

ORIENTATION  
FOR  
FIRST YEAR STUDENTS



**OFFICE OF CAREER STRATEGY**



**WASHINGTON AND LEE**  
UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
**OFFICE OF CAREER STRATEGY**

CLIFF JARRETT  
ASSISTANT DEAN

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## Welcome to Washington and Lee!

The Office of Career Strategy is dedicated to assisting you as you

- assess your interests, skills and goals;
- investigate employment options;
- network with graduates and practitioners;
- target employers;
- perfect job-search tools and techniques;
- reassess strategies in light of personal and market changes; and
- develop professional skills.

In this notebook, you will find some resources to aid you as you begin your job search.

<b>Tab 1</b>	Job Search Timeline
<b>Tab 2</b>	Networking Resources
<b>Tab 3</b>	Resume and Cover Letter Worksheets and Samples
<b>Tab 4</b>	Symplicity Instructions
<b>Tab 5</b>	OCS Professionalism Statement and NALP Recruitment Policies
<b>Tab 6</b>	Best Practices Articles

We look forward to assisting you,

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# **FIRST YEAR**

In accordance with NALP Principles and Standards, 1Ls may not receive individual career counseling from OCS until October 15<sup>th</sup>. NALP Principles and Standards also provide that prospective employers and 1L students not initiate contact with each other, interview, or make offers for summer positions until December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 15**

Position yourself to

- Reflect on your StrengthsFinder results, research your career interests (subject matter and work setting), and assess your skill set (evaluative resources are available in OCS)
- Attend OCS programs (ranging from presentations by visiting experts on areas of practice, panel discussions of summer experiences, skills sessions on job search strategy and materials, networking and the like)
- Using forms available on the OCS website, draft a legal resume and cover letter in preparation for an individual counseling session after October 15

## **OCTOBER 16 – DECEMBER 1**

Prepare to contact potential employers:

- Meet with a career counselor to review your resume and cover letter, discuss career options and job search strategy
- Fine tune a small-section writing assignment for use as a writing sample, and identify a law professor to use as a reference
- Get acquainted with OCS' print and electronic resources, including job postings on Symplicity
- Begin keeping a list of potential summer employers in Excel format, for use in preparing cover letters and envelopes
- Decide on a record-keeping system, electronic or paper, to track your applications
- Complete the online questionnaire on Symplicity asking about your geographic and practice area interests and preferences

## **DECEMBER 1 – END OF FALL SEMESTER**

Many larger law firms, national nonprofit organizations and federal agencies wish to hear from potential summer employees in December. OCS suggests that students:

- Send applications to your top 10 or 15 choices in the beginning of December
- Follow up with phone calls two weeks later
- Plan to follow up with an unofficial transcript as soon as grades are available in January

## **WINTER BREAK**

- Identify a W&L Law alum or other practicing attorney in an area of interest (practice, practice setting or geographic) and arrange for a mock interview. This can also be a good networking opportunity.
- Network with alumni of your undergrad institution, W&L Law alums, former employers, parents of friends, and friends of parents to develop contacts to discuss career issues and summer opportunities
- Monitor your WLU email address for information from OCS about spring term recruiting opportunities
- Monitor Symplicity and other online resources (the Government Honors and Internships Handbook, for example) for position postings

## SPRING TERM

- If you haven't done so, or if you need a follow-up visit, meet with a career counselor about your application materials and job search
- Complete a mock interview with a W&L Law alum or other practitioner
- Monitor Symplicity and other resources for new job postings; submit applications to employers of interest; follow up on submitted applications (OCS can advise on an effective follow-up strategy)
- Consider opportunities available through the Government and Public Interest Job Fair and spring OCI (both administered through Symplicity)
- Consider funding options for unpaid summer employment, including outside sources as well as funding offered by the Law School, the Transnational Law Center and PILSA
- When you accept summer employment, let OCS know and add details to your Symplicity profile
- If you are interested in a research assistantship, speak with faculty members working in your subject matter area
- Consult with a member of the faculty and/or a career counselor to identify fall courses suited to your career interests
- Calendar important dates for summer/fall recruiting programs; register for fairs of interest
- If you are considering a post-graduate federal clerkship, attend OCS programming and acquaint yourself with the application timeline, as some judges recruit rising 2Ls

## 1L SUMMER

- Monitor your WLU email for information about OCS' regional Interview Programs, Fall OCI, second year job search considerations, and other career services events and activities.
- Sign up for OCS' Interview Programs, Fall OCI and job fairs of interest according to their deadlines
- If the Interview Programs and OCI will not advance your career objectives, develop an application strategy and timeline
- Network with alumni and other practitioners
- Prepare for your second year job search by:
  - Updating your resume (be sure to submit your resume to OCS before using it for an interview program or fall OCI)
  - Updating your cover letter
  - Selecting one or more writing samples and revising or redacting them as necessary
  - Contacting potential references and making a reference list
  - Obtaining an official transcript from the University Registrar
  - Keeping track of your work experience by creating a file that includes:
    - Brief descriptions of your assignments
    - Your written work product
    - Employer policy on redacting client or other confidential information
    - List of clients for whom you worked
    - List of attorneys with whom you worked
- Monitor Symplicity Job Postings and later OCI sessions
- Apply directly to fall-recruiting employers who are not coming to interview on campus
- Contact OCS with any questions about your summer experience or your preparation for your 2L job search

Networking is the ***on-going process*** of building professional contacts and relationships. This process does not have a definite time frame nor does it end once you have secured employment. *The goal of networking is to build long-term professional relationships for the purpose of obtaining a job, professional development, and personal growth.* Developing your personal network is an integral part of career planning and job searching, so you should begin this process immediately as a first year law student, if you have not already, and continue the process throughout your professional career.

Networking involves contacting people you know, or with whom you have some connection, to request assistance with your job search. These individuals need not have a job to offer you, and they need not be particularly high-ranking or influential professionals. Any professional contact is helpful if she can provide you with advice and information about a particular practice area, career path, or job market and introduce you to additional contacts.

There are numerous ways to generate your professional network. Once you have generated some contacts, the next step is to arrange meetings with them. Informational interviews enable you to meet practitioners, find out what they do, give them a chance to become familiar with your qualifications and interests, and to discover the names of other professionals with whom you should speak. The mechanics of obtaining and conducting informational interviews will be outlined later.

## **Networking offers you access to:**

- Information
- Advice
- Direction
- Opportunities
- Referrals

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING**

There are several reasons why building your network of professional contacts is vital to your job search and your career. However, one reason stands above the rest - networking is ***the most effective method of finding a job.*** Many students report to OCP and the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) that they secured their part-time, summer, and post-graduate positions through professional contacts. The number of law students, and attorneys, who obtain their jobs through networking makes sense when you consider that the majority of positions in the employment market go unadvertised in the "Hidden Job Market."

## **THE "HIDDEN JOB MARKET"**

The simple fact is that most employment opportunities are not advertised through traditional means. This requires finding creative ways to discover which opportunities are available and are a good match for you.

The existence of the hidden job market means that responding to job advertisements and sending out targeted mailings is only *part* of a complete job search. ***The best way to learn about unadvertised positions is to form a network of people who will get you connected to the job opportunities you want.***

## **BEFORE YOU BEGIN: HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS**

It is very important that you have realistic expectations before you begin developing professional relationships. When networking, *it is reasonable to expect:*

- Advice
- Valuable information about career fields, the market, and hiring trends
- Feedback about a resume, cover letter, and interviewing skills
- Assistance in formulating an action plan for a specific field or organization
- Referrals to others who might assist you
- Professional mentoring

***It is not reasonable to expect your contacts to find you a job.*** You are sure to turn people off when the only question you pose is: "Do you know of any openings?" Not only will you likely receive a negative response, but it is possible that you will lose an opportunity to establish a lasting relationship or gain other valuable information.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE NETWORKING PROCESS**

Networking can be extremely beneficial to your job search if you approach it strategically. The process can be summarized as follows:

- Developing Your Contacts List
- Making Contact
- Scheduling Informational Interviews & Appointments
- Following Up With Prior and New Contacts

## **DEVELOPING YOUR CONTACTS LIST**

### **What is a Contact?**

For purposes of your job search, a contact is anyone who can offer assistance with the job search. This assistance might include:

- Names of organizations or employers to approach
- Recommendations of helpful resources
- Advice on your resume, cover letter, or other job searching tips
- A personal referral to an employer
- An informational interview about what it is like to work in a particular job, field, or organization, about growth potential and salaries, about necessary job search skills and background, or about who is currently hiring

### **Why Contacts are so Important to Your Job Search**

While many law school students find summer internships (and indeed their first post-graduate positions) through career fairs and on campus interview programs, many others find positions through their professional and personal contacts. The method of finding jobs through networking only intensifies the longer one is out of law school.

### **Who are Your Contacts?**

The answer is quite simple - ANYONE YOU KNOW:

- Family: parents, siblings, relatives, partner, significant other
- Social circle: close friends, acquaintances, roommates
- Educational colleagues: fellow students from undergraduate and graduate schools, including W&L Law students, faculty, and staff
- Professional colleagues: past and present co-workers and supervisors
- People you encounter in your daily routine: your doctor, dentist, mail carrier, hair stylist, lawyer, members of your religious community, civic, professional, and social affiliations
- Anyone who knows anyone you know
- Anyone you discover *who you* want to know: you *read* about them; you got their name from a professional association; you heard them speak at an event

### **Finding Alumni**

You can access alumni databases from the Career Planning website on “Networking resources.”

- Alumni Support Network: The Alumni Mentoring Database contains alumni of W&L Law or W&L (who attended other law schools) who have volunteered to mentor. The database contains their contact details, and may be searched by location, practice area and other criteria.
- Colonnade Connections: This database includes W&L Law Alumni and W&L Undergraduate Alumni. Because the site includes both undergraduate and law alumni, you can limit your search to law school graduates by using the "school" search feature. Don't forget however, that many undergraduate alumni are now lawyers and may be able to offer assistance.
- Martindale.com: This site allows you to search for lawyers that have attended Washington and Lee that are in law firms or work in-house. You can limit your search by city.

## **Now that you have contacts, what do you do with them?**

Use them appropriately! Be conscious of their busy schedules and time constraints. Do not make unreasonable requests. THANK THEM. Follow-up and let them know how they helped.

