#### **First Impressions**

#### **An Introduction to Interviewing**

#### Lisa M. Patterson, Associate Dean for Career Services

State University of New York at Buffalo Law School Career Services Office 609 O'Brian Hall Buffalo, NY 14260 716-645-2056 Fax: 716-645-7336 Lpatter@buffalo.edu www.law.buffalo.edu/cso

# Introduction

- Time: Approx 60 min
- Topics Covered: Interviewing
- Skills to master:
- Learn to express yourself to impress others

"Before we hire you, you'll have to take a battery of tests, sign a few oaths, and go through two years of psychoanalysis."

AMS

ERSONN

### Agenda

- How to do it:
  - PREParation = 90% of Success!
  - Interview Function
  - Non-Verbal Cues
  - Interview Questions
  - Types of Interviews

#### Approach to Training: What to Take Away Today

- We'll start with Formal, move to Informal—skills translate!
- Networking/Interviewing are your ways of communicating (verbally and non-verbally) your good qualities to someone else
- NO GAMES: Make the process transparent—know why you're doing it and what result you hope for
- Have an agenda—feed the interviewer your sales pitch!

# PREP! The Key to Success • DON'T JUST WING IT

- Picture Personal Perks
- Research Receiver
- Expound on Evidence
- Practice Performance

# Personal Perks (1)

- "Know Thyself"
- Make a list of all your good qualities

The following selfassessment tests will help you make a list of your legal and general skills!



#### WHAT CAN I DO?

#### HELPFUL SELF TEST: TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND LEGAL SKILLS

This exercise focuses on two classifications of skills that are relevant to the practice of law.

The first classification covers what are commonly known as *transferable skills* because they are readily applicable to a broad variety of tasks or activities in a wide range of work contexts.

The second classification covers legal skills that are the competencies and substantive knowledge that enhance your performance as a lawyer. At this early stage in your career, you are just developing these skills, and as you progress, some will become more important than others in your chosen practice area. However, this exercise will furnish you with a "measuring stick" so that you will have a sense of some of the competencies needed by practitioners in the field of law.

Insight is the goal. Use this exercise as a tool not only to shape and refine your individual cooperative educational plan, but also to assist you in making post-graduate job choices. Competency levels for each listed skill have been assigned the following values:

4 means you feel very "CONFIDENT" about your ability

3 means you feel your ability is "COMPETENT"

2 means you feel "CAUTIOUS" about your ability

#### 1 means you feel your ability is untested - "CAN'T ASSESS"

To adjust for the enjoyment level, add the value of "1" if a high level of satisfaction or pleasure is associated with the performance of the listed skill; subtract the value of "1" if you strongly dislike using the skill. Otherwise, no adjustment is necessary. Record your averages for the various skill cluster areas. Res ipsa loquitor!

#### SELF TEST, PART A: TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Written Communication (Average)	Negotiating
Business correspondence	Mediating
Editing	Group facilitating
Creative/Expository writing	Getting along with others
Technical writing	Being politically savvy
Other writing (reports, memos)	Projecting a professional image
Translating (foreign language)	Organizational (Average)
Verbal Communication (Average)	Anticipating/Estimating
Teaching/Training	Prioritizing
Public speaking	Coordinating/Arranging (events)
Persuading/Promoting/Selling	Compiling/Gathering (data)
Articulating (quality of oral expression)	Classifying/Ordering (information)
Schmoozing/Socializing	Programming
Foreign language/Signing	Planning/Scheduling
Interpersonal (Average)	Record keeping
Listening (really "hearing" the other	Meeting deadlines
side)	Intellectual (Average)
Advising/Counseling	Conceptualizing (new ideas)
Empathizing	Analyzing (events, data, people)
Interviewing (obtaining info.)	Theorizing (drawing generalizations)
Handling complaints	-
Confronting	Comprehending info. quickly

