The Insider’s Guide To Effective Callbacks

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Scheduling Callbacks

- Acknowledge an invitation the same day
- Get there quickly, ideally one of the earliest days offered by the employer.
All employers have different policies regarding callback expenses.

Do NOT make any assumptions about their expense policies.

The first rule in dealing with expenses is to ASK.

Keep ALL receipts.
To the extent you can avoid it, schedule one callback per day.

- You *want* to leave yourself plenty of flexibility to deal with unanticipated events (i.e., a delayed flight, impromptu social outing).
- You *don’t* want to contradict your outward enthusiasm for Employer X by telling them you’ve actually got to be at Employer Y next door by 3:00 PM.
Whenever possible, travel without checking a bag, so your business suit and other important items stay with you.
A Typical Callback

- A series of separate 30-minute interviews back to back.
- Interviewers typically do not share information – may complete a form when you leave and never discuss you again.
- Therefore, each 30-minute interview must stand on its own as your complete “sell.”
Time Allocation of 30–Minute Callback Interview

- Welcome 1
- Assess 5–10
- Answer Questions / Sell 15–18
- Conclude Interview 1
- Notes and Transition 2
The key elements to any successful interview, callbacks included, are:

- PREPARATION
- PRESENTATION
**PREPARATION**

- **Research. Research. Research.**
- Find out as much possible about the employer and the interviewer(s) prior to the callback.
- Employers consistently rank lack of knowledge of the organization as one of the primary reasons for not extending an offer.
In addition to the website, a Lexis-Nexis or Westlaw check will provide information on recent matters in which the organization has been involved.

A search of legal news files and periodicals will also direct you to relevant articles.
Develop a Strategy

The underlying question in every interviewer’s mind is…

“Why should *we* hire *this* person?”

THEREFORE, tailor the specific experiences, credentials and/or achievements emphasized to the employer you’re seeing that day.
Develop a List of Questions

Always prepare a list of questions relevant to the employer and the interviewer.

Be careful not to ask questions that could easily have been found by looking on their website, reading their promotional material or from the media.

- This shows a gross lack of preparation.

At the end of the interview, make sure to follow-up with any questions that have been left unanswered.
At the most basic level, callbacks allow employers to learn more about your skills and experience than can be explored in a 20-minute screening.

More importantly, callbacks give employers the opportunity to get to know you as an individual – often the critical factor in hiring decisions.
Inside A Partner’s Mind...

- Ambitious and hard working?
- Leader v. Follower?
- Brilliance v. Bad Behavior?
- Serious About Us?
- Ties to the city?
- Pulse – energy?
- People Skills?
- Focus?
- Long-term commitment to private practice/government/cause?
Callbacks give the interviewers the opportunity to determine if you will fit in, as a person, with their team.

- Are you someone with whom they can work those long hours and to whom they can relate on a professional, intellectual and emotional level.

**The Big Question:**

Do I Want to See and Deal with This Person Every Day?
Consider Your First Impression

Make sure that you consider all aspects of a first impression. Be early, prepared, well groomed, professionally dressed and personable.

Record a professional voicemail greeting.

Regarding attire, *be conservatively unmemorable.*

And TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES!
Bring Documentation

Always take multiple copies of your resume, writing sample, reference list and transcript.
Be Confident, Enthusiastic, and Engaged

Follow these simple rules:
- Make good eye contact and play an active role in the conversation;
- Ask relevant questions and listen attentively;
- Speak clearly and do not mumble;
- Show enthusiasm about the employer and the attorney with whom you are interviewing;
- Do not talk down about yourself or make excuses;
- Prepare at least one or two specific questions for each interviewer in advance.
You **MUST** prepare and practice your responses to anticipated questions before the interview.

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why do you want to work in X city?
- Why I should hire you?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- What attracted you to this firm or organization (as opposed to ABC down the street)?
- Why do you want to be a X? (litigator, tax lawyer etc.)
- What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
Anticipate Difficult Questions

Prepare responses to the most difficult questions.