## **MAKING CONTACT**

Once you have identified contacts, you can communicate with them through an emailed letter of introduction. If you are contacting someone you know you can initiate contact by phone rather than an email. Remember that the substance of the e-mail must be error free! The initial contact must concisely and precisely inform the reader:

- Who You Are
- How You Identified The Contact
- Why You Are Writing:
  - you are currently searching for employment
  - you would appreciate *any* advice and/or information they would be willing to share
  - request a brief meeting (i.e., informational interview), indicating when you will call to arrange it

If the contact is local, you should always request an in-person meeting. If you have an out of town contact, however, you can request a phone appointment, unless you *are* able to travel for a face-to-face meeting. You should always follow the e-mail with a phone call. When making the call, know your availability in order to arrange a mutually convenient time and date to meet with your contact.

Use the "Networking Checklist" on the next page to assist in preparation for making contact.



## **NETWORKING CHECKLIST**

Be prepared with:

- Introduction/establish rapport
- State your purpose (clearly say you are not asking for a job from them)
- Your two-minute pitch (background, work history, responsibilities, skills, and accomplishments)

Your Career Goal:

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Your Target Organizations and Fields:

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Your Specific Questions (always have three to five open-ended questions to draw out information)

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Obtain New Contact Names to Whom You Should Speak

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Thank them for their time.

## INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS

### OVERVIEW

Informational interviewing is widely considered the best networking strategy available to job seekers. Informational interviewing is the process of talking with people who have jobs that interest you in order to obtain *advice* and information which will aid you in your own job search. When meeting with a contact, you should begin by precisely explaining the purpose of your visit and what information and advice you are seeking. Informational interviews are great networking techniques for learning about career fields, job markets, particular organizations, and other contacts. You should provide your contact with your background and skills to give them a sense of your interests and strengths. You must be considerate of your contact's time and keep the interview brief. In an informational interview, the burden of production is on you - you must come prepared with a list of questions to ask your contact. Questions should be designed to elicit information about:

- Practice area
- Educational and professional background required
- A particular firm or organization
- The job market
- Advice on your job search
- Advice on who you should contact next

At the conclusion of your meeting, obtain the names of others who might be helpful and thank your contact for her time and advice.

### IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Informational interviewing is a valuable networking opportunity because it allows you to spend time with *your* networking contacts in a focused conversation that provides you with key information needed to launch a successful and fulfilling career!

#### **Some of the Advantages of Conducting Informational Interviews:**

- *You uncover an unbelievable amount of information* about what it is really like to work in a given practice. Even resources, such as books, directories, and videos cannot give you the kind of inside information gained by talking with practitioners in a practice area of interest.
- *You build self confidence and find yourself with renewed energy for your job search.* Because you are asking people for information, you will find that you are not facing constant rejection and instead will think of the many ways in which you are qualified and capable of doing the work you see others doing.

- *You hone valuable interviewing skills.* By the time you have had a number of informational interviews, you will enhance your sense of interview dynamics - you will understand how to read interviewing body language and increase your confidence in your professional, relaxed, and dynamic interview manner.
- *You gain visibility.* Once a potential employer knows who you are, they may have some ideas about how they or someone they know could use your strengths and skills.

## **WHEN TO CONDUCT INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

You can benefit from informational interviewing at virtually every stage of the job searching process:

- Early stages - you explore which career path, substantive field, and practice environment to pursue
- Middle stages -- you finalize career, practice field and environment choice
- Late stages -- you decide which organizations interest you and prepare for job interviews
- Maintenance stages - you continually reassess your goals and interests - you may choose to gather new information about particular jobs, practice areas or environments, or legal markets

## **HOW TO USE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

- Conduct self-assessment prior to beginning an informational interview in order to target the appropriate contacts. Explore your interests, skills, and goals so you will be better prepared to discuss them with others.
- *Before you make appropriate contact, understand that an informational interview is NOT a job interview.* You need to think of informational interviewing as a job search tool that allows you to plant many seeds, some of which will grow. If you ask for a job, many doors will close right away. In setting up your informational interviews, you are making a deal with each of your interviewees that you will not ask them for a job. Note that it is perfectly appropriate to be looking for job. Most law students are looking for a job. Your contacts will usually know that your long-term goal is finding employment.
- *When making contact, be clear, specific, and straightforward about what you want in advance.* Introduce yourself in an e-mail or phone call that you would like 20-30 minutes of their time, preferably in person. Reassure the contact that you are not expecting them to help you find a job with their organization, but instead, you are gathering information.

- *Do your research.* You need to learn as much as you can about the organization and person before your informational interview.
- *Be prepared.* Create a list of intelligent questions for your interviewee based upon your self-assessment and research. Remember in this dynamic, you are the interviewer.

## **MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN CONDUCTING INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

- *Placing your contact in an awkward situation.* If you are looking for a job, be upfront about it. This allows the contact the opportunity to decide how to proceed before the interview. Note - during the interview it is appropriate to ask questions related to how to search for positions in their field. Just let them know before the meeting the nature of the information you are seeking.
- *Arriving late or failing to keep the appointment.* Your contacts are busy people who are generous with their time.
- *Being so uninformed that you cannot formulate thoughtful, intelligent, and targeted questions.* You are the interviewer - you must be prepared so that you get the information you need. The burden is on you to make the interview a successful one. Otherwise, you are wasting your contact's time as well as your own.
- *Taking too much of your contact's time.* You must be respectful of your contact's schedule if you wish to maintain and build upon this relationship.
- *Forgetting to send a thank you note or letter after the meeting.* Thank you notes are critical, as well as periodic follow-up to inform the contact about your progress (see the section addressing the importance of follow-up below).
- *Failing to make contact with anyone to whom you have been referred by your contact.* You must continue to maintain and build your network of professional contacts. Following up with referrals will ensure that your network will grow and strengthen. Use the "Informational Interview Tracking Chart" worksheet below to keep track of all of your contacts and referrals.

## **WHO CONDUCTS INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWS**

Often, a person is able to gather important information through an informational interview that cannot or should not be discussed in a formal interview. For example, during an informational interview with a judge it is appropriate to ask what the duties of a law clerk entail. In a formal interview with the judge, however, you will be expected to know the duties required of a judicial clerk. In general, job seekers conduct

informational interviews when they are seeking information about particular:

- Career fields: i.e., real estate law; family law; civil rights law
- Professional environments: government agencies vs. private organizations; large vs. small law firms; city employers vs., suburban employers
- Geographic locations: i.e., the current legal job market in Boston, what the emerging job opportunities are in the Southwest
- Organizational cultures: i.e., minority and women applicants, in particular, often seek information about opportunities for advancement within an organization

## **KINDS OF ADVICE AND INFORMATION YOU CAN GATHER FROM AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

### **Information about your interviewee's career field:**

- Are there jobs in this field for recent law school graduates (or current students)? What are those jobs? If not, what are the paths that typically lead people to them?
- What kinds of employment opportunities exist in this city/town/region for people in this field? Do you envision the job market for this field growing or contracting in next few years?
- What is required for advancement in this field?
- Can you suggest any publications I should read? Organizations or associations I should join?

### **Information about your interviewee's job/position:**

- What are your primary job responsibilities?
- What percentages (of time) would you assign to each? How does your position fit in with the overall structure and goals of the organization?
- What is a typical day like? A typical week?
- What do you like most about your job? Least? What are the rewards? The frustrations?
- How did you get your job?

### **Information about the interviewee's professional background and career path:**

- What is your background?
- Is it typical of others in your field? If not, what is typical?
- Which experiences in your background were particularly valuable to your obtaining your current position?
- How have you advanced within the organization?
- How do you envision your future career path?

### **Information about the interviewee's organization:**

- What is the mission/philosophy of your organization?

- What are the values, work style, expectations, etc. of this organization?
- What are the challenges currently facing this organization?
- Does your organization have employee training and support?
- What does your organization look for when hiring law clerks or new attorneys?

### **Advice for a law student preparing for this career or field:**

- What skills and traits does it take to succeed in this field?
- Are there courses you would recommend that I take to help me in this field?
- Which credentials are especially important if I want to pursue a career in this field - internships, externships, clinics, publishing, part-time work?
- What suggestions do you have if I want to enter this field? Are there ways to get experience or other avenues of which you are aware?

### **General advice and names of additional referrals with whom you can contact:**

- Would you be willing to review my resume? Do you have any suggestions for improving it?
- Does my resume give a coherent picture of my experience and accomplishments?
- Can you suggest any opportunities that would give me a chance to build upon the skills I am developing in law school?
- Would you be willing to suggest other people for me to contact? May I use your name?

### **FOLLOW-UP**

Always send a thank you letter or note to your networking contact within two days of your meeting. You should keep all of your contacts informed of your job search progress. Call the contact if their advice, information, or referral resulted in your receiving an interview. Sending a note, whether by mail or email, every few months is appropriate - you never know when a contact may hear of an employment opportunity. More importantly, updating all of your contacts on the status of your job search is the right thing to do since maintaining professional relationships is a two-way street. You need to make contact on a regular basis – NOT JUST WHEN YOU NEED ADVICE!

*Nurturing relationships with other professionals is important and should be a permanent component of your career planning and development, and not just a temporary job search technique for finding your next position. When you complete your current job search, communicate with all of your contacts and thank them for their assistance. They want to know of your success and that they played a part in it. Furthermore, they will be more willing to assist you and other W&L Law students in the future.*

*Be organized.* Your follow-up will be much easier if you establish a process of keeping track of your contacts. Be sure to include the name, title, employer, mailing and

emailing addresses, and phone number for every person you have identified and met. Keep track of all communication, whether by phone, mail, or email, and indicate what resulted from the contact. You will also need to keep track of whether you need to follow-up with someone and when. One of the biggest mistakes job seekers make is failing to follow through with a contact, whether with thank you notes, by neglecting to call when you say you will, or by failing to forward a resume, writing sample, or other requested information. Use a "Networking Contact" Worksheet similar to the one on the next page to keep track of and manage your networking contacts.

# **SIMON STUDENT**

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## **EDUCATION**

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### **WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW, Lexington, VA**

Candidate for Juris Doctor, May 2016

- Public Interest Law Student Association, Member

### **DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, Hanover, NH**

Bachelor of Arts, *cum laude*, International Relations, May 2013

- Darby Award, presented to one senior for excellence in International Relations
- Two citations for outstanding work in International Relations courses
- Thesis: "The right of women with disabilities to access health care in South Africa: A critical analysis"

## **EXPERIENCE**

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### **D.C. COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, Washington DC**

*Intern*, Summer 2013

- Conducted client intake.
- Counseled and advised domestic violence victims in the process of obtaining protective orders against their alleged abusers.