Managerial (Average)	Persevering
Supervising/Leading	Accepting criticism
Organizing/Coordinating	Working through problems
Motivating others	Adjusting to changes/Flexibility
Initiating	Competing with others
Risk taking	Numerical/Technical (Average)
Delegating	Operating technical equipment
Exercising good judgment	Managing budgets/Allocating
Accepting responsibility	resources Using computational abilities
Decision making	Estimating/Projecting (costs, income)
Problem-Solving (Average)	Developing math/economic models
Examining (attention to details)	Working with precision
	Financial record keeping
Assessing (the performance of others)	Using statistical abilities
Evaluating (programs, services)	Creative (Average)
Appraising (values)	Inventing
Applying knowledge to improve a situation or to benefit others	Imagining
	Designing
Trouble shooting	Applying theory in a novel way
Coping (Average)	Being an "ideas" person
Working effectively & calmly under pressure	Displaying
Managing time	Constructing/Building
Tolerating delays/Patience	Synthesizing ideas

SELF TES SKILLS	ST, PART B: LEGAL	Able to take systematic, useful research notes
		Factual Research (Average)
General Legal I 	)	Able to plan fact investigations to obtain desired information
of ye	substantive knowledge basic areas of law (first ar curriculum) ss substantive legal	Know formal discovery devices and able to use them, including depositions,
kr pa	owledge of your articular area(s) of terest	interrogatories and document requests
Posse kr	ess broad general howledge of other areas law in order to	Know how to respond to formal discovery within ethical restraints to disclose required information
"rec	l flag" issues and to	Legal Writing (Average)
ot ex Keep	hers possessing pertise abreast of current	Plan and organize writing so that it is coherent, logical and persuasive
Legal Research	evelopments in law (Average)	Draft, redraft and edit writing critically
or	research in a thorough, ganized and competent anner	Produce well written, good quality legal documents
Know pr	various secondary and imary research sources	Use language clearly, precisely and concisely
	ow to use indexes	
Familia	plan a research strategy ar with computerized search resources	

#### Legal Analysis (Average \_\_\_\_

Understand how to analyze a case and analogize it to client facts

Understand how to analyze a statute or regulation and apply it to a client problem

Understand how to synthesize cases multiple and/or statutes

Understand how to select legal rules to apply to client or opponent facts

Combine legal analysis with common sense and problem-solving abilities

Develop creative and/or alternative approaches to problems

Develop appropriate strategy to serve client

Advocacy (Average \_\_\_\_\_)

Plan an effective trial strategy

Argue skillfully and effectively in court

Negotiate disputes skillfully and effectively

> Prepare witnesses for examination

Examine witnesses using rules of evidence effectively

Develop ability to determine credibility the of clients witnesses, and testimony

Develop ability to determine the efficacy of opposing arguments

Practice appropriate courtroom demeanor

Problem Solving (Average \_\_\_\_\_)

Identify and assess the problem (issue spotting)

> Help clients with strategic planning (including alternative solutions and strategies)

Advise clients regarding compliance with applicable laws and regulations

<b>Client Relations</b>	(Average	)	Et
cl	t sessions tha ient informed eassured		*
Underst	and client's g	oals	
Provide	realistic asses	ssments	_
	and develop ase	new client	_
	ent apprised f case	of status	
ac	bills reflectin ccurately acco me	-	<u> </u>
Work Habits (	Average	)	
or Learn from ass events Work eff st Monitor promotion promoti	n complete a rganized files om experience corporating s sessment and valuation fectively with aff work (deadli roblems) se of supervis elationship, in- eeking assista nize ethical onsiderations	e through self- d self- support nes, ory cluding nce early	
si	tuation		

#### hics and Professional Development (Averag e \_\_\_\_\_)

Act within the Rules of Professional Responsibility

\_ Support efforts to promote social justice

\_ Further legal education by attending professional seminars, reading etc.

\_\_ Develop relationships with colleagues practicing in your field through

> membership in professional organizations, law alumni/ae groups, etc.

Engage in or financially support pro bono work

\_ Become involved with the activities of your workplace

Produce articles for publication in professional journals

### Personal Perks (1)

# Know your Resume! Be prepared to talk about everything on your resume

-Exercise: Use the chart below to organize your thoughts. You can also make notes on your resume

KNOW YOUR RESUME: Make sure you know what you're going to say about everything on your resume, and have a story ready for each item. Also, decide ahead of time what positive attributes each resume item can illustrate, so that you have some focus in your description of the experience.