Employers are frequently more interested in *how* you respond to such questions than they are in the responses themselves.

The following strategies can help:

- Answer the question concisely and directly;
- Do not focus on negative areas by using your time to make excuses for past mistakes; and
- Use the question to move the conversation into more positive areas.
Be Consistent

Do not be surprised if you are asked the same questions that were asked during your initial interview. You will likely be meeting with different individuals who may want to elicit similar information.

Be sure that your answers to the different interviewers remain consistent.
Treat all individuals you meet with equal respect – including the office support staff.

- They have often been there a long time and are asked for their input.
The call-back schedule sometimes includes a meal. In this more relaxed environment, the lunch hosts will be determining whether you:

- Fit into their firm or organization;
- Have good interpersonal skills;
- Know how to conduct yourself in a professional or social setting;
- Can have a relaxed and/or substantive conversation;
- Present a professional image; and
- Appear mature and self-confident.
A Few Rules

- Do NOT drink alcohol on these lunches even if the associates drink.
- Keep in mind that they already have a job and you do not.
- While the lunch may appear on its face to be a casual social event, it is not—it is part of the job interview process.
So...

- Consider avoiding contentious subjects (i.e., religion, politics);
- Be 33% less boisterous than everyone else;
- Order the familiar and the easy;
- Don’t let your guard down; and
- Use common sense.
  - In interview world, nothing good happens after midnight.
Thank You Letters

- A thank you letter is a must following a call-back interview, and should be sent 24-hours after your interview.
- Letters sent via regular mail or e-mail are both acceptable.
- It is recommended that you send a thank you letter to each person that participated in the interview.
When writing your thank you letters:

◦ Make sure that you have the proper spelling and title of each person who interviewed you.

◦ Include specific information that was discussed during the interview.
This will remind the interviewer of who you are.

The letter should not be so general that it could be used for all callback interviews. In fact, this could do more harm than good.
Observe Your Environment

- Also time for you to assess the employer:
  - How lawyers relate to all in office?
  - Details and knick knacks in office?
  - Open and closed doors?
  - Does the employer (and interviewer) seem prepared?
After The Dust Settles...

- Record your impressions;
- Compare/contrast answers;
- Identify incomplete responses/inconsistencies; and
- Self evaluate: be critical and learn.
Questions For Associates

- Responsibility
- Supervision
- Training
- Compensation / Reviews
- Summer program details
- Opinion on growth in their practice area
- Most of all – whatever really interests you
Questions For Partners

- Growth in office or practice area
- Promotion and Compensation
- Importance of Marketing / Development
- Impact / Likelihood of Merger/Expansion
- Questions re governance
- Use of associates – specific
- How they staff their matters – specific
Maximizing Opportunities Beyond OCI

- Contact smaller firms.
  - And don’t wait until large firms have been exhausted!

- Network.
  - Martindale
  - www.LinkedIn.com
  - Leadership Directories
  - Duke Law Alumni Directory
  - College Alumni Directory
  - Friends, family, neighbors
Also Consider...

- Judicial Clerkships;
- Opportunities in Government;
- Opportunities in Public Interest.
Improve Your Record

- Grades – enormous progress can be made.
- Journals – join, write, publish, edit.
- Courses – take core substantive courses.
- Activities – don’t just join, “do.”
- Don’t go into drift and withdrawal mode.
  - Staying proactive will help you throughout your career
Build Your Foundation

- You may have several employers over 10–15 years.
- The dream job may be available in 2–5 years.
- You may take several steps to reach an objective.
- Don’t over invest expectations in one opportunity.
- Take ownership of your career.
  - Become active in your practice area
  - Join and be active in bar associations
  - Take courses/write articles/attend seminars
Don’t Forget Your Online Profile!
  ◦ Facebook/MySpace/YouTube/Online Photos
    • Scrub content text/photos/video.
  ◦ Blogs
    • Yours and your comments on others
  ◦ Other Commentary

Why?
  ◦ If it exists, it will be found
  ◦ If it shows poor judgment, it will be fatal