### **HANOVER MUSEUM OF ART, Hanover, NH**

*Docent*, Summer-Spring 2013

- Led groups of visitors through the museum and presented information on the history of the various pieces and collections in the visiting and permanent collections.

### **DARTMOUTH COLLEGE RESIDENCE LIFE, Hanover, NH**

*Residence Assistant*, Fall 2010-Spring 2012

- Supported, counseled, and advised thirty first-year students.
- Mediated conflicts and enforced University policies.
- Developed relationships with residents and assisted residents in developing relationships with each other.
- Organized social, cultural, and community service programs.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

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### **BIG BROTHER BIG SISTER, Hanover, NH**

*Mentor*, 2009-2012

### **CENTER FOR SOCIAL CONCERNS, Hanover, NH,**

*Volunteer*, 2010-2012

### **CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES, Hanover, NH**

*Soup Kitchen Volunteer*, Summer 2009



# SALLY STUDENT

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434.312.3961  
[students@law.wlu.edu](mailto:students@law.wlu.edu)

**EDUCATION**     **Washington and Lee University School of Law**, Lexington, VA  
Candidate for Juris Doctor, May 2016

**University of Virginia**, Charlottesville, VA  
Bachelor of Arts, *cum laude*, Government, May 2013  
Honors:        Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society  
                  Henry E. and Sarah Johnson Sorter Government Scholarship

**EXPERIENCE**   **University of Virginia**, Charlottesville, VA, 2012-2013  
*News Director for Television 2 Class*  
Directed 30-minute live newscast twice a week. Led team of other students through the newscast. Made split-second decisions to correct any mistakes made on-air. Trained students on the use of news cameras and computer equipment.

**Outback Steakhouse**, Charlottesville, VA, 2010-2013  
*Server*  
Served customers in a fast-paced restaurant. Trained new employees. Worked 20-30 hours per week during the academic year to finance education.

**Clemons Library**, Charlottesville, VA 2009  
*Student Worker*  
Helped patrons find books. Occasionally served as sole librarian on weeknights.

**ACTIVITIES**    **University of Virginia Collegiate Mock Trial** 2009-2013  
*Team Captain*  
Led team to second-place finish at the American Mock Trial National Competition. Developed case strategy. Drafted opening statements, closing arguments, and direct and cross examinations. Researched legal issues. Argued motions and objections in front of scoring judges. Received feedback from judges and practicing attorneys on trial advocacy skills. Awarded "All American Attorney" at National Competition.

**The Cavalier Daily** 2010-2013  
*News Staff*  
Drafted articles on state, local and University news. Interviewed sources. Received 2012 Virginia Press Association Award for Critical Writing.

**INTERESTS**    Rock climbing, playing the cello, reading historical fiction

# SALLY STUDENT

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## EDUCATION

**WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW**, Lexington, VA

Candidate for J.D., May 2016

Honors: Academic Merit Scholarship

Activities: 1L Class President

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA**, Los Angeles, CA

B.A., *cum laude*, Government, May 2009

Honors: Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society

Activities: Pre-Law Society, Speakers Committee; Orientation Group Leader (peer advisor for first year students); Alpha Kappa Alpha, President

Study Abroad: University of Edinburgh; Edinburgh, Scotland; Summer 2007

## EXPERIENCE

**LYLAND & BRUNER**, Washington DC

October 2011-August 2013

Litigation Paralegal: Led team of seven paralegals during an extensive financial regulatory investigation. Wrote memoranda explaining investigative processes related to discovery. Reviewed documents in large scale litigation matters to determine relevance, privilege and responsiveness of discovery documents. Organized and maintained large quantities of documents and data. Proofread court filings for errors in citations and typographical errors. Managed as many as twelve vendors per trial handling all relevant expenses and issues.

**THE RICHMOND ADVOCATE**, Richmond, VA

June 2009-October 2011

Editor: Edited stories on current events and finalized layouts within tight deadlines.

Conducted investigative reports on news and public affairs. Evaluated all stories from reporters and edited for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors in addition to suggesting ways that each piece could be improved. Fact-checked all stories before printing. Proposed stories and headlines that would resonate with publication's audience.

**CONGRESSMAN JOSH CRAMER**, Washington DC

May 2009-June 2009

Legislative Assistant: Developed legislation related to health care, telecommunications, and international trade. Prepared responses to constituent inquiries.

## LANGUAGE SKILLS & INTERESTS

Spanish (proficient in reading and writing, conversational speaking)

Downhill skiing, tennis, rock-climbing

## CRAFTING EFFECTIVE COVER LETTERS WORKSHEET

*Distinguish Yourself: Submit perfect documents, tailored to the position you seek.*

Any networking contacts connected to this employer? (ex. alum, faculty, classmate, friend, family member)	
Why are you interested in this particular employer?	
Ties to geographic region? Why interested in this location?	

	EXAMPLE #1	EXAMPLE #2	EXAMPLE #3
PARAGRAPH TOPIC SENTENCE #1 (reason employer should hire you)			
PARAGRAPH TOPIC SENTENCE #2 (reason employer should hire you)			
CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH	Traveling to location of employer?		

- Does my cover letter sound like a mass mailing? Or is it targeted to this particular employer?
- If I were only to read the first sentences of my paragraphs, do the topic sentences grab my attention?
- If there is a job description does my cover letter address the listed requirements?

- Is the focus of the letter on what I can bring to the employer instead of what the position will do for me?
- Have I eliminated vague generalities and instead provided specific details? (ex. of vague statement: “through my classwork I have gained valuable insight...”)
- Have I read over the document to check for typos?
  - Is my grammar, punctuation and spelling impeccable?
  - If I have used portions of this letter before have I changed all of the employer names?
  - Have I used the correct name of the hiring attorney? / Is the name spelled correctly?
  - Is the cover letter in proper business letter format?
  - Have I updated the date of the letter?

## COVER LETTER FORMAT BLOCK STYLE

Do NOT include your name in the header.

There are two spaces between state and zip code.

Your Address  
City, State, Zip

Date

There should be two hard spaces between your address and the date. Spell out the month (ex: July 21, 2014).

There should be four hard spaces between the date and the employer's name.

Contact Name  
Contact Title  
Employer Name  
Employer Street Address  
City, State Zip

Never use "To Whom It May Concern." Be sure to use a COLON, not a comma.

The text of the letter should be single-spaced. A double space should separate the paragraphs.

Dear Mr./Ms.(use Ms. for women, unless told otherwise)/Judge, etc. Last Name:

**FIRST PARAGRAPH:** Introduce yourself by stating where you go to law school; when you plan to graduate (or your year in law school); and the position for which you are applying. Do not introduce yourself by name, however. Discuss interest in or tie to geographic area in which the employer is located and interest in particular employer. If applicable, note the person who recommended that you contact the employer. Mention where you are licensed (if applicable).

**SECOND PARAGRAPH:** Discuss how your qualifications, skills, and/or experiences fit the needs of the organization. Consider starting the paragraph with a strong topic sentence highlighting two or three main attributes or skill sets, and *in the following sentences, cite examples bolstering these points*. Be specific with your examples – describe specifically what you have done with a particular employer and avoid generalities.

**THIRD PARAGRAPH:** Mention your desire for an interview and your availability. If you will be in the area where the employer is located during a particular time period, note that you would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the employer at that time. Even if you have not planned a trip, you can mention your willingness to travel to the city for the interview. Indicate that you look forward to speaking with them soon, and express appreciation for the employer's consideration.

Sincerely,

The closing is positioned two lines below the last line of the body.

Your Signature

Your Name Typed

Enclosure

Use "Sincerely" or "Very truly yours" followed by a comma, four hard returns and your signature line. Sign your letters by hand or insert your electronic signature. Avoid cursive fonts.

Simply state "Enclosure" or "Enclosures" if more than one, two hard lines below the signature line to signify the inclusion of your resume, transcript and/or reference sheet.

Your address  
City, state zip code

Date

First and last name of contact person  
Title [if any]  
Employer name  
Street address  
City, state zip code

Dear Ms./Mr. last name of contact person:

**First Paragraph:** Introduce yourself and tell the employer why you are writing this letter and what position you are seeking. If someone suggested that you apply to the employer, mention this connection. Address any specifics about geography, e.g., if you are planning to practice in the area after graduation. Discuss your interest in the employer. The last sentence of this paragraph should be your “thesis” of the letter by setting out the 2-4 qualifications that you will discuss in the body of your letter.

**Second Paragraph:** Discuss your background, skills and qualifications, elaborating on your “thesis” statement. The topic sentence of your paragraph should be the conclusion that you want the reader to reach after reading your paragraph. Then, you can “prove” that general statement by using concrete examples.

**Third Paragraph:** [if needed] Further describe particular experiences highlighted on your resume that suit you for this position.

**Last Paragraph:** Close the letter by thanking the contact person. If you will be in the area in the near future and would be available to meet with the employer, make this suggestion in the final paragraph.

Sincerely,

Your Signature  
Your name

Enclosure(s)

### EXAMPLE OF APPLICATION LOG

Name and Location of employer	Name and contact information of the individual(s) to whom you sent your materials and/or made your initial contact	Note to help distinguish employer	Updates of communications with employer (including follow up calls or emails, rejections, callback invitations, etc), including the date of the communication
Scotch & Keller (Roanoke, VA)	George Recruiter, Recruiting Coordinator, <a href="mailto:recruiter@scotchkeller.com">recruiter@scotchkeller.com</a> , 414.514.3345	Boutique employment law firm	12/1/13: Sent application to email address listed on website.  1/12/13: called Mr. Recruiter. Firm still considering whether to take a summer intern.
Durham & Lowndes (Roanoke, VA)	Susan Contact, Firm Administrator, <a href="mailto:scontact@durham.com">scontact@durham.com</a> 456.789.3222	General practice firm. Requested students with grades in top 30%.	1/15/13: applied through Symplicity job posting  1/25/13: interviewed  1/30/13: received rejection letter
Lowell, Allen, & Myers (Roanoke, VA)	Jeffrey Lowell, Managing Partner, <a href="mailto:lowellj@lam.com">lowellj@lam.com</a> 559.312.3961	Main practice groups include employment law, healthcare, and construction.	1/15/13: Professor Miller suggested that I apply and provided partner's email address. Sent materials directly to managing partner.  1/25/13: called firm to follow up. Will meet with

**EXAMPLE OF APPLICATION LOG**

			Mr. Lowell when traveling to Roanoke.
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# Symplicity Instructions

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Symplicity is our on-line recruitment software used for on-campus interviews, regional interview programs, job fairs and job postings. We also use it to gather information on where W&L Law students spend their summers and their post-graduate jobs.

