

A GUIDE FOR RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATES

How to Land Your First Job in the Legal Industry

Lauren Abrams, M.A.

While graduation is one of the biggest milestones and accomplishments in your life, for many recent graduates, it is also a reality check as you are faced with the challenge of entering the workforce. The transition from “college life” to the “real world” can often be jarring and overwhelming as graduates struggle to adapt to the requirements of presenting themselves in a professional manner. Aside from ditching your jeans and sneakers and taking on a new professional demeanor, landing a permanent job also requires motivation, resourcefulness, enthusiasm and persistence. Presenting yourself in a professional light and developing the right attitude are not classes you can take at any University.

As I recall my own post-college job search, I remember feeling a lot of pressure to start making money and live on my own. Up to this point it seemed like things were planned out for me on a predetermined path and I knew how to achieve my goals. Suddenly after graduation I was faced with a new challenge: securing a job in the legal industry. I was in desperate need of a “rule book” for how to achieve this next step. I had to learn it all on my own, which was had its challenges. In my current position as a Recruitment and Career Development Specialist, I encounter many recent graduates in the same position. To help you successfully transition into the workforce, here are several guidelines from my own experiences and work.

The Resume

Your resume is your initial presentation to prospective employers and it should be used to showcase your accomplishments, professional experiences, and talents. If there is any place to brag, this is it! Even though a resume is only paper, it is your chance to stand out amongst other applicants and get yourself an interview.

Some helpful tips:

- ✓ Easy to read layout, highlighting your key accomplishments
- ✓ Organize your resume with your most impressive accomplishment at the top
 - ✓ This may mean you put your education or work experience at the top
- ✓ No typos!
- ✓ Adjust your resume to match the focus of the job
- ✓ Make sure to send a cover letter with a brief explanation of your background and what position you are applying for
- ✓ Send documents as PDFs to ensure that the recipients can open them successfully with no change to the formatting
- ✓ Keep track of where you have sent your resume so you are able to follow up
- ✓ If you include “interests” be sure they have professional relevance



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The Interview The DOs and DON'Ts of Interviewing

DOs

Prior to the Interview:

- ✓ Network with people to learn about the industry
 - ✓ Schedule informational interviews
- ✓ Research the firm and the people you will be meeting
 - ✓ Search firm and professional association websites as well as LinkedIn profiles
- ✓ Visit your career center, speak with people in the industry, and practice with friends and family using sample interview questions
- ✓ Prepare thoughtful and relevant questions to ask the interviewer(s)

At the Interview:

- ✓ Arrive a few minutes early
- ✓ Wear a suit or professional attire (the legal industry tends to be very conservative)
- ✓ Bring copies of your resume, as well as a pen and notepad
- ✓ Turn your cell phone off
- ✓ Make eye contact
- ✓ Use examples when speaking about your experiences and talk about the results of your actions
- ✓ Be sure to ask for your interviewer's business card so you are able to send "thank you" notes or emails
- ✓ Thank your interviewer(s) for taking the time to meet with you

After the Interview:

- ✓ Send thank you notes or emails; be sure to proofread them for typos
- ✓ Follow up with an email or phone call asking about your status and reiterating your interest in the position

DON'Ts

(Believe it or not, we've seen these occur!)

- ✓ Chew gum
- ✓ Wear sunglasses, even if they are resting on your head
- ✓ Wear open toe shoes
- ✓ Ask about salary or vacation time (wait until you have an offer)
- ✓ Act in too casual of a manner – these are not your friends (yet)
- ✓ Ramble on about irrelevant experiences or information
- ✓ Immediately assume that "no news is bad news;" the process can take time

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Interview Questions

Asking thoughtful questions during an interview is just as important as being prepared to answer questions. It is essential that your questions convey a positive attitude and demonstrate to the interviewer that you have done your research and are educated about the industry and the Firm. These are a few example questions that we have found to be particularly helpful.

- ✓ How would you describe the culture at this Firm?
- ✓ What are some of your favorite things about working here?
- ✓ I know the legal recruiting/marketing industry is always growing and changing. How has the Firm responded to some of these changes, such as the use of social media, technology advancements, and the current economic situation?
- ✓ What are some goals that the recruiting/marketing team is hoping to accomplish in the coming year?
- ✓ What characteristics make someone a valuable addition to your team?
- ✓ Why did you choose to work at this Firm?
- ✓ Can you tell me what a typical day as a (position name) would look like?

From our experience, there are a number of questions that are frequently asked on interviews. As a recent graduate you may feel as though you don't have much to offer, but don't sell yourself short. Any work experience can help market and showcase your skills. For example, working at restaurant or as a retail sales associate illustrates your client service attitude, your ability to multitask and prioritize responsibilities, as well as work in a challenging and fast-paced environment. Even though you may lack direct experience in legal services, showing the interviewer that you have these types of skills can inspire confidence, which counts for a lot! These are some questions (both good and bad) you should be prepared to answer.

- ✓ Why are you interested in legal recruiting/marketing?
- ✓ What do you consider your strengths and what skills are you still hoping to improve?
- ✓ What do you like most and least about your current or past work experience(s)?
- ✓ Where do you see yourself professionally in five years?
- ✓ What skills will help you be successful in this position?
- ✓ Tell me about a challenge you faced and how you overcame that obstacle.
- ✓ What qualities would you use to describe yourself?
- ✓ What makes you stand out?
- ✓ Have you ever had to work with a difficult person and how did you handle it?
- ✓ Does the work you did at school demonstrate your full potential?
- ✓ What are you most proud of achieving in college?



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