

# JOB SEARCH HANDBOOK

## Prepared for the State Bar of Arizona Task Force on Persons with Disabilities in the Legal Profession

### INTRODUCTION

This Handbook offers suggestions for disabled law students and attorneys in preparing for the job search. This Handbook offers suggestions and samples of a few of the approaches you can take in the search process. Your source of assistance should always include contacting your law school's Career Office.

The resume and cover letter are essential beginning steps in preparing for a job search and for the interview process. What is important to remember is the your personality, strengths, work ethic and enthusiasm must be reflected in the resume and cover letter, all within the bounds of accepted business practice.

### THE RESUME

#### *A. GENERAL INFORMATION*

Most employers receive hundreds of unsolicited resumes annually, and responses to an advertised position may number in the 1000's. To get the employer's attention in this very competitive job market requires a *perfect resume* - one that is easily read, well organized, visually attractive, and error free. The more professional the resume, the more professional you will appear. The resume and cover letter do not get you the job offer, but they will get you the interview.

The resume and cover letter each present different facets of the package you are trying to sell. The resume is an exact, factual list of objective information. The cover letter gives you an opportunity to incorporate the more personal aspects of who you are, what you can do for an employer and what you desire from a job. Remember, however, that a resume may be reviewed without a cover letter. Consequently, your resume must be able to stand on its own.

Writing a professional resume is rewarding! What better way to look back on what you have done with pride. It is the first step of your new career as an attorney!

#### *B. GETTING STARTED*

If you have never written a resume, or want to redo your resume with a fresh outlook, start by brainstorming. Divide a piece of paper into sections with headings such as: *Education, Legal Employment, Other Employment, Organizations, Community Service, Special Skills, etc.* Jot down anything that you think might fit into each category. Do not worry about what might actually go into your resume at this point. For example, your high school job at Taco Bell might not impress a Chief

Justice, but it will remind you that you worked all through school, an important point you might want to include in your cover letter.

Now it is time to cut out irrelevant material. If you are a second or third year student, or someone with substantial work experience, your task may be to *cut irrelevant material* from your list. Leave out undergraduate activities if they have little bearing on what you want to do, but leave in honors or leadership positions. If you have summer or part-time legal clerking experience that should always be included. The construction job you had in your junior year of college, or the summer you waited tables in a resort may be included if you are short on legal-type experience, but may be shortened to type of job and dates to show work ethic.

As a 1L, with no legal experience, you must draw on what you have to date, such as: college activities, important papers and projects, relevant course work related to job you are applying for, and work experience, to show work ethic and responsibility.

### ***C. SOME COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT TO INCLUDE ON A RESUME***

*Should I include my grades?* There are differing views on whether to include grades on a resume. If your grades are in the top third, the answer is always yes. If your grades are below the top third, the answer is maybe. Some resume experts feel that excluding grades is an indicator of lower grades than what you actually earned! They advise always including grades, and boosting them up with experience, as well as being able to explain them. Others advocate including low grades only if you can show *steady improvement* in later semesters. Still others counsel against including grades if they are not exceptional. *The final decision is yours to make.* If you feel uncomfortable with your grades and do not want to include them, then do not. Three final considerations:

- 1) Beware of inconsistency. If you are including your undergraduate GPA, but not your law school GPA, it will draw attention to the absence.
- 2) Some employers, such as judges, will have GPA requirements or require that you are in some top percentile. In these situations, you must be willing to divulge your grades, and the resume might be the best place to do it.
- 3) Sometimes your transcript reads better than your GPA, so include a copy of the transcript instead of listing your grades.

*Should I include my prior earnings or salary requirements?* Unless the employer specifically asks for this information, keep it out! If the employer does ask for this information, put it in the cover letter so you can make it clear whether you expect a similar salary in the future. You do not want to be excluded from an interview opportunity because of salary!

What kind of personal information should I include? Many non-legal resume books suggest setting forth an “objective” on the resume. A professional resume should not have an objective; that is the purpose of the cover letter. Include hobbies and interests only if they are uncommon and interesting or are related to the employment being sought. Employers are not impressed if you list as a hobby that you like to read, but they may be if you include that you are a marathon runner or a nationally ranked chess player. You should not put any information relating to your age, how many children you have, your marital status, your disability/ability status, or your religion. Do not include a photograph with your resume. A professional resume should be *factual*, not subjective, and should convey a *sense of purpose, focus, and interest* related to the job.

Should I include references on my resume? References may take up too much room on a resume; however, if you find yourself with room, include them. Always carry a neatly prepared page of names, addresses, email and phone numbers of three to five professional and scholastic references (with the connection to you noted, e.g., “Contracts Professor”) to the interview, and present it if asked. Of course, if references are requested from the beginning, this additional page should be sent along with the resume and other requested items. Always list your identifying information at the top of the page (name, address, phone, email). It goes without saying that your references should have been previously invited and should have agreed to serve as a professional reference.

#### **D. FORMATTING YOUR RESUME**

Now that you have the information that you want to include, you are ready to begin the actual writing. Always begin your resume with how you can be reached: name, address, telephone number(s) (home, work and pager, whatever you have) and e-mail address, at the top of the page. Include your full name with middle initial. Save nicknames for after you have the job!