Resume Item	Positive Attribute (s)	Story
e.g. "Soccer Captain"	"Leadership, Communication"	"Mediated conflict between two players"

You can use a chart like this to help you organize your thoughts:

### Research Receiver (1)



- Get a sense of which qualities are relevant:
  - Specifically for the employer
  - Generally for law jobs or all jobs

# Research Receiver (2)

- How to find specific employer information?
  - Research employer: website, news, published cases
  - Research relevant areas of law
  - Take clues from job description
  - Ask around: use your mentors and contacts

### **Exercise:** Practice your research skills by researching law firm Cannon, Heyman & Weiss in Buffalo, NY

#### RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

(Find out as much as possible about what the employer does, what is important to them, if they've been in the news, who else has worked there, who their clients are, etc. This will help you answer the question "why do you want to work here," or "what do you know about us?")

List things you know about the employer: E.g. "Focuses on affordable housing law"

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 4. 5.

# Research Receiver (3)

• In addition to specific employer-driven criteria, consider general attributes:

#### General qualities for law

writing, research, analysis, case-making, arguing, articulation, thinking on feet, selfteaching, complex facts, reading comprehension, accuracy, work-ethic, client skills, business savvy, rainmaking, etc.

#### – General overall qualities

reliability, responsibility, initiative, intelligence, work ethic, discipline, empathy, professionalism, confidence, presentation, resilience, persistence, dedication, loyalty, precision, organization, clarity, intuition, judgment, trustworthiness, friendliness, kindness, heart, etc.

#### EMPLOYER Name: Cannon, Heyman & Weiss. - Buffalo, NY

Areas OF Specialization	Corporate, Finance/Corporate Finance/Bond/Capital Markets, Litigation (Civil), Medical/Medical Malpractice, Personal Injury, Products Liability
Job Title	Law Clerk
CONTACT	Ms. Ivanna Lawclerk, Hiring Partner
Address	726 Exchange Street, Suite 516 Buffalo, NY 14210
Country	United States
Phone	(716) 856-1700
Fax	(716) 856-2311
Job Description	Growing downtown law firm seeks a 2L or 1L as a law clerk to do legal R & W, preparation of pleadings, consultation with clients, etc. The firm's practice areas include: public and private financing transactions, including municipal finance and tax credit syndication transactions. Qualifications: Self-motivated, well organized, strong R & W skills. Must be able to work well with others and handle multiple tasks.
CLASS Years	1L 2L
TIME Period	School Year/PT
Materials Requested	Resume, Cover Letter
Response Method	Mail directly to contact

**Exercise: Using this job posting, identify 10 qualities that this employer is seeking in an ideal candidate:** 

# Expound on Evidence (1)

- Interview = making a verbal case for your candidacy: you're your own client!
- Combine P + R Three ways:
- 1. Actually compose answers to the question: "Give me an example of a time when you were (insert good attribute here)"
  - Include stories (draw from resume, plus...)
  - Answers can be used in different ways to answer many different questions



# Expound on Evidence (2)



"Now go out there and sell yourself!"

#### 2. Write answer to "Tell me about yourself"—your 2minute "Advertisement"

- Half anecdote, half sales pitch
- Loose biographical—relevant to professional goals (I am a first-year student at UB Law school...)
- To help you compose your answer, imagine, after you get the job, the employer circulates a newsletter with a short bio of all the new hires. How would yours read?
- Even if it's not asked directly, your prepared answer to "tell me about yourself," is also useable when you get stuck, or when you're networking

# Expound on Evidence (3)

- 3. Match what the employer wants with what you have to offer
  - Here's where you combine your self-assessment with your employer research
  - Helps focus your thoughts, combat nervousness
  - Turns a bad interview to good one
  - Projects confidence, not ego
  - Gives your interviewer the material they need to take to the Hiring Committee or other decision-maker(s).

#### -Exercise: Using the Cannon, Heyman & Weiss information, match your skills to the employer:

#### WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER IS LOOKING FOR?

(Not all employers have the same set of criteria for selecting employees. Some want to see good grades, others put more emphasis on people skills. The job posting can provide clues to this, as well as research about the employer, and advice from the CSO, faculty, mentors and friends. Make a list of the criteria you think they weigh most heavily, and match up each item with an example of how you meet that criteria.) *You can use a chart like this to help you organize your thoughts:* 

Criteria	Example
e.g. "Good Judgment"	"Management position in a store, responsible for making crucial decisions, including hiring and firing."



