

## Preparing for Callbacks and Beyond



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## A Few Introductory Observations

- Caveat: I have been called “a walking reality check”
- Students have survived down markets before
- Thinking hard about what you want early on may be the best thing that ever happened to you
- Deciding what you want is one of the hardest things to do

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## Basic Interview Styles

- Most students are reactive
  - Friendly chats
  - Substantive back-and-forth
- Some interviewing styles require proactivity
  - Open-ended questions
  - The inexperienced interviewer
  - The war-story teller
  - The skeptic
- You need to have a plan for handling both

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## Developing an Interview Plan

- Interviewers make up their minds fast
- Interviewers are looking for “fit”
  - Fit with specific practice areas
  - Fit with firm culture
  - Already trying to envision which practice group
- Most students have no idea where they fit
  - Most rely on their charm and their wit
  - Lack of knowledge can make you seem green and seem like a bad fit

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## Formulating a Basic Plan

- Learn about:
  - Your strengths
  - Particular legal practices
  - Firms
- Target a handful of firms and practice areas
- Develop a distinctive “elevator pitch” that is

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## Find Your Strengths

- Emphasize synergy
  - Course selection
  - Prior employment
  - Student activities
  - In-term externships
  - Major student writing
- Remember that stories are more memorable

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## What You Should Know About the Firm

- The firm's self-image
  - How does the firm market itself to clients?
  - What other firms does the firm see as its peers?
  - How does the firm attract associates?
  - What is the firm culture?
- The firm's strategic direction
  - Which practice areas are the key profit centers?
  - Which practice areas are targets for growth?

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## What You Should Know About the Firm (cont'd)

- The firm's big "names"?
  - Who are the firm's key clients?
  - Who are the key rainmaking partners?
  - Who is the firm's managing partner?
- The key people for you
  - Previous summer associates from Penn and your college
  - Attorneys from Penn and your college
  - The people who will be interviewing you

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## Informational Interviews

- The easiest source: other students
  - 2Ls and 3Ls who summered at that employer
  - 2Ls and 3Ls who summered in the city
  - 2Ls and 3Ls who interviewed in the city
- The best source: attorneys in the area
  - Penn alumni and your college
  - Referrals by friends and family
- Leveraging the source: get further referrals

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## If You Only Have 30 Minutes

- Westlaw/Lexis
  - Search legal newspapers
  - Search attorney lines in cases
  - Search background information on interviewers
    - Biography
    - Publications
    - Media references
- Firm website
  - Practice group listings
  - Press releases

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## Interview Preparation

- Find the most effective ways to emphasize your fit and your selling points
  - Find out what your resume "really" says
  - Think up 3 stories that you would like to tell
  - Try to emphasize synergy
- Make a cheat sheet
  - List of key names
  - List of key points/stories

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## Interview Preparation (cont'd)

- Figure out how you are going to sell yourself
- Work up short answers for each resume line
- Work out answers to classic interview questions
  - Examples
    - Why did you go to law school?
    - Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
    - What was your favorite class?
    - Do you have any questions for me?
  - Avoid answers that anyone could ask any firm

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## Basic Interview Reminders

- Be energetic and enthusiastic
- Keep your answers short
- Don't be afraid to listen and ask questions
- Focus on eye contact and body language
- Remember that the interviewer is in charge
- Look for openings to steer the interview
- Learn how to name-drop tactfully
- Relax and be yourself

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## Preparing for a Successful Summer

- Goal: being ready to discuss your role within the firm next fall
- Strategy: make a plan that will prepare you for this negotiation
  - Enter the summer with a few practices in mind
  - Explore them proactively during the first half
  - Be open to other practices you didn't know of
  - Spend the second half burrowing in

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## Keeping Things in Perspective

- What matters is your long-term career
  - Your summer job need not be perfect
  - You only need one full-time job
  - Most people change jobs within 3 years
  - Anything in the ballpark will do
- Making decisions is scary, but inevitable
- Career management is a lifelong job
  - Knowing yourself is really hard
  - Doing it now will make you more successful

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**Practice Areas:** Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation-Contracts; Employee Benefits and Executive Compensation-Counseling

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Prior to joining the firm in 1998, Mr. Wang was an attorney with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of the Solicitor, for four years. During this time, he handled litigation involving ERISA, FLSA, and other federal employment statutes.


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Mark S. Melickian, is counsel to the Corporate Restructuring and Financial Institutions Practice at Gardner Carton & Douglas LLP. He has represented debtors, secured lenders, creditors' committees, trade creditors, indenture trustees, panel trustees, asset purchasers, insurance companies and other entities in reorganizations, workouts and liquidations and has advised corporations, financial institutions, and shareholders on restructuring issues, bankruptcy implications and insolvency risks.

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