There are two primary ways to organize a resume: chronologically or functionally. *Chronological resumes* are arranged by date with the most recent position listed first. Each position describes job title, employer’s name, dates of employment and a brief description of what you did at that job. This type of resume allows the reader to work backwards by date to analyze your work history. It is the most commonly accepted format, and one that gives the employer comfort when reviewing your employment history.

*Functional resumes* are organized by topics, such as Design, Accounting, Medical, Management, etc. Under each topic are examples of what you have done that supports that heading. The topic section is followed by a brief chronological list of dates and employers. This format is not commonly used and is not always as readable as a chronological resume, but may be more effective if you have had a *number of employers* in the same or similar fields, or have a number of years in the military, etc.

Your resume will include at least two major categories: Ed

#### **How to write job descriptions for your resume:**

- Do not write in the first person (I, me, my).
- Use action words that describe your experience in a professional manner (drafted, instead of wrote; responsibilities, instead of duties). See Appendix Three for a list of action verbs.
- Describe past work accomplishments in terms of skills used or learned (negotiation skills, contract analysis, public speaking).
- Present your most important skills and accomplishments. What results did you produce? (i.e., “reduced costs 18% in one year.”)

Undergraduate) and Employment History (Legal and Non-legal). Other categories may also include: Professional Associations, Publications, Special Skills (language proficiency, computer skills, etc.), Community Service, References (if they are not listed on a separate sheet). Begin with the category that reflects your most current status. If you are a *student* or a recent graduate, lead off with Education; if you are a *practitioner*, lead off with Professional Associations and Employment History.

Do not try to attract attention by printing your resume on colored paper or by using stylistic print. Use white, off-white, or light cream paper, and conservative print. An employer will compare your correspondence and resume with usual business standards.

The following are samples of the most common and appropriate type styles for resumes and business letters: Times New Roman, *italics*, **bold**, SMALL CAP; CG Times, *italics* & **bold**, SMALL CAP; Garamond, *italics*, **bold**, SMALL CAPS. Always use the same font size for the text of your resume, although the section headings and letterhead can be larger. Choosing the appropriate font size is important. If it is too small, the person reviewing your resume might miss a key piece of information. A 12-point font is the most appropriate font size for your resume and you should never use anything smaller than 10 point (which is not recommended).

## THE COVER LETTER

When you begin to look for a job, whether a temporary or permanent position, you may be responding to an advertisement, a job tip from a friend (networking), or your own research of firms or companies of interest (“cold calls”). The introduction, in all cases, is the cover letter.

An effective cover letter is the most important key to opening the door to an interview.
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While a resume is factual in nature, the cover letter expresses personality -- who you are, what you can do for the employer, and what you want in an employment situation. Let the cover letter show you are sincere and a hard worker. Convey a sense of purpose, an air of excitement about the firm or company and the position for which you are applying, as well as an understanding of the firm/company goals. A good cover letter lets you *personalize* the factual resume while directing attention to your accomplishments and the particular skills that are important to the position.

### A. PREPARING TO WRITE YOUR COVER LETTER

Unlike your resume, which is a completely objective factual presentation of your work experience, your cover letter should be written as a persuasive document. Imagine that your resume sits on top of a stack of 50 other application packets. How can you craft a cover letter that will convince an employer you are the very best person for the job?

Before you start writing, take an inventory of your strengths. Quickly list the most persuasive reasons why the firm should hire you from a group of 50 applicants. In addition to legal skills, knowledge and experiences, list other qualities that will make you an asset to the organization. This is a brainstorming exercise. What skills did you develop in your life before law school? What is your undergraduate degree and what talents did it develop? Would they be useful in the law? Work quickly, be creative, do not edit as you write.

## **B. CONTENTS OF A COVER LETTER**

**Always address a cover letter to a specific individual within the firm or company.** Do not use "canned" letters that are so general they could be going to anyone. You must put in the effort needed to sell your assets. Cover letters take time, but once your framework is built, they can easily be personalized for the specific position.

In general, each cover letter should include the following:

An introductory paragraph which addresses:

- 1) Your current status (e.g., first, second or third year or graduate);
- 2) Why you are writing (e.g., summer clerkship, associate position, request for information or advice);
- 3) Why you are specifically interested in this employer.

**If the position is out of town, always address the reasons for your interest in the new geographical area.** Employers are very reluctant to give serious consideration to anyone who does not express a knowledge of or specific interest in or connection to the area.

A paragraph or two selling yourself. The purpose is not to repeat the resume, but **to prove by example your skills and experiences outlined in the factual resume.** Refer the employer to your enclosed resume and take the opportunity to highlight one or two items that may be relevant to the particular needs of the employer, and expand on them. Give your work experiences some "life" by applying specific skills or accomplishments to the facts set forth in your resume. Also, let the employer know you have researched the office and have given some thought to how you see yourself fitting into the practice.

The closing paragraph will address the action you want them to take and the action you plan to take (e.g., "If I may, I would like to contact you next week to see if an interview can be arranged.") Indicate your flexibility in planning an interview, or even better, suggest a date(s) you will be in the area. Finally, express your thanks for the employer's consideration, and close.