# Expound on Evidence (3)

THERE'S NO AGENDA ! DOBS ANYONE KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN ?!

#### 3. Formulate an Agenda

- List 3-5 points you want to make before your leave
- Helps you deal with interviewers who do all the talking
- Keeps you focused
  - Don't be rigid, though. If the conversation is going well on a different topic, stay with it to establish rapport with your interviewer!

#### -Exercise:

#### MAKE AN AGENDA

(Pick 2-3 of the most important things about yourself that you must talk about before the interview is over. Make this your agenda, and find a way, in the course of the interview, to work in your example/story for each of those things. This will help you project enthusiasm, confidence and focus in your interview. It also helps when the interviewer talks too much and you need to be able to interject!) *List your agenda items here:* 

Selling Point	Example
e.g. "Commitment to criminal law"	"Pattern of criminal law-related activities since college"
V	

© Original Artist Reproduction rights obtainable from www.Cart<u>oon</u>Stock.com |

### **Practice!**



 Read answers out loud, use mirror

"YOU LOOKIN' AT ME? I SED "YOU LOOKIN' AT ME? ..., "

- Practice with others
- Come to CSO for a mock interview or coaching
- Ask CSO to set up a mock interview with an alum, or ask your mentor

WHY PRACTICE?

- Answers will sound natural later
- You will have facility with them and be flexible in using them

# **Questions?**



## **The Formal Interview**

- What it's for:
  - Follow-up on resume/application
  - Get to know you
  - Test communication skills
- Elements:
  - Behavioral Observations
    - Questions based on resume
  - General questions
    - "Gut Feeling"
      - = Connection?



Sorry, but I have to put "Orca": Who would hire a "Killer Whale"?...

### **Behavioral Issues (1)**

- Not just cosmetic—are you a potential representative of the employer?
- Timeliness: Be 5-10 minutes early
- Handshake: Firm, sideways,
   "web-to-web"

#### -Exercise:

Practice shaking hands with someone!



# Behavioral Issues (2)



- Posture: Show enthusiasm and friendliness naturally
- Eye contact: Displays confidence, trustworthiness
- Voice tone: Clear, slow. Don't trail off, don't boom
- Bad habits: Fidgeting, nailbiting, gum-chewing, hairtwirling, etc.
- Address: Use Mr./Ms. Unless specifically invited to use first name

### Appearance



"You've got the job, but you've got to change your clothes."

- Not a beauty contest, but...
- Hygiene: Clean hair, hands, nails, clothes. Pressed clothes. If you smoke, avoid smelling like it!
- Adornments: No or light perfume/cologne, limit jewelry, conservative accessories
- Dress: Conservative suit, dark color, well-tailored, good fit.
  - Women: Skirts at or just below knee, wear hose with a skirt. Pant suits are generally fine also.
    Conservative pumps, no open toes, 2" heels, max. Not too much jewelry, scarves, etc.
    - Men: Single-breasted suits are more standard, pleasant but non-distracting tie pattern, shoes conservative, dark socks, neutral shirt color

### Questions on your Resume

- Goes back to PREP—know what you will say about everything
- Prepare "stories" to go with resume items, point out conclusions highlighting positive attributes.
  - E.g. "My four years as a server at Applebees were concurrent with my undergraduate studies at Niagara University. In addition to honing onthe-job skills like customer service and organization, the job also taught me time-management and personal accountability. Even though I financed 50% of my college costs through this job, I managed my time effectively and was able to earn good grades and serve in several leadership positions on campus."

# General Questions (1)

• With PREP, you should have a good idea what's coming

- Use research on employer to field direct questions about job ("Why do you want to work here?") as well as more oblique questions ("What are you most proud of?")
- Use your inventory of "Evidence" to draw answers



"I really believe my research abilities would be an asset to whatever this company is called."

# General Questions (2)

#### • A word about tone:

 Use POSITIVE language and avoid forms of "no" and "not"



BAD: "I don't know much about the law because there are no lawyers in my family."



