Tips for a Successful Phone Interview

Phone interviews are becoming more and more common in the job search process. They companies and candidates a lot of time and money. Preparing for a phone interview is just as important as preparing for a face-to-face interview. The more prepared you are, the better the interview will go. A good phone interview can give you an advantage prior to meeting a potential employer. The tips below will help you to become a successful phone interviewer.

- **Be enthusiastic.** The first 15 seconds are crucial and interest in your voice is key. The way you answer the phone will have an impact on the caller. Talk distinctively and with enthusiasm.

- **Schedule the interview for a quiet time.** If you have the opportunity to choose the time of the phone interview, be sure to schedule it when you know you will be able to give them your full attention. Make sure the environment at your home or office is clear of other people and noise, such as radios, TVs, pets, etc. You do not want to have distractions or loud noises that will disrupt you and/or your interviewer.

- **Use a landline phone.** This way you won’t have to worry about dropping calls or bad connections. If you don’t have a landline, please use one of the phones in the Office of Career Services.

- **Have your resume next to the phone.** Have your resume in front of you for quick reference. Be sure it is the same copy you sent to the employer. Your interviewer will be looking at your resume throughout the interview, and you'll want to be sure to know exactly what he/she is talking about. Be ready to discuss the details of your work history.

- **Prepare Notes.** Prepare a list of accomplishments for each of your positions prior to starting the call. Know what you want to highlight. Have prepared answers ready for basic questions like, “why do you want to work for our company?” or “why should I hire you?” Use your notes to help you say exactly what you want to say. Sell yourself more than your resume does!

- **Do your research.** Just like any interview, research the firm or organization, practice areas, past cases and clients, and other pertinent information. You should jot down a few things in your notes that you can refer to in case questions that require firm/organization knowledge come up. If possible, have the firm/organization’s website pulled up on your laptop for quick reference.

- **Have questions ready.** Show your interest in the employer by asking thoughtful questions. Have a few questions prepared in your notes. Asking good questions illustrates that you are already thinking seriously about the position. Potential employers expect to be asked questions and welcome opportunities to talk about their company and their own background. See your 1L Career Services Handbook for examples of questions to ask.

- **Know your schedule.** If your interviewer is interested in setting up an actual face-to-face interview, know your availability. The last thing you would want to do is succeed in a phone interview only to tell them that you'll need to call back because you are not sure when you can meet with them. Have a copy of your schedule next to the phone.

- **Closing.** How many times have you thought of something you should have said after you left an interview? Don’t let that happen again! Know that you have said everything you want to say before the interview ends. Again, write down any comments and/or questions you want to address as well as how you would like to close the interview.

- **Always thank the caller.** Thank the caller for his or her time and reiterate that you are interested in the opportunity. If the interviewer has not asked you about your schedule or availability, it is a good idea to ask, “What would be the next step in the process?”

- **Send a thank you note.** Be sure that you have the interviewer’s exact title and name spelling, as well as the complete mailing or email address, in order to send a thank you note.

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**Save the Date: Practice Tracks!**

Still haven’t decided what area of law you want to pursue after graduation? Want to learn more about over 50 practice areas from practicing attorneys?

**Come to Practice Tracks and meet practicing attorneys representing over 50 different practice areas!**

**Thursday, February 16, 2011 | 5:00—6:30 p.m.**
**Chicago Bar Association | 321 S. Plymouth Court**

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**U.S. Attorney’s Office Internships**

Students interested in **interning with the U.S. Attorney’s Office** for the Northern District of Illinois during the summer of 2012 should be sure to apply soon!

More information and details on how to apply can be found at [http://tinyurl.com/cyilli3g](http://tinyurl.com/cyilli3g). Applications are due by December 31st.

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**Job Hunting outside of Chicago?**

If you’re looking for a summer or post-graduate opportunity in another market, consider requesting reciprocity. Reciprocity will allow you temporary access to the Office of Career Services at an ABA accredited law school in a different city or state.

More information on requesting reciprocity can be found at [http://www.luc.edu/law/career/reciprocity.html](http://www.luc.edu/law/career/reciprocity.html).
Meet the Public Service Organizations Reception

On November 8th, students from the Chicago area law schools joined representatives from 50 area public service organizations and government agencies for the Meet the Public Service Organizations Reception. Attending the event were: Candace Moore (2L) with Ruta Stropus (’89) of the Illinois Attorney General’s Office.