## **C. HOW TO FORMAT A COVER LETTER**

**The Paper:** Use high quality 8 1/2" x 11" paper that either matches your *envelope* or your *resume*. Your letter does not have to match your resume, but it should match something. Limit your letter to one page with three to five paragraphs.

**Contact Information:** Place your information to the right or across the top of the page, either in block format or as a letterhead. Consider having letterhead printed, or create your own. Place the employer's address in a block on the left hand side of the page. Always address to a named *individual*, never "to whom it may concern." If the job announcement does not list an individual's name, then address the letter to the "Hiring Committee" or the correct committee's title. The salutation would then be "Dear Hiring Committee."

**Spacing:** *Double space* between the employer's address and the greeting/salutation. End the

salutation with a colon after the individual's name, not a comma ("Dear Mr. Smith:"). *Double space* between the greeting and the first paragraph and between each subsequent paragraph. Indenting the first sentence of a paragraph is the norm. *Single space* within the paragraphs. *Double space* between the last paragraph and the closing. The closing is typically middle right and formal (i.e., "Sincerely"). Space four times between the closing and your typed full name for your signature (although four is the standard amount, this is a good place to vary the spacing to allow yourself a little room if needed).

## WRITING SAMPLE AND OTHER REQUESTED DOCUMENTS

Employers *always* need a cover letter and resume. Other documents that may be requested are:

**Writing Sample:** Preferably something you have written during law school, such as a memorandum for a class, Moot Court brief, law review/journal article/note, or work product you did for an employer (brief, motion, memo, court order). Remember to ask permission, and redact identifying information unless the document is a public record.

Length is generally 5-7 pages, but could be lengthened if research is right on point for the type of employer. If your sample is 20 pages, excerpt a portion of the sample that shows your ability to formulate an argument, reason, and apply the law. Include a *cover sheet* that has your name, address, phone, who the writing sample was prepared for, and if excerpted, a brief review of facts.

**Transcript:** Unofficial is fine, unless official requested. Grade sheets will suffice for 1L's. Law school grades only, unless undergraduate requested.

**References:** 3-5 references, work- or school-related (not personal). Full name, employer, address, phone *and* connection to you (e.g. summer clerkship supervisor).

## THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Prior to interviewing, observe practice interviews or participate in mock interviews. In preparation, think about how you will answer questions that are likely to be asked such as: What do I enjoy doing/not doing? What are my strengths and weaknesses? What motivates me? What am I most proud of? What are my short-term and long-term goals? Actually writing out answers to some of these will help you to define the characteristics of positions to which you will be best suited. It will also help you to figure out what questions you will want to ask of the interviewer.

The night before an interview affects how you will appear the next day. Be sure to get plenty of rest. Lay out your clothes and extra copies of resumes, writing samples and reference lists so you do not have to hunt for them. Make your roommates or family aware of the importance of the interview so that you will be able to get uninterrupted sleep. In the morning, try to eat something so you have energy and to avoid a growling stomach. Do not smoke before or during an interview.

### A. *INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES*



- Learn about the firm or company *before the interview*. The more you know about the employer, the better able you are to show what role you will play in the firm and how you will meet their needs as an employee. If something has been *written* about the employer, you need to have read it before the interview! This is called *preparation*. Ask a question about material answered in their web materials, and you will be viewed as unprepared. You can obtain information about the firm or company from websites, annual reports, professional associations, periodicals, newspapers and magazine articles, and other lawyers in the area.
- Be sensible about your dress and grooming. Wear professional clothing that makes you feel good about yourself. Reflect what is *common business dress* for the particular city and practice area; *you want to look like you would fit in*. It is always better to be *overdressed* than underdressed.
- Shake hands firmly (but do not crush), look interviewer in the eye, and always address by Mr. or Ms. The interviewer will invite you to use a first name, if he or she desires.
- ***The 60-Second Rule***. All answers to questions should be answered in 30-60 seconds. If you go beyond 60 seconds, you are in danger of losing the listener. This is an excellent opportunity for you to show your first skill that you need in a courtroom - the ability to respond quickly and concisely to a judge.
- You must *sell yourself*, since no one else can do it for you. *Sell yourself to everyone, from the senior partner to the support staff*. You never know whose opinion will become a factor in the hiring decision.
- **Never talk salary or benefits** unless the employer brings it up. It will appear you are only interested in money, and not the job. A good rule of thumb is wait until the *employer* brings up the salary issue.
- *Be yourself*, answer questions honestly, sincerely, and to the point. Think about what the employer needs to know to hire you. Answer clearly and succinctly, and do not ramble. Suggested topics for applicant questions may include organizational history, what the employer envisions in the growth of the firm/company, leadership or management styles of the employer, the culture of the firm/company, trends impacting business, etc.
- There are good interviewers, and not-so-good interviewers. If you have the latter, just know that he/she is just as uncomfortable as you are. Therefore, try and make the interviewer comfortable, adjust to the interviewer's style, and you will probably be remembered.
- If the employer is in an out-of-town location, you must have a reason for wanting to live in that location (e.g., family members, college, etc.). Employers understand that a new job is stressful, and a new location only adds to that stress.
- Do not feel that you have to agree with everything that the interviewer says. Most interviewers recognize that they need somebody who has the ability to stand up for

himself, to disagree when appropriate, to show some self confidence. When you do disagree, however, do it with respect.