• GOOD: "I am proud to be the first member of my family to be in law school and look forward to learning as much as I can about the profession."



- BAD: "We haven't covered anything practical in class that would suggest what type of law I'd like to do."
- GOOD: "After a semester of law school, I realize there is still much to learn about the day-to-day practice of law. From speaking to attorneys as often as I can, I find their descriptions of litigation exciting and challenging, but I am keeping an open mind at this point and hope to try many different practice areas."

• Exercise: How would you describe the difference?

## General Questions (3)

- List of typical questions at the end of the presentation!
- Absolute musts to prepare for:
   Tell me about yourself
  - Why did you go to law school?
  - Why did you go to UB Law?
    - (Get marketing messages—the better the school sounds, the better you sound)
  - Why do you want to work for us?
  - What are your connections to this area?
  - Why should we hire you?
    - Tell me about (item on resume)

# **General Questions (4)**

- Questions you hope you don't get (but try to anticipate them anyway)
  - What is your worst fault?
  - What is your second worst fault?
  - How do you explain your low grade in (course name)?
  - If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be?
- Ways to get out of it fast—answer directly and follow up with a question.
  - E.g. "I have had to work the hardest on seeking feedback on my work. As an undergraduate I was inclined to accept a grade or comment without question and then feel frustrated by it. In law school, I have decided to ask my professors to critique my work, even though it is often difficult to hear. It has made my writing stronger. Can you tell me about the review and feedback process during your summer program?"

# **General Questions (5)**

- Other good sources:
  - Guerilla Tactics for Getting the Legal Job of Your Dreams by Kimm Walton
  - *The Legal Interview* by Clifford Ennico
  - See the CSO Resources at http://law.buffalo.edu/career\_services/submenu//pd t/bibliography.pdf



"I think I'm right for this job because I'm a real people person. Now , are you going to hire me or not? I don't have all freakin' day!"

#### The Bad Interview

- Usually due to lack of experience/training on the part of the interviewer
- Typical Forms of Bad Interviews
  - Inappropriate Questions
  - Antagonistic Interview
  - Wimpy Interview, or "The 20minute Employer Sales Pitch"
- Bad Interview ≠ Hard Interview

# Inappropriate Questions (1)

"Illegal" Questions

- Questions which could be potentially discriminatory
  - Gender
  - Marital/Children Status
  - Religion
  - Age
  - National Origin
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Physical Limitations



"YOU MAY BE THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB, BUT I HAVE A DOZEN WOMEN WHO ARE BETTER QUALIFIED."

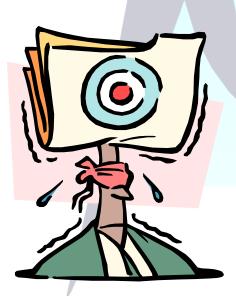
### Inappropriate Questions (2)

#### • 90% of them "Innocent"

- Untrained interviewer wants to call your attention to a selling point of firm, e.g. more women than average, parents' group, religious-based clients, pro-bono work with certain constituencies, etc.
- Interviewer is just interested, e.g they like to talk about their kids, do you have kids too?
- However, if asked,
  - Option 1: Shout "that's illegal" and storm out (not advised)
  - Option 2: Try to think of the question behind the question and answer tactfully, e.g. "If what you're asking is, will I have time to devote to my work, then let me assure you that I will."

### Antagonistic Interview

- Interviewer takes an aggressive stance, challenges you directly
  - "What makes you think you're good enough to work for us?"
  - "Why should we hire someone who got a C in Property?"
- Why?
  - On Purpose: The interviewer knows that because of the nature of the work, partners or clients, you have to have a thick skin for the job, or be able to think on your feet. They may also be testing you on how well you can argue a hard case.
  - By Nature: The interviewer has a difficult personality. Remember, you would be working with him/her, and someone else at the office



actually hired this person. Here's where the interview process works both ways. You will have to make a judgment about the job based on your I interview experience. If you have thick skin, you may not mind. Or, other perks of the job make it worth it to deal with him or her.

# Antagonistic Interview Tips

• Usually, despite the tone, you have already thought of your answers to these questions. Stay calm and don't be baited.



