

THE SECOND OR "CALLBACK" INTERVIEW

Your first interview with a firm may be on-campus, over the phone, at an off-campus job fair or at a firm's office. If you succeed in making it past this round, you will be invited to a second interview, more commonly referred to as the "callback." Be proud of yourself for making it to this stage! Although the number of "callback" invitations varies among firms, typically a firm will invite back 10 – 30% of those students initially interviewed. Callback to offer ratios vary also and, in light of the current competitive employment climate, the national market saw a decrease in the percentage of callbacks that resulted in an offer for second-year students participating in Fall 2008 recruitment programs -- 47%, versus 60% in 2007. (See NALP's Perspectives on Fall 2008 Law Student Recruiting, which is available on-line at www.nalp.org.) We anticipate that the number of offers that will result from callbacks may dip further during the fall of 2009 given many firms' plans to hire fewer students for their 2010 summer programs.

In short, being invited for a callback represents a great success. It indicates that the interviewer enjoyed meeting with you and believes that you are academically capable of performing the firm's work. The callback is an opportunity for more attorneys to meet with you, to ensure that you "fit" in the firm's culture. Of course, it is also an opportunity for you to learn more about the firm and during your visit you should evaluate the work environment, as it is likely you will spend more waking hours there than in your own home.

Things to look for and evaluate:

How were people treating one another? Were people behaving in a friendly and respectful manner to each other? What did you notice about the interaction between attorneys and support staff? Were people on a first-name basis?

Was the office hectic or calm? Were office doors open and inviting? Did you like the office surroundings? Did associates look happy - or overworked and tired?

General Information:

- Most likely, a callback invitation will come from your first interviewer by phone. For this reason, it is important that your answering machine have a professional message on it. Additionally, if a firm has your cell phone number, only answer calls when you are available to speak. As attorneys often work late at night, a call after 7 p.m. could still be from a firm.
- Generally, a callback invitation will come anywhere from 24 hours to 2 weeks after your initial interview. The timing of the invitation will depend on how the hiring department is run at the particular firm.
- A callback visit usually consists of four 20 - 30 minute interviews with different attorneys. The visit may also include a meal. Due to the length of time needed for the visit, callbacks are most often scheduled by the half-day, either morning or afternoon.

Scheduling the Interview

The Invitation and Your Response: Although the callback invitation will likely come from your interviewer, you will probably be asked to phone the recruiting department to schedule your visit. Return any phone calls or respond to any letters received immediately and try to schedule the callback as soon as you are available. As offers are made on a rolling basis during the fall, firms will begin making offers before all callbacks have occurred. If you are fortunate to be invited on several callbacks, you should consider scheduling your office visits in order of your preferences, so that you are visiting your favorite firm first. Be sure to have your calendar with you when scheduling callbacks so that you avoid conflicts with other commitments.

Your Conversation with the Hiring Department: As always, be courteous when speaking to anyone at the firm, as it is likely everyone you have contact with will have some input into the hiring decision. When scheduling your callback interview, you should consider asking the following questions:

- *How much time should I allot for the visit? Will it include a meal?*
- *Do you know who I will be meeting with, or should I phone back the day before my interview for this information? (Keep in mind that the interviewers may change at the last minute depending on the attorneys' schedules.)*
- *Is it possible to speak with an attorney in a particular department? (Only ask to speak to attorneys in specific departments if you have a particular interest in that area of law.)*
- *What is your travel reimbursement policy? (This question is only applicable to interviews outside of Boston.)*

Reimbursement Policies: Most large firms reimburse for transportation and reasonable expenses for lodging and meals. If you have multiple callbacks in one city, try to arrange them on the same day and inform the employer of this. Firms will usually share costs and don't see it as a "breach of loyalty" if you are also interviewing with others. Firms may or may not make your travel arrangements. Should you find yourself making your own travel arrangements, call the employer if you have any questions about what constitutes a reasonable expense before you incur the cost and keep all of your receipts to include with your reimbursement request. Some firms may request that you use the NALP Travel Expense Reimbursement Form, available at www.nalp.org.