- Acknowledge your mistakes. If you have said something incorrect during the interview and later realize it, do not be afraid to correct yourself. If a question calls for discussing a situation in school or work where you made a mistake, admit it and explain.
- Be careful when talking about prior employers. “Bad-mouthing” your prior employer or divulging confidential information will make you appear untrustworthy. *Do Not Do It.*
- Do not be afraid to show enthusiasm for a subject. Similarly, no matter how many times you may have been asked a particular question, answer it as though it is the first time you have been asked.
- When you are asked if you have any questions, *have several ready*. Write your questions down. It will be perceived as a sign of preparedness and interest. An interview is stressful; do not rely on your memory.

## **B. COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED IN INTERVIEWS**

The following are examples of frequently asked questions. Think about how you would answer these questions and what kind of reaction an interviewer might have to your responses. If necessary, adjust your responses to avoid negative feedback. Remember to be honest and forthcoming, while remaining positive and forward-looking.

### ***“Tell me about yourself!”***

This is a common opener. It is, in fact, a broad "sell-me" invitation that should be *answered in 60 seconds or less*. They like to know where you are from, why you ended up in law school, etc. Impress the interviewer by expressing your knowledge of yourself. The employer will ask you about more specific points when you have finished your “broad brush.” Include special interests (tournament tennis, chess) and special work experience. Exclude information that may result in discrimination, such as marital status, family plans, young children, religion, etc.

### ***“Why are you interested in working for this firm/company/agency?”***

Emphasize your particular interest, and the reasons why your experiences and success (backed by facts, figures) are appropriate for this employer.

### ***“Why do you want to leave your present job?”***

One of the worst errors you can make is to respond to this question by expressing your negative feelings about your current or past employer. The interviewer will assume you cannot get along, you have a poor record, and that you will also speak badly or be disloyal to your new employer. One of two conditions prevail: you are either satisfied or unsatisfied in your present job. Obviously, being satisfied is the preferred condition, especially if you are happily employed and are merely investigating possibilities for even greater achievement. Being unsatisfied detracts



from your bargaining position. You can sell yourself more effectively when you associate with successful people, programs, and companies. Build the image of your current employer and you will be building your own image. Respond to this question as positively as possible by stating your interest in the challenges of this new job, and the opportunity for professional growth and development.

***“Why have you chosen this particular field?”***

Here is a perfect opportunity to impress the interviewer with your interest, knowledge of the field, and ability to perform successfully on the job. Explain that this type of work gives you a strong sense of purpose, identity, and accomplishment. Emphasize your directly applicable experiences and skills, and support your belief in yourself by presenting functional selling points.

***“Why should we hire you/how can you solve my problems?”***

This question is the most important question any interviewer can ask. Whether asked directly or indirectly, it is certainly uppermost in the interviewer's mind throughout the interview. It is a direct invitation from the interviewer to you to "sell me." If they do not ask the question, make sure they still get the answer.

***“What are your long-range goals?”***

This question is popular in interviewing because it gathers useful information about you: (1) maturity, foresight, and realistic outlook; (2) degree of preparation in career planning; (3) knowledge of yourself, the occupation, and the employer, and (4) commitment to your profession. Reveal a career plan and indicate that you have the potential, desire and capability to grow within the organization. In your research, determine what position you could reasonably expect to reach in five years and in ten years.

***“What is your greatest strength?”***

This is a direct "sell-me" question. Select one (maybe two) key quality you possess that you know to be in great demand *for this job*. State the quality, then support your claim with past achievements.

***“What is your greatest weakness?”***

Before you volunteer anything negative remember this important rule: You are screened *in* because of your strengths, and screened *out* because of your weaknesses. But, since we all have weaknesses, you have one as well! In stating your reply to this question, be straight-forward and self-confident, express a desire to further improve the good credentials you now possess, and possibly point to a relatively unimportant area that needs some improvement (and what you are doing to strengthen that skill set). For example, you may be hyper-attentive to detail, but you are learning to step back and view the forest in addition to each tree. Always answer a negative question in a positive manner!

***“What is your salary requirement?”***

There is a wrong time and a right time to discuss salary matters. The wrong time is before you have had the opportunity to sell yourself in person during the interview. The right time is after the interviewer tells you that a specific job is available and that he or she wants you for the opening. Who should initiate the first figure in discussing salary? It is generally to your advantage for the interviewer to mention the first figure. Do not give a salary "range." Pick a figure, when the time comes, that is based on salary research for the geographical area, your personal needs, and your qualifications.

***“What is important to you in a job?”***

The interviewer wants to hear that you are personally satisfied by the same things that contribute to the organization's programs and objectives. The importance of salary, fringe benefits and vacations is not appropriate in responding to this question.

***“What do you do in your spare time?”***

From your reply, you want the interviewer to realize that you use your time wisely, are well-rounded and have diverse interests, get along well with others, and you are a participant and not just a spectator.

***“Which feature of the job interests you the least?”***

This is another negative question; however it can be converted into a positive selling opportunity. Tell the interviewer that all aspects of the job interest you, which is why you have chosen this line of work. If the interviewer mentions that the work is difficult and could require frequent overtime, reply in a positive manner. If the employer tries to coax you to respond negatively, he may be trying to see how truthful you are about your commitment.