Steps to take:

1. Go to W&L Law home page
2. Click on **CAREER PLANNING**
3. Click on **CURRENT STUDENT**
4. Click on **SYMPPLICITY**
5. Click on “**for students/alumni**”
6. Log in using your email address and student ID number.
7. Read and initial the Professionalism Statement.
8. Click on **PROFILE**
9. Fill out profile pages
10. Have your resume reviewed by an OCS Counselor before uploading
11. Click on **DOCUMENTS** and **ADD NEW**
  - a. create your documents in Word
  - b. Symplicity will convert documents to .pdf
  - c. Check uploaded documents for accuracy
  - d. You will receive email from Linda Johnson in January regarding transcripts. Prepare “Course Sheet” (list fall and spring courses) if needed before transcripts are ready.
  - e. limited to 10 documents at a time
12. Click on **JOBS** tab to view current jobs available
13. Click on **EMPLOYERS** tab to view list of employers
14. Click on **OCI** tab to view interview programs

## **Symplicity – Uploading Documents**

1. Create document (resume, cover letter, writing sample, list of references) in Microsoft Word
2. Name document and save to your hard drive
3. Log into Symplicity
4. Go to **DOCUMENTS** tab
5. Click on **ADD NEW** button
6. Choose type of document you are uploading (i.e., resume, cover letter, etc.)
7. **TRANSCRIPTS:** YOU WILL RECEIVE AN EMAIL FROM LINDA JOHNSON IN JANUARY TELLING YOU HOW TO GET AN UNOFFICIAL COPY OF YOUR TRANSCRIPT. SAVE TRANSCRIPT TO YOUR HARD DRIVE AND THEN CLICK ON THE **CLICK HERE** BUTTON TO UPLOAD YOUR TRANSCRIPT.
8. Browse and find document to upload
9. Enter name of document in label box (i.e., resume, cover letter, etc.)
10. Hit **SUBMIT** button
11. Wait for system to finish converting your document to a .pdf
12. Open document and check to make sure it has converted properly. Be sure your resume did not become two pages.

## Setting Up a Job Search Agent

There are several steps:

Go to **JOBS** tab

-Go to **ADVANCED SEARCH** tab

-Check box that says **SAVE AS** and then name your search, i.e., Virginia jobs.

-Select your parameters. Keep as broad as possible to begin with, you can always update and make a narrower search.

-Click on **SUBMIT** button

Now go to **SEARCH AGENTS** tab

-Click on **SCHEDULE** button across from the search agent you just created

-Click on **YES** to enable more selections

-Select frequency that you would like to receive emails

-Select multiple – how often do you want to receive emails

-Then click **SUBMIT** and you are all done!

WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW  
OFFICE OF CAREER STRATEGY

**STUDENT PROFESSIONALISM  
STATEMENT**

Students at Washington and Lee University School of Law (“W&L Law”) are preparing to enter a profession in which they will be expected to adhere to the rigorous ethical and professional codes of conduct that govern lawyers. In keeping with W&L Law's commitment to helping students develop the professional skills they will need in the practice of law, many of which come into play in the career planning and recruiting context, the Office of Career Strategy (“OCS”) has prepared the following Student Professionalism Statement. All students are expected to adhere to these principles in their interactions with OCS, employers, alumni, and, indeed, the W&L Law community as a whole.

1. OCS Policies and Communications. I agree to keep myself informed of OCS policies, procedures, resources, employment opportunities, programs, and applicable deadlines by monitoring on-line job postings and OCI schedules, and reading emails, memoranda, newsletters and other communications circulated to students or posted to Symplicity and the OCS website. I agree to conduct myself in accordance with all applicable policies and procedures.

2. OCS Appointments. I agree to calendar and to keep appointments with OCS or, if I cannot keep an appointment, to contact OCS in advance to cancel or reschedule the appointment.

3. Document Review. I agree to provide my resume and cover letter, or any other documents to be reviewed, to OCS no later than 24 hours before a scheduled appointment if I would like to receive comments during the appointment. If I submit documents for review by email, I agree to submit them to only one OCS counselor at a time (sequential submission of documents to multiple counselors is permitted).

4. Resume/Cover Letter. I understand my resume and other uploaded documents are available to the OCS staff through Symplicity. I agree to provide honest and accurate information to employers in my resume, cover letter or other submissions, and in the course of any interview.

5. Sincere Interest. I agree that I will only apply to employers in which I have a sincere interest.

6. On-Campus Interviews. I agree to be prepared for, and attend, all scheduled on-campus interviews, including those taking place in Charlottesville. I understand that I must obtain the advance consent of the Assistant Dean of OCS to cancel an on-campus interview, and that such a cancellation will be approved only for good cause. If unforeseen circumstances prevent me from obtaining such advance consent, I agree to contact OCS as soon as possible regarding the interview.

7. Call Back Interviews. In scheduling call back interviews, I agree to avoid, to the extent possible, conflicts with actual or potential on-campus interviews by keeping a calendar of

dates on which I have, or may have, such an on-campus interview. I further agree to be prepared for, and attend, all scheduled call back interviews. If my circumstances change such that I cannot attend the interview or I have already accepted, or am seriously considering, an offer from another employer, I agree to contact the interviewing employer as soon as possible to explain the circumstances and cancel or reschedule the interview.

8. Regional Interview Programs. I agree to comply with the rules of all regional interview programs and other job fairs in which W&L Law participates, particularly the attendance requirements, and to be prepared for all interviews at an interview program or job fair. I understand that if I have missed an application deadline for a Regional Interview Program that any attempts made to contact participating employers will require prior approval by OCS. I understand that any contact with participating employers is not permitted for the week prior to the interview program. Any misrepresentations made in order to gain entry to a Regional Interview Program will be considered a violation of the Professionalism provision of the OCS Recruitment Policies and Procedures and this statement.

9. Offers. I agree to abide by the guidelines published by the National Association for Law Placement ("NALP"), available at [www.nalp.org](http://www.nalp.org), for the acceptance and holding of offers.

10. Employment Information. I agree to provide OCS with requested information concerning my summer and permanent employment status and details of my summer and permanent employment. I understand that, in addition to retaining such information to compile statistical reports, OCS will make appropriate use of such information to establish and maintain recruiting relationships with employers and assist students as they search for employment.

11. Professional Conduct. I agree to act in a professional manner, and to exhibit a professional demeanor, in my dealings with OCS, employers, alumni, networking contacts, fellow students, and W&L Law personnel, whether such interactions are in person, by phone or in writing, including email correspondence. I agree to maintain a professional internet presence by selecting appropriate privacy settings on social networking sites and conducting periodic internet content searches. I understand that statements made in print or online may affect my reputation, my job search, my admission to the bar, and the reputation of Washington and Lee, and agree to conduct myself professionally in debate and comment, in print and online.

I have read, and agree to abide by, the principles set forth in the [OCS Recruitment Policies](#) and this Student Professionalism Statement. I understand that I must return a signed copy of this Statement to OCS in order to have access to OCS resources, including Symplicity.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Year: \_\_\_\_\_

(please print)

**Recruitment Policies and Procedures**

**SINCERE INTEREST REQUIREMENT**

1. When you apply to an employer, either through Symplicity or on your own, you are indicating a sincere interest in interviewing with and accepting a possible offer from that employer.

**PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

2. A. You are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner in all dealings with employers, alumni, faculty and staff.
- B. Professional conduct includes, but is not limited to:
  - i. responding within 24 hours to emails, telephone calls, employer requests for information or interviews, and all other written correspondence,
  - ii. maintaining a professional outgoing voicemail message that, at a minimum, confirms that the caller has reached the correct number,
  - iii. establishing a professional address for any non-WLU.edu email account used for applications or networking,
  - iv. maintaining such security settings on social networking and other websites as are necessary to present a professional presence to employers and bar examiners, and
  - v. exhibiting professionalism in debate and commentary, both in print and online.

**INTERVIEW PROGRAMS**

**On-Campus and Virginia-Based W&L Interview Programs**

3. A. On-Campus and Virginia-Based W&L Interview Programs include, but are not limited to:
  - 1) all On-Campus interviews,
  - 2) all interviews conducted at the OCI satellite location in Charlottesville, VA,
  - 3) the Spring Commonwealth Law School Consortium Job Fair (CLSCJF), and
  - 4) the Public Interest and Government Job Fair (PIGJF).
- B. You may not decline interviews granted for On-Campus or Virginia-based W&L Interview Programs.

- C. An interview granted for an On-Campus Interview or Virginia-based W&L Interview Program may only be cancelled or rescheduled with express approval from the Assistant Dean of Career Strategy. Before you cancel or attempt to reschedule an interview you must first contact the Assistant Dean of Career Strategy. Approval to cancel or reschedule an interview for an On-Campus Interview or Virginia-based W&L Interview Program is granted only in cases where a student has either 1) accepted an offer of employment or, 2) experienced an emergency.
- D. If you withdraw from an On-Campus or a Virginia-based W&L Interview Program interview because you have accepted an offer of employment you must withdraw completely from all other scheduled interviews and subsequent interview programs or job fairs for the remainder of the recruiting season unless otherwise permitted by the Assistant Dean of OCS.
- E. You must abide by each term and condition of the CLSCJF and PIGJF set out in the registration documents and memoranda circulated to participants.