Canceling or Declining a Callback: A firm will not be offended if you decline a callback invitation; however, it is courteous to decline the invitation as soon as possible. Similarly, give the employer as much notice as possible if you must cancel or reschedule a callback.

Before the Interview: Prepare Thoroughly

RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH

Put your excellent research skills to use! Review the firm's website and learn the basics about it: the number of attorneys, the locations of offices, the practice areas and representative clients. Remember to try to request the interviewers' names beforehand and to review their backgrounds if the firm has "attorney bios" on their website. In addition to the firm's website, research employer information on Symplicity, Martindale Hubbell (www.martindale.com), and the *NALP Directory of Legal Employers*

(www.nalpdirectory.com). Other resources include the *Vault Guides*, recent news articles (use Lexis), and students, attorneys and professors who have worked at the firm.

PRACTICE ANSWERING QUESTIONS

While preparation is very similar to that for the initial interview, you should expect to spend a considerable amount of time preparing for each callback. Generally, expect more informal conversation during the callback, as the firm is trying to gauge your “personability” quotient. Everything on your resume is “fair game” for discussion, so review it again. Also, spend some time thinking about your skills, interests, quality of life issues and career goals. If you are interviewing in another city, be prepared to discuss why you are interested in relocating. Most importantly, practice answering questions out-loud! Thinking about potential answers to questions is not nearly as effective as having a friend ask them of you or even sitting in front of a mirror and asking them of yourself. If you have not done so already, conduct a mock interview with a CDO Career Counselor.

Also, be sure to pick out any areas of your background that you may feel uncomfortable talking about and be prepared to discuss them: your G.P.A., your lack of legal experience, your reasons for changing careers, and any gaps in your schooling or jobs. Practice answering questions about your weaknesses in a positive and concise way. Do not dwell on the subject – instead, move on to how you have learned from the experience and your strengths.

LET YOUR PERSONALITY SHINE THROUGH

Be confident, without being arrogant, and talk about your strengths and accomplishments. It might help to think of your interview as the “water-cooler” or “conference room” test. You want the interviewer to like you and to think that they would enjoy working with you daily -- even if you are stuck together in a conference room on a tedious document review. If your interviewer steers the conversation towards a mutual interest, engage yourself in the conversation. If the interviewer spends most of the time speaking with you about one item on your resume, do not get nervous. Rather, follow the attorney’s lead and continue the discussion.

PREPARE QUESTIONS

Prepare several thoughtful, relevant questions to ask at the end of each interview. It is perfectly acceptable to ask the same questions of several attorneys, in fact, this may be a good way to hear different perspectives about working at the firm. Remember, it is expected that you have thoroughly researched the firm, so don’t ask questions that are already answered in the firm’s written material or website. Good questions are those that require a personal response (such that it varies from person to person).

Certain topics should be avoided unless the employer brings them up, or until you have received an offer. This includes questions about salary, vacations, maternity leave, or other benefits. Asking about these issues may give the employer the impression that you are more interested in the benefits of the position than learning about the firm’s work and your role as a contributing associate. (Should you seek this information earlier in the recruiting process, you may find it on the firm’s website and NALP form.)

Sample Questions:

- *Can you tell me more about your firm’s system of attorney training and supervision?*
- *How often do associates receive reviews?*
- *Could you describe a typical caseload for an attorney in your department?*
- *When can a litigation associate expect to appear in court?*
- *What do you find most challenging/rewarding about your work?*

- *How long have you been working at the firm? Why did you choose to work here?*
- *Could you describe your typical day to me? Do you spend most of your time meeting with clients, on the phone, or preparing documents?*
- *Are there new practice areas in development at the firm?*
- *What areas of the firm are growing?*
- *What skills are necessary to succeed here as an associate?*
- *What distinguishes your firm from others?*

KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING

With increased security in place at many office buildings, it is important for you to build in extra time for your travel time to the firm. Remember to take a photo I.D. with you. You may also want to arrive early enough to freshen-up before walking into the firm's offices. It is best to allot enough time to arrive in the firm's offices about 10 - 15 minutes early, so that you can locate a restroom (if necessary) and spend a few minutes observing the environment.