***“How do others describe you?”***

The interviewer wants to know that you get along well with your co-workers, have the respect of your subordinates, and are respected by your boss. Your ability to work well with other people is extremely important to the interviewer; therefore, paint a positive picture of your social relationships on the job.

***“What are your plans for continued study?”***

Convey your desire for continued growth and self-improvement. Indicate that continuing education will help you stay current and be better prepared to cope with the new and changing techniques of your profession.

***“Tell me about your schooling!”***

Speak well of your alma mater, for you are a product of your school's educational programs. The key to this question is to reply in a positive manner. If you praise the programs, you indirectly

praise yourself. If you are asked to explain a low grade, avoid being defensive. Follow up with a reasonable explanation of your priorities, indicating that you worked 30 hours a week to help support yourself and family, if this was the case. Then add that, regardless of the grade earned, you learned a great deal from that course, much of which you still use today. Always answer truthfully and in a positive manner.

Look at your resume to identify other questions that may come up. If you have a large block of time unaccounted for, you may be asked to explain it. Interesting job titles or descriptions are often used to break the ice in an interview. Be sure that you are prepared to talk about the summer job you had herding cattle in Montana. Review your cover letter, resume and writing sample that you sent to this employer. This is where they will be drawing questions, so you should be more familiar with its content than they are.

“Keep in mind that there is a good deal of luck involved in interviewing. Whether you get an offer may depend on whether you and the interviewer have something in common; on the timing of when your application landed (somebody may have resigned just the day before); or on whether you or the interviewer are having a good or bad day. Do not expect more rationality from the interview process than is reasonable.” (*The Essential Book of Interviewing* by Arnold B. Kanter).

### ***C. ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND HOW TO RESPOND***

Federal, state, and local laws regulate the type of questions that can be asked of a prospective employee. It is illegal for interviewers to ask questions for the purpose of discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or non-job-related disabilities. A few states and municipalities have also included sexual orientation as an illegal basis for discrimination, but there is no federal law prohibiting this type of discrimination.

Employers will make every effort to comply with these regulations. Sometimes, however, an interviewer will ask an inappropriate question. It is almost always innocently asked while “making conversation.” This can put you in an awkward position. There are four basic options available, and you must decide which is appropriate based on the specifics of the situation.

First, you can answer the question without revealing that you are offended. More often than not an employer is trying to get to know you, and the discussion can edge over into personal questions that may or may not make you feel uncomfortable.

Alternatively, you might address the interviewer’s underlying concern in a legal manner. For example, if the interviewer asked, “Are you a U.S. citizen?”, you could answer “I am authorized to work in the United States.” (Remember, some jobs require US citizenship, and in those cases, the question is appropriate!) Or “do you have children?” This is very common for interviewers to touch on family situations. While it is inappropriate to ask, the underlying question is will you be able to devote the time necessary to get the work done. Be ready to answer questions like this by answering the underlying issue bothering the employer! (E.g., in this case, describe how childcare issues are not a problem).

A third possible response would be to tactfully and WITH HUMOR inform the interviewer that

the question is *irrelevant to job performance*. You might respond, “I would be happy to answer this question if you can please tell me how it relates to the job” OR “I would prefer to only be asked questions relevant to the job.” Other examples: “I would prefer to stick to job-related issues, rather than personal ones” OR “I don’t think you really want to touch on [religious issues], do you?” This reminds the interviewer to stay on focus and indicates that you are aware of the law in this area. It may also dissuade the interviewer from asking further inappropriate questions. However, if the question was asked innocently, this may irritate the interviewer. You take a risk when challenging the interviewer; the result can be positive *or* negative.

The fourth option is to terminate the interview and walk out. This is an extreme step and should be used if the interviewer is asking offensive questions with a *blatantly* (and provable) discriminatory purpose. If you feel that is the case, please contact Career & Professional Development.

## THE THANK YOU LETTER

Always write a thank you note after an interview, even if you do not plan to pursue work with them. Not only is the thank you letter the courteous thing to do, it is one more way to be professionally remembered. As an applicant, you are not only qualified, but polite as well! Either a short (one paragraph) *handwritten* note on conservative plain paper, or a *typed* letter using a business-letter format, is correct.

Write to *everyone* who talked to you *on campus*; the notes can say the same thing to each person. If you are invited to the office for a *call back*, also include a note to the recruiting coordinator (if the firm has one), thanking her/him for setting up the office visit. These individuals are always included in the hiring decision process.

How many thank you’s do you write when you have met *many* people in a firm? *Not* to everyone, but write to all partners and associates if you spent any significant time with them. Generally write to those lawyers with whom you spent the most time, and ask them to express your thanks to the others who took the time to speak with you.

Thank you’s after an *on-campus* interview are important if sent within 48 hours; they are too late after that.

A thank you after a “*call back*” is *essential* and must be sent within 24 hours.

The letter should be simple and short and should include:

- Thank them for coming on campus (or for having you to their office) to interview.
- That you enjoyed the interview.
- Any special points you learned which will make a difference.
- Anything that you left out in the interview that is important.

On call backs, also add:

- Thank them for arranging the meeting, lunch, dinner, etc.
- For making travel arrangements, showing you the city, etc.