University of Arizona Government Honors & Internship Handbook

Don’t forget to check out this handbook on our website if you’re looking for a summer or post-graduate opportunity working for a government agency. 1Ls: Please be aware that many of the 1L summer opportunities in this handbook have December deadlines. Don’t miss your chance to apply! Access the handbook at: http://www.law.arizona.edu/career/honorshandbook.cfm (Username: snicker | Password: doodle)

PILI Summer Internship Applications

Each summer, PILI funds dozens of 400-hour internships for first and second-year law students to work at public interest law agencies in the Chicago area. PILI pays a $5,000 grant to the agency and the agency withholds taxes and pays interns for 400 hours or 10 full-time weeks of work. PILI began accepting applications from 2Ls on October 15th, and will begin accepting applications from 1Ls December 1st.

PILI also offers a limited number of school year internships. Agencies hosting interns will receive $2,500 to support 200 hours of intern work. PILI began accepting applications for spring 2012 internships on November 1st.

Visit http://www.pili-law.org/internships.htm for more info or to apply for a spring or summer internship!
What is a typical day like for you?
I spend a typical day working in my office and attending various meetings with other members of the legal department, members of other operational departments or outside attorneys or other third-parties. My primary tasks vary greatly from day to day depending on the priorities for that day and urgent issues that might arise. I may work on drafting a contract, investigating a customer complaint, exchanging emails or phone calls with outside counsel regarding litigation or research projects, writing letters or doing legal research. A typical day involves setting a list of priorities for the day and having that plan frequently interrupted with more “urgent” issues that need to be addressed.

What specific tasks do you spend the majority of your time on?
The majority of my time is spent drafting and negotiating contracts and providing legal support to the retail lending operations at my company.

Do junior and senior attorneys in your line of work do the same types of work – or do daily tasks vary greatly depending on level of seniority?
The work is more segmented for junior attorneys than senior attorneys. In addition to their own projects, meetings and responsibilities, senior attorneys need to focus on review and support for the junior attorneys. Senior attorneys are more likely to be involved with executive level strategy and planning and must provide high-level legal and business input in these situations.

Who are your clients/who do you work for?
My clients are technically the company but my day-to-day clients are the business partners in the operational departments of the company that need legal support. Working in-house requires a delicate balancing act between being responsive to your day to day clients while keeping the focus on the company as your true client. At times the interests of the two don’t align.

How closely do you work with your clients?
I work very closely with the business partners to address “one-off” legal issues and to work as part of project teams to provide the legal and compliance support for new initiatives.

How do you get clients?
My clients are a captive audience. Business partners either approach me because they have an issue or I approach them because I identify an issue or law change that needs to be addressed.

How much contact do you have with opposing counsel/attorneys for the other side?
I have fairly frequent contact with attorneys who are threatening litigation against my company and with other in-house counsel when drafting and negotiating vendor contracts.

How does your role as an attorney differ from the role of the business people that you work with?
My role is one of support, advice and counsel. Except for purely legal issues, the business side of the company usually makes the tough decisions once they’ve understand the law and the risks to various alternatives. My client is the company, not the business partners, so at times I will need to identify various alternatives that should not be pursued, but the majority of the time I analyze situations, research the law and to provide the information required to make decisions. It is important for in-house counsel to remember that the business partners are the ones making the product and earning the money that keeps a company in business and hopefully successful.

What were you surprised to learn about your area of practice when you came out of law school and began practicing?
I think a surprising aspect of in-house practice generally, although luckily not as much of an issue where I work, is the tendency of business partners to push tough decisions towards the legal department even when they aren’t necessarily legal in nature. The positive part of this is that it shows that your business partners trust you and think it’s important to have legal input on difficult decisions but it’s also often just a safer alternative than making the decision themselves.

What should a student know if they are thinking of heading into your area of practice after law school?
Working in-house requires a significant commitment to learning to work within an organization and with the people in that organization. My clients are a captive audience but it works the other way as well. If I can’t find a way to get along with and develop good relationships with the business partners I work with, neither of us will be able to accomplish our goals. In-house attorneys need to be ready to adapt to the corporate culture of the business they work for and strive to understand the work styles and personalities of their day to day clients.

What personality traits make someone in your line of work an effective or not so effective attorney?
I think beyond the traits that make a good attorney in any field (attention to detail, analytical mind, etc) it is critical to understand the business. In order to do your job as an in-house attorney you need to understand what the business does, how it makes money and how the organization operates. Attorneys providing advice to businesses, whether in-house or outside counsel, struggle when they’re too theoretical about the law. Business people want answers, not discussions of the finer points of the law. If an attorney is asked to research an issue, it is to provide an answer to a question that is a potential obstacle to the business, not to educate the business on the point of law. One of the more frustrating experiences in dealing with outside counsel is when you ask an attorney to research a question that relates to an area in which they specialize and instead of providing a straight answer they respond with a lengthy memo weighing both sides of an issue without a conclusion.