The Interview

Usually the recruitment coordinator will greet you when you arrive at the firm's offices, and provide you with your interviewing schedule for the day. In some cases, your first interview may be conducted by the recruitment coordinator. Your visit may also include lunch or dinner with members of the firm and a tour of the office. Often, someone from the recruitment staff will meet with you again after your interviews to answer any remaining questions and tell you how the hiring process will proceed. (You might ask at the beginning if you are to return to their office.) It is important to keep in mind that everyone you meet may have input for hiring decisions and to act professional at all times.

Reminders for the Interview

- *Dress conservatively and professionally*
- *Bring a few extra copies of your resume, transcript, writing sample(s) and list of references*
- *Greet everyone you meet with a solid handshake*
- *Use Mr./Ms. unless you are told otherwise*
- *Sit up straight in your chair and maintain eye contact during the interview*
- *Remember to smile*
- *Speak clearly and slowly – people tend to speak more quickly when they are nervous*
- *Tailor your answers to the employer (practice areas, size, location, etc.)*
- *Speak positively about previous employers*
- *Stay interested and enthusiastic throughout the visit – never appear bored*
- *Remember that although you may be asked the same questions by several different attorneys, the interviewer will hear your response just once*
- *Be honest, don't exaggerate about your experiences or pretend to know more than you do*
- *Stay focused on the interviewer, don't take notes during your interview*
- *Try to have your questions memorized, but if you have to, refer to a list you have brought with you*

A Few Notes about Meals

- *Remember, the meal is a continuation of your interview and act accordingly*
- *Follow the lead of the attorneys, order an appetizer only if they do*
- *Order foods that are easy to eat (forget the spaghetti!) and stay away from strong flavors/spices*
- *Choose entrees that are mid-priced, it may be a free lunch, but show good judgment*
- *Remember good manners – don't start to eat until everyone has been served*
- *When asked if you would like a drink, stay with non-alcoholic beverages*

After the Interview

The two most frequently asked questions are:

*Should I send a thank you note?
When will I hear from the firm again?*

Thank You Notes

Unfortunately, there is no general rule as to whether or not you should send a thank-you note after your callback interview. Many recruiting coordinators and attorneys who work in large firms have told the Career Development Office that thank you notes are completely unnecessary and are rarely read. Moreover, a typo in a thank you note could prevent you from receiving an offer.

If you would like to send a note of thanks, be sure that it is well written, typed in business format and carefully proofread. Notes should be sent immediately (or no more than a day or two following the callback). You need not send a letter to each person with whom you spoke. One letter to the hiring attorney or to the person who arranged your interviewing day is sufficient. If you do choose to write to more than one person, be sure that the letters aren't identical. If you use email to send your thank you notes, use a business letter format.

Timing of Offers and Acceptances

After your interview, it is appropriate to ask an employer when you can expect to hear back from them. If you do not hear in the expected time frame, wait another week and then follow-up through e-mail or a phone call. When you will hear from a firm depends on many factors, including the firm's policy, the target size of a firm's summer class, and the quality of students interviewed. Many firms have a hiring committee that will meet weekly and discuss all of their candidates. If you visit the firm on a Thursday, but the committee meets on Wednesday, you should expect it to be at least a week before you hear from them again. Additionally, some firms may not decide on all the candidates presented at a meeting, but may wait to decide on a student's status until they have met with more students, in which case it might be several weeks before you hear from the firm.

