everyone you meet
- Maintain eye contact with the interviewer
- Provide a firm handshake upon meeting
- Smile and remain positive and enthusiastic during the interview
- Sit in an attentive posture
- Do not interrupt the interviewer or dominate the interview
- Be aware of your body language
- Be consistent with your answers
- Stay positive: do not speak negatively about a former employer or school; avoid speaking about personal issues
- Remember the “Rule of 3”
- Turn off your cell phone

What to Wear to an Interview

- Professionalism is the key! Wait until you have the position to display your stylishness.
- Suits should be in a dark, neutral color (gray, navy blue, or black); shoes should be conservative (no peep-toes) and comfortable.
- For women, a skirt suit with neutral pantyhose is the most conservative attire (skirt should be no more than 2 inches above the knee); a conservative pant suit is also acceptable.
- For men, wear a conservative tie; socks should complement the suit and shoes.
- For more guidance:
<http://careers.berkeleylawblogs.org/2008/08/19/ocip-attire#more-16>

Following Up After an Interview

Thank You Letters:

- Send within 24 hours of your interview to all of the interviewers with whom you met (ensure you have not misspelled their names).
- Tailor your letter (no duplicates!) for each interviewer: think back to your interview topics and the questions you asked them.
- Error-free (writing sample), polite, and concise!

Reasonable Expectation for Response Time:

- If you do not hear a response from the employer within two weeks, it is acceptable to reach out to the recruitment contact to reiterate your interest in the opportunity and to inquire about the timeline for making a hiring decision.

Sample Thank You Letter

Dear Mr./Mrs. [Name]:

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me yesterday. I enjoyed our discussion about the firm's Corporate Department, and I appreciated hearing your perspective about the skills that are most important for a junior associate on your team. I am confident that I possess the requisite research, writing, and communication skills to become an effective associate. I was also interested to learn about your representation of Latin American clients. I would be eager to contribute my Spanish language skills and prior legal training to your practice.

I remain very enthusiastic about an associate position with your firm. If I can provide you with any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,
Joachim Student

Further Resources ...

- **Make a counseling/mock interview appointment with an LL.M. Career Advisor**
 - Sign up for an appointment using the online Appointment Scheduler: <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/231.htm>
 - When prompted to enter a username and password, enter “cdo” for the username and “cdoaccess” for the password
 - If you have not done so already, create an Appointment Scheduler account using the “Enrollment” tab
- **Consult the extensive “Effective Interviewing” guidance on the CDO Web site:** <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/8388.htm>
- **For videoconference interview logistics, consult** [http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Videoconference_Interviewing\(1\).pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/Videoconference_Interviewing(1).pdf)

Remember...

- If you have received an interview, the employer believes you are qualified for the position. The purpose of the interview process is to determine whether you are the best fit for the organization.
- An interview is a conversation (a polite, formal dialogue). You should appear engaged and interested throughout each interview, which you may demonstrate by providing tailored responses, asking well-considered questions, and displaying positive body language.
- Interviewing is truly an acquired skill. Practice will make you more confident in your skill and will lead to a more polished performance. Take advantage of the CDO resources and schedule a mock interview!

Any Questions?

Mock Interviews

Structure: Each “team” has 4 students, who will take turns playing the interviewer, the interviewee, or the observer. Each student has the opportunity to be interviewed and receive feedback during a 10-minute round. There will be 4 rounds.

Rules: Each mock interview lasts 5 minutes. When time is called, the interviewer must ask “What questions do you have for me?” The interviewee has 1 minute to ask questions. The remaining 4 minutes will be devoted to providing helpful feedback to the interviewee.

Feedback: Eye contact; facial expression; nervous gestures; responsive answers; length of response; uncomfortable pauses.