- Ask them to express your appreciation to all who took the time to meet with you.

Remember, if you meet practically an entire firm, individual letters are not feasible. If you have a special connection to someone, write and say how much you enjoyed talking about X. You must at minimum send a letter to the attorney in charge of the visit (hiring partner or associate) and the recruiting coordinator. You can then ask that person to pass along your appreciation to the other attorneys.

## NETWORKING AND INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

### A. NETWORKING

What is networking? Networking is an ongoing process of building professional contacts. These contacts are sometimes made at cocktail parties and luncheons, but are also be made throughout law school. For example, some of the best contacts can be made by participating in volunteer organizations, and attending Career & Professional Development programs with attorney speakers!

Why should I network? Between 70 and 85 percent of job openings are never advertised. Instead, they are filled informally through effective networking. The only way to find out about these opportunities is to make contacts within the legal community.

When should I begin networking? It is never too early to start. Even if you are not searching for a job now, you will have an opportunity to make contacts that will pay off when you begin your job search. Your fellow students, professors, alumni and your mentor will all be potential sources of information about job opportunities.

How should I handle networking functions? Events like cocktail parties and luncheons are a great place to begin networking. It can be unnerving to walk into a room full of strangers and strike up a conversation, but there are a few things you can do to make the experience rewarding and less intimidating:

Be prepared. Keep up with current events and legal trends, to help you make better conversation and to fill a lull in conversation.

- Make sure that you are appropriately dressed for the event.
- If you arrive on time to an event, you will not be walking into a room full of people already engaged in conversation. You will be able to strike up a conversation more easily, and then hopefully get “passed off” to another person. Do not stay locked on one person as you may make them feel uncomfortable. After a nice discussion, thank them for taking the time to speak to you.
- When you arrive, take a moment to survey the room. Locate the food and drink, but do not immediately rush to the bar or buffet. Remember that you are primarily there to make contacts, not have dinner. However, the buffet can be a good place to start conversation!

- **MINGLE!** Do not stand in a corner by yourself. If you are at an event with law students and practicing attorneys, do not clump yourself only with other law students. As uncomfortable as it may be, you should mingle throughout the gathering, not confine yourself to one group. Remember that many lawyers are no better at making small talk and are just as uncomfortable as you are.

#### **Networking reminders:**

- Bring breath mints, not gum
- Shake hands firmly, but do not crush the other person's hand
- Maintain eye contact when shaking hands
- Carry your drink in your left hand to avoid having to shift it when shaking hands and to prevent your handshake from getting clammy
- If you drink, have one, then switch to sparkling water

- **MINGLE!** Do not stand in a corner by yourself. If you are at an event with law students and practicing attorneys, do not clump yourself only with other law students. As uncomfortable as it may be, you should mingle throughout the gathering, not confine yourself to one group. Remember that many lawyers are no better at making small talk and are just as uncomfortable as you are!
- Do not be afraid to initiate the conversation. The best way to begin a conversation is to find someone standing alone or approach a group of three or more people involved in a conversation. Avoid groups of two people who are deep in conversation; they will probably not appreciate being interrupted. When approaching a person standing alone, make eye contact, extend your hand, and introduce yourself. Include in your introduction a brief (5 or 10 seconds) synopsis of who you are and why you are at the event. When approaching a group of people, wait for a break in the conversation to introduce yourself. Make sure to shake hands with everyone in the group.

- Do not spend all of your time talking to one person. To leave a conversation, wait for a lull, then politely thank the person for his or her time. (“I want to thank you for taking time to chat with me. I hope we will have the opportunity to meet again.”)
- Remember the people you meet. You should follow up with a note to those of particular interest within a week of the meeting. Then you can add them to your list of contacts for when you begin informational interviewing.

### ***B. INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING***

What is an informational interview? The goal of an informational interview is to gain information about a type of practice, geographic area or specific area of law, and to obtain contacts who may be able to assist you in your job search.

How should I begin informational interviewing? The first step is to create a list of current contacts and use them as a resource for additional contacts.



**A list of contacts may include:**

- The Career & Professional Development Staff
- Your mentor
- Professors, fellow students, and alumni
- Former employers and co-workers
- Parents of friends and friends of parents
- Anyone you know from volunteer organization work
- Anyone you know from a professional society.
- Contacts made at cocktail parties and luncheons

Next, let these people know you are seeking or will be seeking employment. Ask if they know of anyone who may be able to offer advice and tell them about your career interests and goals. When you begin to get these referrals, the next step is to request informational interviews with these individuals.

How should I contact a person for an informational interview? If you know the person fairly well, you can contact them by phone. If the person is a referral, send the request in a business letter and include your resume. Here is an example for what you may want to include in the letter:

- a) ¶1: I am currently a [second] year law student at the University of Arizona. [Ms. Jones of Smith & Jones] suggested I contact you regarding my interest in [patent law]. I am writing to you for advice in my job search - not for a job. Understanding your busy schedule, I would like to meet with you briefly for any advice you may have.
- b) Last ¶: I will call you during the week of [August 26th] to see if we can schedule a brief meeting at your convenience.

- c) Last ¶: I will be in [Dallas] September 24-27, and would appreciate the opportunity to meet you.