As stated earlier, in light of the challenging economic climate and the expectation that most if not all employers participating in fall recruitment will hire significantly smaller summer associate classes, **the CDO advises that if you receive an offer, evaluate the opportunity quickly and, if you plan to accept it, do so immediately – even though you will be allowed 45-days in which to make such a decision (see NALP guidelines below).** And, if you are not interested in the offer, decline the offer promptly so that a fellow Suffolk student may be considered for such an opportunity. All law schools are advising their students to proceed in this way and we urge you to be sensitive to and mindful of these market forces. If you have any questions, please speak with a CDO counselor.

In some cases, you may be put on “hold” after a callback interview. Because of the smaller summer programs planned by most employers, some employers may hold candidates in whom they still have an interest until they hear whether other offers have been accepted or declined. “Hold” status is not a negative. It means that should an opening arise, you may be in contention for an offer, although an offer is not guaranteed. Again, talk with a career counselor if you have questions.

NALP (The Association of Legal Career Professionals) promulgates standards for the timing of offers of employment and job acceptances. All employers who recruit law students are required to comply with the

“General Standards for the Timing of Offers and Decisions” as part of NALP’s “Principles and Standards for Law Placement and Recruiting Activities.” The standards include the following:

- **A. General Provisions:**
 1. All offers to law student candidates (“candidates”) should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter unless the offers are made pursuant to Sections B and C below, in which case the later response date should apply.
 2. Candidates are expected to accept or release offers or request an extension by the applicable deadline. Offers that are not accepted by the offer deadline expire.
 3. A candidate should not hold open more than five offers of employment at any one time. For each offer received that places a candidate over the offer limit, the candidate should, within one week of receipt of the excess offer, release an offer.
 4. Employers offering part-time or temporary positions for the school term are exempted from the requirements of Paragraphs B and C below.
 5. Practices inconsistent with these guidelines should be reported to the candidate’s career services office.
- **B. Full-Time Employment Provisions:**
 1. Employers offering full-time positions to commence following graduation to candidates not previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 45 days following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first. Offers made after December 15 for full-time positions to commence following graduation should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter.
 2. Candidates may request that an employer extend the deadline to accept the employer’s offer until as late as April 1 if the candidate is actively pursuing positions with public interest or government organizations. Candidates may hold open only one offer in such circumstances. Employers are encouraged to grant such requests.
 3. Employers offering full-time positions to commence following graduation to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open until at least November 15 of the candidate’s final year of law school. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within thirty days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 30 day period.
 4. Employers offering candidates full-time positions to commence following graduation and having a total of 40 attorneys or fewer in all offices are exempted from Paragraphs 1-3 of this Section. Instead, offers made on or before December 15 should remain open for at least three weeks following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first, and offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks.
- **C. Summer Employment Provisions for Second and Third Year Students**
 1. Employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates not previously employed by them should leave those offers open for at least 45 days following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first. Offers made after December 15 for the following summer should remain open for at least two weeks after the date of the offer letter.
 2. Candidates may request that an employer extend the deadline to accept the employer’s offer until as late as April 1 if the candidate is actively pursuing positions with public interest or government organizations. Candidates may hold open only one offer in such circumstances. Employers are encouraged to grant such requests.

3. Employers offering positions for the following summer to candidates previously employed by them should leave those offers open until at least November 15. Candidates should reaffirm these offers within thirty days from the date of the offer letter. Employers may retract any offer that is not reaffirmed within the 30 day period.
4. Employers offering candidates positions for the following summer and having a total of 40 attorneys or fewer in all offices are exempted from Paragraphs 1-3 of this Section. Instead, offers made on or before December 15 should remain open for at least three weeks following the date of the offer letter or until December 30, whichever comes first, and offers made after December 15 should remain open for at least two weeks.

These standards cover many other situations. For a complete description of these guidelines, visit www.nalp.org.

Should you have any questions as you participate in your callback interviews or concerning the offer process, please make an appointment with a Career Development Office staff member. We are always glad to meet with you and help guide you through your job search.