- Try to translate the questions in your mind and answer to "questions behind" them
  - "What makes you think you're good enough to work for us?" becomes
    "Tell me some of your good qualities as they pertain to our practice"
    - "Why should we hire someone who got a C in Property?" becomes "Do you have an explanation for the grade? How do I explain it to my hiring partner?"

You will either "fit" this job or not.

### Wimpy Interview

- Untrained Interviewer has no idea what to ask, tells you all about the employer for 20 minutes. You don't get a word in edgewise.
- Take control: Use your AGENDA creatively.
  - Try to slip in 2-3 items about yourself.
  - Without being too rude, interrupt with a question following up on an item.
    - "I'm very interested what you just said about your Real Estate Department. I did very well in Property and the practice area seems to fit me well, as I enjoy dealing with people and prefer a more transactional practice. Can you tell me more about that department?"

Sometimes this can help force a more conversational format

### Aspects of a Good Interview

- You get at least 3 pieces of evidence across
- The interviewer takes notes
- Feels more like a conversation
  - Think tennis volleys, not baseball pitches
- You find something in common
- You learn more about the employer



"Welcome aboard, Felton. Something tells me you'll be perfect for our sales staff."

### **Supplemental Material**

• Full Interview Prep Worksheet to use every time!

#### Job Interview Prep Worksheet, Part 1: You

This worksheet is meant to help you examine your best selling points critically and to organize your experiences into stories and examples before an interview. You may want to fill out a separate worksheet for every interview you do. If you prepare thoroughly, you should be able to answer almost any question about yourself!

#### 1. TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF:

(Imagine you have the job, and the organization sends out a newsletter announcing its new employees with a short paragraph about each person.)

Write your paragraph—that's your answer to "tell me about yourself."

#### 2. KNOW YOUR RESUME:

(Make sure you know what you're going to say about everything on your resume, and have a story ready for each item. Also, decide ahead of time what positive attributes each resume item can illustrate, so that you have some focus in your description of the experience.) You can use a chart like this to help you organize your thoughts:

Resume Item	Positive Attribute (s)	Story
e.g. "Soccer Captain"	"Leadership, Communication"	"Mediated conflict between two players"

#### 3. MAKE AN AGENDA

(Pick 2-3 of the most important things about yourself that you must talk about before the interview is over. Make this your agenda, and find a way, in the course of the interview, to work in your example/story for each of those things. This will help you project enthusiasm, confidence and focus in your interview. It also helps when the interviewer talks too much and you need to be able to interject!) *List your agenda items here:* 

Example
"Pattern of criminal law-related activities since college"

#### Job Interview Prep Worksheet, Part 2: The Employer

#### 1. RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

(Find out as much as possible about what the employer does, what is important to them, if they've been in the news, who else has worked there, who their clients are, etc. This will help you answer the question "why do you want to work here," or "what do you know about us?") *List things you know about the employer: E.g. "Focuses on affordable housing law"* 

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 2. WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER IS LOOKING FOR?

(Not all employers have the same set of criteria for selecting employees. Some want to see good grades, others put more emphasis on people skills. The job posting can provide clues to this, as well as research about the employer, and advice from the CSO, faculty, mentors and friends. Make a list of the criteria you think they weigh most heavily, and match up each item with an example of how you meet that criteria.)

You can use a chart like this to help you organize your thoughts:

Criteria	Example
e.g. "Good Judgment"	"Management position in a store, responsible for making crucial
	decisions, including hiring and firing."

#### 3. PREPARE QUESTIONS FOR THE EMPLOYER

(Most interviewers will ask if you have any questions. You should always come prepared with some. This shows interest in the employer, enthusiasm, and seriousness about the opportunity. Good sources of questions are the news/press release sections of their website, news searches about their cases and work, attorney profiles, other students' experiences, etc. Questions generated from this research might include, "I see that many of your attorneys write articles. Does the firm have an official policy to encourage this?" Or, "I have been reading that the district attorney has formed a task force to combat bullying in schools. Can you tell me more about that initiative?" You can also ask more direct questions to your individual interviewer, like "what do you like most about working here," or "can you tell me about your typical day?")

List questions for the employer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 3.
- 4.

#### -Questions for the Employer