### **W&L Law Regional Interview Programs**

- 4. A. W&L Regional Interview Programs include programs currently offered in Boston, Dallas, Los Angeles and New York, as well as any future locations for Regional Interview Programs.
- B. If you receive one or more interviews for a W&L Law Regional Interview Program you are obliged to attend the interview(s) unless otherwise set out in the Regional Interview Program policies or approved in advance by the Assistant Dean of OCS.
- C. Permission to withdraw from a W&L Law Regional Interview Program may only be granted by the Assistant Dean of Career Strategy. Permission to withdraw from a W&L Law Regional Interview Program is given only in cases where a student has either 1) accepted an offer of employment or, 2) experienced an emergency.
- D. If you withdraw from a W&L Law Regional Interview Program interview because you have accepted an offer of employment you must withdraw completely from all other scheduled interviews and subsequent interview programs or job fairs for the remainder of the recruiting season unless otherwise permitted by the Assistant Dean of OCS.
- E. You must abide by each term and condition of the Regional Interview Programs set out in the registration documents and memoranda circulated to participants.

## **Non-W&L Law Interview Programs and Job Fairs**

5. A. You may only decline interview offers obtained through Non-W&L Law interview programs and job fairs (hereinafter “programs”) if doing so is consistent with the stated attendance policy of that program. You are responsible for reviewing and following all policies of Non-W&L Law programs. Prior to declining an interview offer obtained through a Non-W&L Law program you are required to contact the coordinating staff member in Career Strategy to inform them of your intended withdrawal and to provide them with a copy of the Non-W&L Law program’s attendance policy.
- B. If you withdraw from a Non-W&L Law program because you have accepted an offer of employment you must withdraw completely from all other scheduled interviews and subsequent programs, including W&L Law programs, for the remainder of the recruiting season unless otherwise permitted by the Assistant Dean of OCS.

## **Illness Related Absences**

6. If you are too ill to attend an interview, you must notify Career Strategy before your interview time or as soon as possible thereafter. Within three days of missing an interview due to illness, you must deliver to Career Strategy a signed letter of apology addressed to the employer.

## **Missed Interviews**

7. If you miss a scheduled interview for any reason besides illness you are to notify Career Strategy by telephone (540.458.8535) as soon as possible thereafter. Within 24 hours of missing an interview, you must deliver to Career Strategy a signed letter of apology addressed to the employer. The letter of apology will be reviewed by the Assistant Dean or Assistant Director of Career Strategy and is subject to mandatory revisions. A second draft of the letter with mandatory revisions, if requested, is due back to Career Strategy within 24 hours of notice. Missing a scheduled interview will subject you to sanctions. See the “Non-Compliance” section, below, for information concerning sanctions.

## **Schedule Conflicts**

8. A. You are responsible for maintaining a calendar that reflects ALL of the program interviews to which you have applied.
- B. Program interviews include On-Campus Interviews, Virginia-Based W&L Program Interviews, W&L Law Regional Programs Interviews, and Non-W&L Law Program and Job Fair interviews.



- C. If after applying for a Program Interview you subsequently schedule a callback interview or other appointment that conflicts with the Program Interview you must reschedule the call back interview or other appointment in order to attend the Program Interview. You are to promptly speak with the Assistant Dean of Career Strategy if you are unable to comply with this provision.
- D. Failure to attend a Program Interview due to a schedule conflict will subject you to sanctions. See the “Non-Compliance” section, below, for information concerning sanctions. Within 24 hours of missing a Program Interview, you must deliver to Career Strategy a signed letter or letters of apology addressed to each of the employers whose interview(s) you missed. The letter(s) of apology will be reviewed by the Assistant Dean of Career Strategy and is subject to mandatory revisions. A second draft of the letter(s) with mandatory revisions, if requested, will be due back to Career Strategy within 24 hours of notice.
- E. You are responsible for negotiating a rescheduled interview with an employer. Career Strategy Staff does not represent students in efforts to reschedule.

## **RESUMES**

- 9. All facts contained on your resume must be true and accurate. You may list experiences for which you have been selected, but in which you have not yet participated. State your status clearly (e.g., competitively selected for Black Lung Clinic, beginning Fall semester). You may not list experiences for which you have not been selected and in which you have not yet participated (e.g., Intend to participate in Davis Appellate Advocacy Competition).
- 10. A. You may, but are not required to, list cumulative grade and class rank information on your resume. You may list grade information without rank, but may not list rank without also providing grade information. If you elect to report your cumulative GPA, (i) you must report the GPA exactly as it is provided to you, i.e., to three digits beyond the decimal (ex. 3.114) (ii) you may also include ranking information and (iii) you may also list additional grading information, e.g. your GPA for a given semester or year, or your GPA for a group of related courses. You are personally responsible for the accuracy of any individual grade calculations (e.g., GPA for tax courses). If you elect to report your cumulative class rank, (i) you must report the percentile exactly as provided by the Law School and (ii) you must also include your cumulative GPA and (iii) you may also include non-cumulative ranking information provided by the Law School, such as your rank for a semester.
- B. Transfer students may list their GPA from their first year institution. This GPA must be reported exactly as it appears on the granting institution’s transcript and must clearly be attributed to the granting institution and not to Washington and Lee University School of Law. As transfer students do not receive a Washington and Lee University School of Law GPA until the conclusion of their second year of

legal studies, a Washington and Lee University School of Law GPA may not be reported by a transfer student on a resume until after the conclusion of their second year of study. If the Washington and Lee University School of Law GPA is reported on a transfer student's resume it must comply with Section 10.A of these policies.

### **APPLICATION DEADLINES**

11. The deadline for all Symplicity applications is no later than 11:30 p.m. on the date indicated in the OCI schedule or Job Posting. Students are advised to submit their materials well in advance of posted deadlines to accommodate unplanned technological and logistical issues.
12. If you are mailing application materials directly to an employer, your materials must be RECEIVED on or before the date indicated in their Job Posting.

### **NALP GUIDELINES**

13. Washington and Lee University School of Law is a member of the National Association for Law Placement (NALP), which has promulgated guidelines concerning employment offers and acceptances. Students must adhere to NALP rules. To read the guidelines and their interpretations visit the NALP website, [nalp.org](http://nalp.org).

### **NON-COMPLIANCE WITH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

14. Failure to comply with the letter and spirit of these policies and procedures may result in sanctions, up to and including exclusion from submission of resumes through Symplicity, exclusion from On-Campus interviewing, exclusion from use of Symplicity and other OCS privileges, or other law school discipline, as determined by the Director of Career Strategy and the Deans of the Law School.
15. You are expected to exercise professional and ethical judgment in all aspects of the recruitment process. Lack of specific prohibition against an activity which is unprofessional, unethical or damaging to the Law School or fellow students, does not permit such behavior.

### **DISCLOSURE POLICY**

The Office of Career Strategy (the "OCS") respects the privacy of all students and complies with all legal requirements pertaining to student privacy.

From time to time, various university constituencies and outside organizations request that the Office provide them with information about currently-enrolled students. OCS thoroughly reviews the requests and only complies with them when, in OCS's professional judgment, a response will benefit current or prospective students or the

institution as a whole. Certain requests, such as those from the American Bar Association and the U.S. News & World Report, are received annually and our response is institutionally mandatory.

To ensure that OCS can carry out its obligations to such groups, the office requires students to submit certain information about their job searches and results. Students must promptly and completely respond to all OCS inquiries made for the purposes of compiling data on employment statistics. Failure to do so may result in sanctions.

Information that does not identify students by name will be statistically aggregated and provided to groups with legitimate interest in receiving such information. Information that identifies students by name will be shared with university constituencies, as dictated by obligations of OCS to enhance career opportunities for students and contribute to the mission of the law school and university.

On occasion, employers request information in order to provide promotional materials and/or invitations to certain events. OCS does not provide contact information to these employers. Instead, we offer to make the material available to students on their behalf. However, if an employer requests a copy of a students' resume for purposes of potential employment, OCS may furnish a copy of said resume to the employer and OCS will notify the respective student(s) of this request as soon as practicable.

In order to counsel students effectively and track employers' recruiting behavior, OCS is privy to certain information regarding students' grade point average and class rank. This information is strictly confidential, and will not be shared with any constituency in any format that identifies students by name or that reveals facts or characteristics that would reveal students' identities.

 [Click to Print](#) or Select 'Print' in your browser menu to print this document.

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# Finding 'Success': A New Equilibrium in the BigLaw Marketplace

Robert N. Freedman, Daniel H.R. Laguardia, Doreen E. Lilienfeld and Linda E. Rappaport, New York Law Journal

August 18, 2014

Whether the cause was the credit crisis, the lingering effects of the "Great Recession," or just a natural shift in the market for legal services from sellers to buyers, law students and law firms have seen a long-standing equilibrium for achieving success disrupted, and the two sides are still looking for ways to restore it. For many years before 2008, the equilibrium was well settled and based on the institutionalized—and constrained—path to success that law firms presented. Now, however, that path diverges. And law firms are seeking new and innovative ways to sell their product (what is still a very meaningful and fulfilling career path) to a marketplace made up of top students who have many different options at many different stages of their careers. So, how will this balance be restored? Perhaps it will be as simple as both sides recognizing that success for either a student or a firm is not defined as a single concept but rather the ability to take advantage of the significant shifts in the legal marketplace and an openness to doing so. In defining success, lawyers would do well to remember the best answer to most law school questions: It depends.

In hindsight (and with the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia) it all seemed so simple "back in the day." There was a relatively small group of firms that the market for legal services viewed as "elite" or "highly prestigious," and among those firms competition was limited. Firms in this group knew the client base of the other firms in the group and, for the most part, each was able to coexist without infringing on the others' business. Quantitative metrics and ranking tables were not needed in a world in which everyone knew each other and there was more than sufficient work to go around. This was a time before English firms merged with U.S. firms, before the rise of the 3,000-plus lawyer law firm, and before it was an accepted norm that groups of law firm partners could move from one firm to another.

Each of the firms in this elite club recruited from the top 15 or so law schools in the country, but because the number of firms in the club was limited and the work was plentiful, there was abundant need for, and supply of, good students and young lawyers. The billable hour model was rarely questioned, and, given the state of technology, law firms needed a considerable amount of people-power to assist their clients. At that time, many top law students perceived that a job in one of the firms in the elite club was the most prestigious—and most remunerative—route for law students to take.

Most, if not all, of the firms in this group had a well-defined, if not expressly stated, definition of a successful hire. Simply stated, it was a capable junior lawyer who worked hard at the tasks provided. Senior partners managed relationships, junior partners managed the several matters brought into the firm from the relationships managed by the senior partners, and the associates did a large portion of the work. There really was not much need to expand the criteria of evaluation given the limited competition and the small size of the club. Those who excelled at the criteria were shuttled along a seven- or eight-year path and ultimately made a partner (if the profitability of the law firm permitted). Though movement to clients was always an option, lateral movement was rare at every level.