Your letter should make it clear that you are not seeking a job interview and that the purpose is only for you to learn more about the area of practice/geographic area. After sending the letter, call the person during the time period you have indicated. Schedule a time that is convenient for the other person and show up on time.

How should I prepare for an informational interview? Prepare for an informational interview as you would for a job interview. Become familiar with the firm and prepare questions about the specific field of law in which you are interested. The questions should be open-ended and designed to give the interviewers a chance to talk about themselves and their job, and to possibly make referral suggestions. Show up on time dressed in proper business attire and be mindful of how much of their time you are taking; informational interviews should take no more than 15-30 minutes.

What questions should I ask? Make sure that you write down questions before you go. Here are a list of possible questions to ask during the informational interview:

- What do you like about what you do?
- What do you not like about what you do?
- How is your time divided between people, data, and research?
- What are the major issues and challenges in your field?
- Where do you see this field in the future?
- What job hunt strategies would you suggest for a recent graduate seeking employment in this field?

- How did you enter this field?
- What does your firm look for when hiring new associates?
- What does an attorney in your field do? What are the different aspects of your job?
- Are there any professional associations I should join that may put me in touch with other attorneys in this field?
- What about CLE's (continuing legal education) I could attend on specific topics?
- I am trying to speak with as many people as possible to learn as much as I can. Is there anyone else with whom I should speak for additional information?

What questions should I avoid in an informational interview?

**🗨 DO NOT ASK FOR A JOB!**

The informational interview is not an opportunity to ask for a job. Asking for a job, or even a job opening, is a good way to make the person with whom you are interviewing uncomfortable and defensive. This will also cast doubt on your motives for requesting the interview.

What should I do after the informational interview?

- Keep accurate records of each contact, the date of the meeting, what was discussed and the names of additional contacts received.
- Write a brief thank-you letter expressing your appreciation for the assistance you received and including a couple of specific points that the person touched on during the interview.

Keep in touch with your contacts. If you see an article about something that may appeal to them, send them a copy. Let them know when you have found a job and how they contributed in your job search. Finally, keep in touch even after you have found a job. You never know when you will need your network again.

## **ACCEPTING A JOB OFFER AND SALARY NEGOTIATIONS**

### ***B. THE JOB OFFER***

After all of your hard work in conducting your job search, the stress of the interviews, and the waiting, you have finally been offered a position (or a few positions if you are lucky). Your work is still not finished! One of the most important parts of your job search is closing the deal and accepting an offer that fits both your career interests and financial needs.

**“We are ready to offer you a position...”** The offer is what all of this work is about, but do not leap to accept until you have evaluated the pros and cons. The best policy is not to accept an offer right away, even if you are certain you want the job. Most organizations will give you several days to consider the offer. It could raise questions about the organization if they demand an on-the-spot decision.

- Do not accept an offer with the idea that you can always back out if a better job offer comes along. It is inappropriate to give your word to an employer and then cancel at the last minute. "What goes around comes around" is often true, and this action could come back to haunt you later on down the road. Your word should be good and your reputation in the community is at stake.
- You may accept or decline by telephone, but ask for written confirmation spelling out job title, area of responsibilities, starting date, and salary information. It is standard practice to formalize a verbal acceptance of a job offer.
- Once you have accepted a job offer, call or write to those employers who are still considering your application and inform them you are withdrawing. This is a matter of courtesy and is a way of protecting your reputation. At a future point, you might be considering employment with these organizations, and you do not want any burned bridges to get in your way.

## ***B. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO NEGOTIATE A SALARY***

Negotiating your salary and benefits, once you have received the offer, is often an uncomfortable but important aspect of your career search process.

Do not go into a new job thinking you will settle for an average salary and then increase your pay by hard work, raises and bonuses. Negotiating initially is important, because raises may be based solely on cost-of-living and be smaller than you hoped. It is wise to start with the best package you can get, and not count on raises to reflect your worth.

Determining your value in the marketplace. First, you need to determine what is important to you in terms of total remuneration: base pay, bonus opportunity, stock options, 401k and pension, benefits, work schedule, and availability of time off. Next, do your homework. You should know your market value and what salary this position typically commands. By taking a good look at your own salary needs, understanding the current market, and approaching salary as something you and the employer will agree on as mutually beneficial, your chances of successfully negotiating a salary are greatly enhanced.

Sources of salary range data. Your law school Career Office has various salary surveys as well as other resources to help you determine an appropriate salary range for the position you have been offered. Additional resources include:

- The NALP Directory of Legal Employers ([www.nalpdirectory.com](http://www.nalpdirectory.com))
- Similar job postings
- National Association of College & Employers: Salary Survey
- American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries
- Trade and professional association surveys
- Professionals in related career fields

### ***C. GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTING OR REJECTING AN OFFER***

If you have questions on any aspect of the offer or the job, clarify them before accepting. If you receive an offer you want to consider, acknowledge and thank the employer immediately, and ask how long you have to decide. Employers should allow you reasonable time to consider your decision. By the same token, if you have received an offer from Firm A, but would prefer an offer from Firm B, you can write or call Firm B informing them another employer has extended an offer but that you are still interested in Firm B and would like to know your status with them. Be considerate of employer needs in requesting time extensions.