As referred to above, there are many reasons for the fundamental shifts in the current legal market, and those reasons are better left for other fora. It is nevertheless worthwhile to note the following features of the current legal market that have resulted from the shifts: (1) rather than having a relatively small group of firms for law students to review and choose from, "elite" or "highly prestigious" top firms now come in many different sizes and specialties, from large but-still-considered-boutique litigation shops, to more tech-focused firms, to 4,000 lawyer firms with 40-plus offices, offering law students a "something for everyone" assortment, (2) jobs outside the law firm world have become more numerous, interesting, and potentially more remunerative than in the former paradigm, (3) competition is rampant, and (4) advances in technology have greatly enhanced productivity and efficiency.

Students now constantly reevaluate whether a long-term career at a law firm is really the meaning of success—more so, it seems, than in the past. And this reevaluation is a good thing. For those who love practicing in the firm environment, with its commercial intricacies, its premium on creative problem solving and flawless execution, and its competitive rush, it is difficult to think of a more attractive job. Indeed, the variety of experience offered at large firms, in terms of the type of work available, the opportunity for international placement and experience, and the ability to do pro-bono or public interest work is hard to match. But it can come with a corresponding cost of significant time and energy, and students should ensure that is therefore really the right fit for them. It is entirely rational that law students and young lawyers who have seen a job market with increased flexibility and substantial variety of opportunities, and who have a generational openness to change and less devotion to a single job or career, become more mobile just as the world has become more mobile.

Similarly, law firms now evaluate their staffing more actively, and consider whether it is realistic to expect that associates will, or will want to, stay at a firm longer than four to five years. Firms have also adjusted their expectations for associate (and partner) performance in a long-term role. Leadership, management and success in the "business of law" have all become more important measures of achievement. There is, therefore, a need for both young lawyers and law firms to adjust to each other's expectations and to create a new paradigm for success.

Perhaps a good starting place is to expressly recognize the different career alternatives in the legal marketplace and to foster an open forum for discussing those alternatives. Dialogue regarding alternative career paths has traditionally been muted within law firms. Firms were reluctant to engage in such conversations for fear that they would be left with too few associate resources. Firms also worried (and continue to worry) that associates might misunderstand conversations about alternatives to be implicit warnings of failure within the firm. Students shared, and often continue to share, similar concerns that expressing interest in alternatives implied a

rejection of the practice of law at a firm and would engender reciprocal rejection or abandonment by the firm.

Both of these views ignore the reality of what a legal career is or can be, and the approach has to change. From the beginning of a legal career, when associates line up their summer jobs and consider their post-graduate options, they should also consider how they plan to develop. Firms need to shoulder their burden of training and mentoring young lawyers along any of the number of paths they may take. Just as firms have begun to focus more regularly on skills other than legal research and drafting, including marketing, thought leadership and team development, they must also focus on preparing those interested for careers in the public sector, in-house, or even in business apart from the practice of law. Also, where firms may have been inclined in the past to have more siloed practice groups to better serve their client's siloed business units, there is an increased need for lawyers to be more flexible in their practice and for associates, in particular, to be more well-rounded and capable of shifting between work in different practice areas. This also creates a welcome environment for those students looking for variety in their practice rather than starting and ending their career in a single practice area, and enhances their opportunities in a job market where changing employers and careers happens more frequently. And, of course, everyone has to be more open to talking about options.

What then are some ideas to assist law students and young lawyers achieve a new success equilibrium with law firms? First, there is an increased need for law students and young lawyers to take control of their own careers. Recognizing the wide variety of options now existing in the legal marketplace means also recognizing that a good navigation system is required to take advantage of those options. Second, while there has always been a need for honest and frequent feedback, this is even more important in today's law firms. It should not be frowned upon to recognize that not every work environment is right for every lawyer at every point in his or her career. Finally, strengthening the relationship between a firm's recruiting and professional development departments is essential. Whether the law firm assists in developing lawyers for a long term career within the law firm or assists lawyers in finding the right path outside of the law firm, understanding a student's or young lawyer's goals from the inception of the recruiting process and throughout their law firm career will be important for the long-term success of both the firm and the lawyer.

## Keeping Your Cool - A Law Student’s Perspective on Networking

By *Stephanie Stroup* • May 23, 2014 • *Careers*

I was about eight weeks into law school when one of my classmates said that she had two extra tickets to an award luncheon with women lawyers. I eagerly accepted the invite because I wanted to start getting to know these unfamiliar legal circles. The next day, in a taxi on the way to the event, another student who was joining us brought up a great, relevant concern: “Why will people want to talk to me? I am just a student. I do not have anything to offer. How do I network?” Although I did not admit it at the time, I was thinking the exact same thing. Each of us – whether we are students or not – have asked these questions. But, how can we make these events a little less frightening?

**First, visualize.** Before a big networking event, I always try to think about the structure of the event, and how I will comfortably deal with awkward moments. I almost feel like I am an athlete getting ready for a big game because I need to mentally prepare. Indeed, there will be times when I will head over to the snack table (again) to refill my plate, but, there will also be times where I politely introduce myself and start a real conversation.

**Second, do your research.** This piece of advice was passed along to me, thankfully, and it is my Number 1 tool. Before any event, I look at both who will be speaking and attending. I then see if there is anyone specific who I might want to approach, and then I do a little bit of research. I look up, for example, if someone either has the same alma mater as me, or followed an interesting career path that resonates. In addition, I have found that if I have questions relatively prepared, then I am much more confident when I actually talk to them because I know we have some common-ground that can help us get past “small talk” and into a more meaningful conversation.

**Third, “give back.”** A common misconception about networking - especially when you are a student – is that it is a one-way street where employers are the only ones that can help students and not vice versa. But, this is a far from the case. As students, we have a tremendously valuable asset: time. I have found that a great way to get to know people in an organization, for example, is to help out, and do the “dirty” stuff. Do not be afraid to email an event coordinator and ask what needs to be done. Whether it is checking coats, making photocopies, or working the sign-in sheets, you will be remembered.

**Fourth, use your school as a platform to keep in touch.** For example, I recently met an attorney who was interested in learning more about copyright law, and wanted to expand his firm’s copyright practice. A few months later, Cardozo held a big copyright symposium that focused on 3-D printing. As soon as I heard about the event, I sent the attorney an email to let him know about it. This simple gesture kept us in touch while also helping out the attorney.

**Last, practice.** Like many things, networking is a skill that improves with practice. However, I would not wait for big networking events to get comfortable. Instead, start practicing talking to new people in low-risk environments. Personally, I have had a lot of success using websites like Meetup.com – a website that gets people together who have similar interests that span from finance to storytelling to hiking.

A few months ago, I decided to go to an event that was aimed at woman entrepreneurs. Equipped with my 15-pound token law school backpack, I had to drag myself to the event. I walked in a

little late, and found a group of about fifteen women seated in bar stools at a big, long table. I went up to the corner, eager to squish my way into the conversation. Unfortunately, I was totally ignored.

At that moment, I thought about walking out of the event. I was chair-less, awkwardly standing off to the side of the table, and, again, had that big backpack. Then, my outlook shifted, and I realized that I was already at the event, and here was this entire table of people. If these people were not going to be friendly, there were better people with whom to speak with!

I picked myself back up, walked to the other end of the table, and immediately things were different. I ended up having not only a great conversation, but also learning a lot about inspiring women who had started their own companies. The event also gave me new experience to add to my networking repertoire. Now, I will be much more comfortable when an uncomfortable situation happens at a “real” networking event.

From prepping for networking events with visualization techniques and research to making sure to “give back” and practice, these strategies have helped me turn networking into something that is a lot less frightening, and a lot more beneficial.



[Legal Jobs](#) >> [Legal Articles](#) >> [Career Counsel](#) >> Developing the skills of writing a perfect Law firm Resume

# Developing the skills of writing a perfect Law firm Resume

by Law Firm Staff

## I. Introduction

A good resume is an extremely important tool in the job search process. Because firms are inundated with resumes, your resume must be able to [get the attention of the human resources manager](#) and create a good, strong impression at a brief glance. Your resume is your sales pitch to the employer. It is not merely a recitation of your life's chronology. You need to make your value to the employer clear and, since your resume will likely only get about thirty seconds of the employer representative's time, you need your value to be emphasized and evident from a quick scan and cursory examination.

There are two styles of resumes: functional and chronological. Chronological resumes are useful when outlining your accomplishments and experience in relation to your past employment. Functional resumes break your accomplishments into areas of experience and are more useful when you have had many jobs or large gaps in your employment history. If you have had many jobs, all of which are relevant, the employer is likely to assume that you were unhappy or unsuccessful at your past jobs. Constant job migration is never a good indication to any employer. By emphasizing your knowledge and set of skills while downplaying your job-hopping, you can sometimes eliminate the stigma that employers will associate with your employment history. However, because many legal employers are interested in seeing a resume that paints a chronological picture of your advancing career through your past employment, the functional resume will appear confusing and will make the employer suspicious of your intentions. This article is designed to help both experienced and inexperienced job seekers design a resume that is effective and sure to leave a favorable impression with any potential employer.

This article consists of two sections that offer specific tips for improving the content and appearance of your resume. Two appendices follow the article. Appendix I contains a list of several hundred Action Verbs - words that will energize your job descriptions and emphasize all your accomplishments properly.

## II. Content of Your Resume

**Tell the truth.** [Lying on your resume will not help you.](#) Employers are very familiar with employment verification and reference-checking services, and they do use them. Do not lie, or stretch the truth on your resume. Don't even think about it. Absolutely every statement on your resume should be the absolute, verifiable truth. No exceptions.

**Be proud of your extensive career.** If you have been working for many years and have many accomplishments under your belt, you do not have to be limited to a single page resume. If your resume spills onto a second page, it should fill at least a half of a page. Be sure to put your name and contact information on the top of the second page as well.

**Eliminate excess language.** Someone who has already scanned a hundred resumes that day and will still have to read a hundred more before the day's end will scan your resume. Saying "Currently I am actively involved in the day-to-day decisions regarding management of the document management system of my firm" will make the decision-maker sick of reading it. Instead you can say, "Supervised all daily decisions [regarding document management](#)" or "Made key decisions regarding document

management system".

**You are not writing an essay.** There is no need to use "I" or "my", and you should eliminate articles where appropriate. A better phrasing of "I reorganized the firm's billing practices, reducing our errors by 35%" is "Reorganized billing practices, reducing errors by 35%." Short phrases and sentence fragments are the most efficient and effective methods for making your point.

**Your accomplishments are more important than your "responsibilities."** What sounds more impressive - the fact that you were "Responsible for filing and storage of case records " or that you "Structured system for filing and storage to minimize cost and maximize availability of documents?" "Responsibilities" implies passive activity, which won't excite the person thinking of paying you. Using Action Verbs (see Appendix I) will revive the active voice and energize each job's duties and accomplishments. Several important Action Verbs to keep in mind are "enacted", "performed", "supervised", "maintained", "organized", and "developed".

**Avoid irrelevancies.** It is important to exclude all irrelevant information, including experience, employment and superfluous information. If you worked as a waiter during college, it is not necessary to list that job. However, don't attempt to fill the gap by stretching your relevant employment dates. Instead, make sure you can give an honest answer if asked about it during an interview. Include your objective on the resume at the top so that your employer will understand why you are applying and have context for understanding your experience.

Personal information other than your name, address, phone number, and email address is unnecessary. The employer does not need to know your birth date, height, weight, marital status, or hair color. This is a general statement that may have exceptions; if, for example, your spouse is the manager of a client or potential client of the firm, you may consider disclosing your marital status and spouse's name (but do not be boastful). No matter how gorgeous you are, the HR manager does not want a photo of you. Unless requested, you should not include a salary history, references, thesis, or other superfluous materials. With the amount of time given to each resume, do you want it spent gazing at your photo or reading your many accomplishments?

**Give attention where attention is due.** If your resume describes your most recent position with a law firm in only one line, but describes the paper you wrote for your thesis in four, you need to reassess your priorities. Accomplishments and experiences should get attention proportional to their importance. Generally, your current job is more important than your [summer internship in college](#), unless that internship gave you more relevant experience and skills.

**Use job descriptions wisely.** Because your job title may mean different responsibilities and skills to different employers, you should use descriptions to eliminate doubt and clarify your position. The [responsibilities of a "Legal Assistant"](#) at some firms may be close to the duties of a "Paralegal" at other firms, and to the [duties of a "Legal Secretary"](#) at other firms. While your job title may seem more impressive, employers may find it misleading. Explicit descriptions of your duties, responsibilities, and achievements can clarify the extent of your experience.

**Be creative and professional at the same time.** This is possible to do. If you have a particular interest or hobby that may not parlay into a skill used in a law practice, but it makes you stand out in a crowd, use it. Your resume needs to create an image of a person, not just a series of jobs and education. Your interests will let the employer know who you are as well as what you can do. You can have a section on your resume for "Personal" or "Areas of Interest". Be specific, too. Instead of being "Interested in sports and reading", you are an "Avid skier, and collector of Early American Literature." Personal interests and hobbies can be an excellent way to break the ice in an interview. However, you must use discretion. Keep in mind that, if your resume makes it past the HR Manager's hands, it is likely to be read by many eyes. While some may find your interest in collecting "Dukes of Hazard" memorabilia to be interesting, others may find fault.

Other categories that you can add could be "Professional Affiliations" or "Community Activities". These

sections are a good way to show your level of involvement in the local professional or business community.

There is no need to record those abilities the employer will take for granted, such as ability to drive or type, unless it is critical to the position you are seeking. Every librarian, for example, should have general computer skills and know how to research online; therefore, by listing those skills on your resume, you are identifying those as the most notable of your abilities. This will make you look average, not exceptional. Other categories can include "Writing", "Public Speaking", or "Languages". If you speak a language, include that language and your level of proficiency. The employer has the right to know whether someone who lists "Chinese Language" as a skill has taken two years of Chinese or has lived in China for six years.

**No grades are not good grades.** Regardless what the old maxim says about "no news", the omission of your GPA or class rank on your resume implies that your grades were very likely mediocre to below-average. If you have any honors or an impressive GPA or class ranking, include them. As the years out of school grow, your grades may grow less important; however, a highly experienced paralegal that graduated in the top of his class still has an edge over a similarly qualified paralegal with poor grades. If you have mediocre or poor grades, omitting them will not get you off the hook. You should always be prepared to discuss your grades.

### III. Your Résumé's Appearance

**Don't use a scripted font.** Scripted fonts may look fancy, but straightforward, easy-to-read fonts such as Times New Roman and Courier New are highly preferable.

**Avoid small type.** 8-point font will make your resume illegible. While it may seem better to keep your resume to one page by using a smaller font, do you want the hiring partner to be forced to squint to read your resume? With the abundance of resumes coming in the door, it is easier to throw yours out and move on to the next one.

**Leave enough white space, but not too much.** Margins that are .2" wide will make your resume appear crowded, while margins that are 1.5" wide will present the impression that you don't have enough to offer to even fill a single page. You need to leave margins that are wide enough to eliminate a cramped feeling, while at the same time keeping your margins small enough to prevent the appearance of space filling. An effective margin width would typically be around 1".

**Use bullet points wisely.** There is no need to use a bullet point for every job; instead, use them to highlight important accomplishments of one or two particular jobs. Too many bullet points will eliminate their effectiveness in emphasizing aspects of your resume.

**Walk the fine line between a slick resume and a "slick" resume.** You may think that going to a professional printer and having your resume printed will guarantee an attention-getter. You would be right, but it would be the wrong type of attention. Professionally printed resumes will give the impression that you hired someone to do your resume for you because you cannot do your own work - an impression you certainly cannot afford to give. However, your resume must look professional. You should print your resume on professional, heavy stock paper that is a muted color using a laser printer.

**Emphasize your job titles and experience.** Your only priority where your resume is concerned should be making your achievements obvious in a quick scan. While the dates of your past employment are very important, the employer will not examine these carefully until you become a candidate for an interview. This only happens after the hiring partner has initially seen what you have to offer and kept your resume from the dreaded circular file. Do you really need to have "**Employment**" and "**May 2001**" in bold, or is it better to have "**Associate Attorney, Corporate Division**" in bold instead?

**Proofread your resume.** Spell check is a wonderful invention, but it cannot yet tell you that you meant to use "if" instead of "is". There is a big difference between a "ravid" and a "rapid" typist. After spending all

week writing your resume, you will be tempted to skim it. Resist this temptation or pass the resume on to a colleague or friend who will carefully read every word. The importance of language in the legal profession only heightens your responsibility to send an error-free document.

**Keep it simple.** With the popularity of the Internet, emailing a resume is very commonplace. If you have structured your resume using complicated columns and tables with a unique font in Microsoft Word, what will happen when your potential employer uses WordPerfect and only has three fonts? Keeping your resume a simple block of text with basic formatting and indenting will offer much better results with employers who use different software.

[Legal Jobs](#) >> [Legal Articles](#) >> [Feature](#) >> The Dos and Don'ts of Cover Letter Writing

# The Dos and Don'ts of Cover Letter Writing

by Morgan Brazil, Esq.

## Top-Five Dos

1. Organize your letter in a reader-friendly and easily digestible format. The reader is most likely a very busy professional, and you have to capture his/her attention quickly. Also, the easier it is for the reader to get through the information, the more likely he/she will not just skim over the letter and miss your biggest selling points. For example, bullet points can be used to list important matters you have recently worked on, whether they are cases on which you have had significant case-management responsibility or transactions on which you played a large role. If you are a junior associate who may not have had primary responsibility on cases or transactions, be sure to summarize the issues involved in the litigation or the details of the deal and your specific role in the matter in one or two short sentences. Similar to resume writing, there is no bright-line rule in length; however, in general, you should aim to limit your letter to one page, unless there are specific circumstances that warrant a longer letter.
2. Write in a confident, purposeful tone, and highlight your strengths. This is your chance to sell yourself, but temper your enthusiasm with a healthy dose of modesty. State clearly what you believe to be your strongest assets and those skills you have been complimented on by prior employers. Also, consider mentioning significant obstacles you have overcome or additional responsibilities you took on in your academic career, such as working to put yourself through law school or choosing to attend a particular school because of scholarship monies received. This is your chance to separate yourself from other applicants, and no detail may be too small. Also, back up your assertions with specific illustrations. For example, many young associates make the claim that they have great research and writing skills. While this is probably true, you should be able to back up such claim by citing either an example of a brief you wrote that garnered compliments from the partners or a successful dispositive motion you drafted.
3. Individualize each letter. Address it by name to the hiring person, whether it is the hiring coordinator or the hiring partner. You may want to also consider sending your resume to an attorney within the practice group you are targeting with whom you have something in common, such as the same law school or undergrad institution. More important, show that you have done your research on the firm and the particular practice you are interested in joining. A mass-produced cover letter will not impress your audience; targeting a firm specifically in your cover letter adds sincerity to your application and will demonstrate to the reader your desire to work for that particular firm.
4. Put your fate in your hands. End the letter with the responsibility for further action on your shoulders. Unless the job posting or firm website states otherwise (be sure to do your research, as some firms specifically request no phone calls from applicants), state in your letter that you will follow up to discuss a possible meeting regarding the position. While it may take some firms a few weeks to review resumes after they are received, follow up nonetheless about a week after you have sent in your resume to inquire about the status of the review, state that you are excited about discussing the position further, and ask if any additional information is needed to assist the decision maker in processing your application.

5. PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD, PROOFREAD. This is arguably the most important thing you can do when drafting a cover letter. No matter how persuasive the information contained within the letter, if the reader is distracted by misspellings, improper word usage, or sloppy punctuation, you will not be seriously considered for a position. As a funny example of how distracting sloppy work can be, a friend recently forwarded me a Motion for Continuance filed in a case in Florida. The plaintiff's counsel sought to continue the beginning of trial because he was recovering from painful disc surgery. However, in his request for the continuance, either he or his assistant confused disc, as in the spinal kind, with disk, as in the computer kind. To make matters much worse, he had misspelled "disk" in the motion by using a c instead of an s. Can you imagine the judge's face when he read the request? Obviously, this is a lesson that is particularly important throughout this profession; you will never get in the door if you send in shoddy and careless work. From the example above, you can see that using spell-check is not enough, so read the letter aloud or have a friend look it over to spot anything you may have missed.