Accept in writing, restating important facts (salary, starting date, title, etc.). If you get an offer you are not interested in accepting, you should withdraw immediately to allow the employer to move on to another candidate.

Inform all other organizations with whom you have been dealing of your acceptance of a job. You will want to remain on friendly terms with these organizations; you may consider employment with them at some time in the future or do business with them in your new job.

### **SPECIAL TIPS FOR SUMMER CLERKSHIPS**

For many law students, a "summer associate" position will be your first chance to use the legal skills you have accumulated throughout law school. This can be both an exciting and frightening experience. The experience will be challenging, and will provide many opportunities, both professionally and socially.

#### ***A. GENERAL TIPS***

- Let the firm know of any potential conflicts at the initial interview. If you have something already planned for the summer (for example, if you are planning on getting married) let the firm know about it if you are called back for a second interview. The firm will not be happy if you give them only a month's warning that you need two weeks off for a wedding and honeymoon, when you have known about it for over a year.
- **Make a good first impression.** Have an enthusiastic attitude and appear professionally dressed and neatly groomed for your first day on the job. Remember the old advertising slogan, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression." People, lawyers included, have a tendency to make quick subjective judgments about your abilities from a brief initial encounter.
- **Make the summer work your first priority.** Personal interests and commitments must take a back seat to your work obligations. Discover how much time you are expected to spend at the office. If everyone else, including your fellow summer associates, works until 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., do not leave the office at 5:00 p.m. Remember this is not just a 9 to 5 summer job. It is an opportunity to see what the practice of law will be like. If the partners notice you leaving at 5:00 p.m. every day while everyone else continues working, they may not see you as a good fit and may not extend an offer.

- **Get organized.** Keep a research log and keep your research and writing materials organized. Keep up with your time sheets; accurate billing is very important in the legal profession. Spend a few minutes at the end of the day doing this; it will allow you to use the rest of your time more effectively.
- **Participate.** Attend the social functions that the law firm has planned. They have these functions so that the attorneys and summer associates can get to know each other better and to determine if you will be a good fit with the firm. Act responsibly at these activities and limit your alcohol intake.
- **Treat the support staff with the respect and appreciation they deserve.** The support staff can provide invaluable advice on everything from finding files to operating your computer. Also, they will not hesitate to share their opinions of you with the recruiting attorneys. If you make a poor impression on them, your chances for an offer as a first-year associate will decrease.
- **Do not be afraid to ask questions.** If you are having a problem with an assignment, ask the assigning attorney for advice or clarification immediately. However, remember that the best time to get clarification of the assignment is immediately upon receiving the assignment. You do not want to have to interrupt the attorney later to ask something you should have asked when you first got the assignment. You will also be able to work more efficiently if you ask questions early.

#### ***B. TIPS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS***

- **Know your audience.** Remember that you are writing for a professional audience, not an academic one. The main goal is to communicate ideas efficiently and effectively.
- **Watch your spelling and grammar.** Spell-check programs cannot correct improper word usage. Read through your writing before you hand it in to catch these mistakes. Also, keep a grammar reference book on hand at your desk to answer any questions.
- **Be sure your work is clear before you hand it in.** Proofread your work to see if your writing is logically organized and easy to follow. You may want to have another summer associate read through it before giving it to the assigning attorney.
- **Always meet deadlines.** One of the worst things you can do as a summer associate is to miss deadlines. If for some reason you are unable to meet the deadline, you must give the assigning attorney sufficient and early warning so that help can be arranged in order to meet the deadline.

### *C. TIPS FOR MEETING WITH ATTORNEYS*

- **Be confident, but not over-confident.** Every summer associate is nervous and unsure. If you prepare well and are confident in your research, then you will make a good impression. If you are arrogant and abrasive, you will not.
- **Be prepared.** Always bring a pen and a pad of paper with you to a meeting or presentation. Include an outline that you can quickly reference. Also, take notes and be sure to clarify any questions you have before leaving the attorney's office.
- **Listen to what the attorney says.** You will do a much better job on an assignment if you get the assignment right from the beginning. If you do not listen carefully, you can do a great job of researching and writing over the completely wrong issue. That costs a firm time and money and could place a case in jeopardy.

### *D. TIPS FOR RESEARCH*

- **Research efficiently.** Remember researching at a law firm is different than researching at law school. Research time and resources are limited, and have a cost associated with them. Most issues will have a limited amount of billable hours allotted to research. Find out your firm's policy regarding on-line research before you begin using on-line resources. Law firms and government agencies do not have unlimited access to LEXIS and WESTLAW, so you may have to rely primarily on searching through printed resources and following with a limited online search.
- **Begin with the right resource.** If you are assigned to research a complicated area in which you have little or no experience, it may be helpful to begin with a secondary source like a treatise or law review article. This will give you an overview of the subject matter and references to primary authorities.
- **Keep a detailed research log.** It is important to be able to remember how you proceeded in your research so that if you hit a dead end, you can backtrack without having to start your research over from scratch.
- **Be sure your research is current.** If you are using case law, use Shepherd's or KeyCite to make sure the case law is still good. If you are working with statutes, check the pocket parts or supplemental pamphlets to make sure the law is still valid.