### Top-Five Don'ts

1. Don't be negative about anything. If you are seeking to leave your current position because of a personality conflict or because it is simply not a good fit, put a positive spin on your motivations for looking for a new position. Maybe you are seeking to join a firm with greater opportunity for future advancement or seeking an opportunity to get more hands-on experience than your current position allows. However you choose to phrase it, make sure your motivations focus on your desire to grow as an attorney and develop your skills and practice. Just as when you are interviewing, a firm is trying to get a sense for your personality and enthusiasm for the job. If the reader senses negativity in your cover letter, he/she will be turned off right away.
2. Avoid fluff. As the opposite of #2 above, fluff is a list of qualities you possess without supplying supporting evidence. Again, specific illustrations are imperative. For example, instead of just stating "I believe you will find me to be smart, hardworking, and capable of effectively managing a number of matters at one time." Try "I graduated in the top 20% of a top-tier law school while also serving as a member of the Business Journal. In addition, I am no stranger to hard work, as I am on track to bill 2,200 hours this year. Also, my [current position](#) has allowed me to hone my time-management skills, as I have consistently been able to effectively manage a heavy docket of more than 10 cases at any given time." Proving to a firm that you possess specific attributes will go a lot further than just advancing unsubstantiated claims.
3. Avoid repeated use of *I*. While the cover letter focuses on what you bring to the table, you want to avoid sounding totally self-absorbed and want to be able to show the firm how your strengths will better its practice and reputation. Also, vary sentence construction and length to keep the reader engaged in your message.
4. Don't just regurgitate your resume. The cover letter should be used as a vehicle to provide additional information or to elaborate on or highlight the details in your resume. Take the most interesting or impressive parts of your resume and summarize them. Discuss individual matters you have worked on in more detail. Do not, however, just reiterate the firms you have worked at and the schools you have attended. That should already be clearly noted in the resume.
5. Don't use wordy or overly complicated phrases. Speak English! It should not read "I am clearly focused on the minutiae involved in composing court documents," but rather "I am detail-oriented." Such complicated language only distracts the reader. The fewer words you use to get your message across and the more direct you are in making your point, the better off you will be.

Of course, these dos and don'ts are not exhaustive and only represent a few important considerations. Overall, however, it is very important to always do your research first and to remember the specific

audience when writing the letter. Most law firms are conservative, so keep your formatting, including font choice, and tone conservative. In addition, think about the size of the firm and what it may value the most in its associates. Also, check out the firm's website to review the credentials of the other attorneys. If your academics do not appear to be on par with their current associates, think of reasons why they should consider you nonetheless. Did you put yourself through law school while working full time? Can you hit the ground running on most matters? Have you brought in business to firms in the past, or do you have portable clients that you can bring over to the new firm? Have you published articles in prominent journals? Ask yourself this: Why would this firm want to hire me? Persuasively answering this question will lead to a first-rate cover letter!

16 Apr 2014 at 3:44 PM

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## 11 Tips For The Biglaw Interview Day

By ANONYMOUS RECRUITMENT DIRECTOR

*Ed. note: This is the latest post by [Anonymous Recruitment Director](#), who offers an insider's perspective on the world of law firm hiring.*

I have received numerous emails from law students requesting advice about the Biglaw interview day. I once again solicited the input of other recruitment professionals in order to compile a list of the items that candidates should keep in mind on their interview day.



Please recall that, as members of the recruitment staff, we are not the individuals who conduct the interviews; rather, we hear secondhand about the reasons why a candidate is or is not advanced in the process. The following list contains our collective thoughts, but, ultimately, a candidate needs to be true to him or herself during the interview process:

**1. Lack of Focus.** Over the last five years, it has become more common for interviewers to report that candidates use the interview as an opportunity to discuss their broad career interests. In other words, candidates are using the interview time to discuss with their interviewer a variety of possible employment interests, including interests outside of Biglaw. Interviewers often report that these candidates seemed “poorly prepared” or “immature.” Interviewers want the candidates to focus only on the job on offer and to prove during the interview why this job should be given to them. Discussions about your other interests should be saved for meetings with your law school career placement staff.

**2. Steering the Interview.** We are often asked whether a candidate should try to take control of an interview if he or she feels as though the interviewer is not asking them any questions of substance. The answer is YES. Many candidates are rejected because, after the interview, the interviewers report that the candidate was nice but that he or she lacked “gravitas” (or the like). It is your job to leave the interviewer with a clear sense of your abilities, even if he or she fails to direct the conversation accordingly. You may say to the interviewer, “I appreciate that we have a limited amount of time together. Before the time gets away from us, I wanted to let you know about xxx.”

**3. Inappropriate Questions.** Despite our efforts to educate interviewers about the types of questions that are inappropriate, we receive feedback from candidates that they have been asked questions about their age, their intention to have children, and whether or not their romantic relationships were solid enough to withstand the strain of long working hours. Yes, these questions are inappropriate. If you are asked a question of this nature, please respond by telling the interviewer that you are not comfortable answering the question. Please do your best to then move the interview forward. If this happens to you, please let the director of recruitment know by email right after the interview that you were asked an inappropriate question. If we have this information in hand, we can do our best to ensure that you are not penalized for being put in this position when your interview feedback is reviewed.

**4. Dress.** Law school recruitment staff members often encourage candidates to dress conservatively for their interview days. This appears to be sound advice – for women, in particular. All of the recruitment staff members reported that they have encountered interviewers who passed on a woman candidate because she was dressed too provocatively for a law firm environment.



**5. Enthusiasm.** It is imperative that a candidate demonstrate a passion for the law during his or her interview. A candidate may assume that his or her decision to go to law school, to pursue the interview, etc. is evidence of an interest in the law. However, in 2014, many law students feel that they have made a mistake by attending law school and that they must work in Biglaw for a few years in order to pay off their debts before leaving the profession. You must ensure that your interviewers know that you did not make a mistake and that you feel that are indeed on the right career path. The interviewer wants to believe that his or her firm is the only place that you wish to work and that you wish to be there for at least two years.

**6. Specificity.** Candidates will often report that they wish to be tax lawyers, for instance, because they “have always found tax law fascinating.” Often interviewers will not press the candidate to explain this declaration any further. Later, in a hiring committee meeting, the interviewers are often unable to advocate for the candidate because the candidate is not memorable; the candidate has, in effect, failed to explain with specificity why he or she wants a certain job. Please answer questions of this nature with a more personal response. If you are able to explain with specificity why you love tax law, you will be remembered.

**7. Social Media.** We are often asked whether we search social media to gather further information on candidates. My firm does not engage in this practice; however, I am aware of several firms that do research candidates to see if there are any smoking guns lurking out there on the Internet. I imagine that in the coming years it will be standard practice for all firms to research candidates online before an offer is extended. Please remove all questionable photographs and posts from any public social media account. Problematic photographs that were reported include: a female candidate taking a hit off a bong and a male candidate with his face buried in a female’s covered breasts. Problematic posts that were reported include: a 2L who wrote “Day 2 of OCI. Another day lying to sad old men. Just give me the money!”

**8. Additional Interests.** At the bottom of the résumé, candidates often put a few items under the heading of “Additional Interests.” These items tend to get candidates into trouble in two ways. First, if a candidate writes that he or she is interested in the political unrest in Crimea, the candidate must be ready to discuss this situation and to have definitive views on this matter. Apparently, it is not uncommon for candidates to list supposed interests but then to be unable to discuss them intelligently. Second, on occasion, a candidate puts an additional interest on his or her résumé which is so odd/inappropriate that it pulls focus from the candidate’s accomplishments. Problematic “additional interests” that were reported include male attorneys interested in: “all-night raving”, “photographing small children” and “collecting vintage underwear.” On interview day, please be ready to discuss in depth your additional interests.

**9. Anxiety.** It is becoming more common for interviewers to report that candidates are so nervous during their visit to a firm that the interviewers were made uncomfortable. Unfortunately, there is a view that lawyers should never be anxious and that, in order to succeed in their roles, they need to present themselves with unwavering confidence. This is a tough subject. Sadly, anxious candidates often are not advanced in the process. I would recommend that, if you are prone to anxiety, you must take extra time with your law school recruitment staff to practice, practice, practice. The more you prepare your answers to possible interview questions, the more relaxed you may be in the interview setting. Also please bear in mind that attorneys are at heart a decent group of people; for the most part, they are quietly rooting for you to do well and to make their job easier by taking the job on offer.

**10. Honesty.** As one would expect, it is not a good idea to let your interviewer know that you are not sure if you wish to work at his or her firm. While this may sound obvious, a number of candidates fail to receive offers because they report during the interview that they are hesitant about joining the firm because of the long hours, competitive environment, etc. If you wish to receive an offer, it is best to keep your concerns to yourself until after you have received the offer. You may then return to the firm, offer in hand, and openly discuss your particular concerns with staff members.

**11. Materials.** Please bring a few copies of your résumé and transcript with you to the interview day just in case your interviewer misplaces them. It happens.

**Update**

My last column focused on recruitment staff pet peeves. Based on the feedback that I received, it appears that there are varying views on the importance of a thank-you note after an interview day. While the note will not tip the scales in favor of a candidate who has not made a connection with his or her interviewers, many firm attorneys wrote to say that that these letters are welcome and that a candidate should send a note if he or she feels a strong desire to do so. There appear to be certain markets — for instance, Washington, D.C. — where thank you notes are more common.

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TOPICS	<a href="#">Advice</a> , <a href="#">Anonymous Recruitment Director</a> , <a href="#">Biglaw</a> , <a href="#">Callback interviews</a> , <a href="#">Callbacks</a> , <a href="#">Career Advice</a> , <a href="#">career planning</a> , <a href="#">Fall Recruiting</a> , <a href="#">Fashion</a> , <a href="#">Headhunters / Recruiters</a> , <a href="#">Interview Stories</a> , <a href="#">Interview Tips</a> , <a href="#">Interviews</a> , <a href="#">Job Searches</a> , <a href="#">On-Campus Interviewing</a> , <a href="#">Recruiting</a> , <a href="#">Resume</a> , <a href="#">Resumes</a> , <a href="#">Social Media</a> , <a href="#">Social Networking Websites</a> , <a href="#">thank you</a> , <a href="#">Thank You Notes</a> , <a href="#">Update Your Resume</a>
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