

I HAVE A CALLBACK! NOW WHAT DO I DO?

What is a Callback?

Students often ask what the difference is between a screening interview and a callback. A screening interview is a short meeting in which the employer determines whether it will be worthwhile getting to know the student further in order to determine whether the student will meet the employer's needs. A callback interview is a lengthy interview at the employer's offices in which a more thorough assessment of the student is made. The object for a student in both cases is to help the employer imagine him or her as a member of that employer's organization. But in a call-back interview, it is important to remember that the employer has already decided that the student has the credentials the employer is seeking; much more emphasis is placed during a callback on determining whether the student will fit into the workplace, in other words, whether there is "chemistry."

A callback interview can last for half a day or even a whole day. Students will often meet with several attorneys, both partners and associates, for twenty or thirty minute interviews, and will often be invited to lunch. In many cases, several attorneys will ask the same questions, often the same questions you were asked in the screening interview. It is important for you to remember that each new interviewer is hearing the information you have to give for the first time, so do not get frustrated when you have to repeat yourself.

Callback Interviewing Tips

- Do not arrive at the interview more than 10 minutes early. Having a candidate waiting around for a long period of time is unduly awkward.
- Constantly refine your interviewing technique. Know why you wanted to interview, be sure you have something to say, and learn how to get to the point. Do not take over the interview at the first pause, as the interviewer may merely be organizing his or her thoughts.
- Be careful with humor. Nothing damages an interview more than an offensive joke or a joke the interviewer doesn't get.
- Bring copies of your writing sample, and extra copies of your resume, transcript, and reference list with you to the interview. If you forget any of these and need to mail them to the firm, be sure that your transmittal letter is well-written. Firms use even these letters to evaluate your writing skills.
- Be conversational but think before you ask or answer any questions. Choose your words carefully and do not interrupt the interviewer. Avoid "uh" and "um" as time fillers.
- Before you leave the firm at the end of the interview, be sure you have all of the interviewers' names (spelled correctly) and the correct address for the firm so that you can write a thank-you note. It is acceptable to send one thank-you letter to the recruiting coordinator or hiring partner, asking him or her to convey your thanks to the others with whom you interviewed. You may want to send individual letters to particular interviewers you "clicked with."

- Pay attention to your tone of voice and body language. Be sure that you show an appropriate amount of enthusiasm, without seeming overbearing. Be aware of non-verbal cues from your interviewer indicating that you should elaborate on your answer or that you should stop talking.

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Preparing for the Callback: Know the Employer

- Talk to the hiring attorney or recruiting coordinator. This person can provide you with a significant amount of helpful information. Among the things to ask about are the length of the interview (half day, full day, meal included) and who will be interviewing you. Having this information ahead of time will allow you to research the attorneys you will be speaking with. Check out the attorney profiles in *Martindale Hubbell*, either in the books in the OCS library, on Lexis/Nexis or on Martindale-Hubbell's web site (<http://www.martindale.com>). Notice where most of the attorneys came from, what type of activities they engaged in during law school and after as well as what type of activities they are currently pursuing. Also note what practice areas are listed and how many attorneys are in each one. Think about how your credentials, activities, and interests fit in with the type of people listed in the profile. Pay particular attention to the bios of the attorneys interviewing you.
- Use infirmation.com (available on the OCS web site). Some descriptions of firms explain what their callbacks are like. In addition, refresh your knowledge about the firm itself.
- Similarly, read the employer's web site. Information on a web site is considered to be the most up-to-date information around. The OCS web site (<http://www.law.umich.edu/currentstudents/CareerServices>) has links to many firms with home pages that either interview on campus or appear on the list of employers unable to visit campus. You should also look at the firm resumes and brochures located in Room 210 HH in the file cabinet.
- Talk to other students who have worked for this employer. Check in Room 210 for the names of students who worked for that employer this past summer and call or e-mail them. Most students are happy to share their experiences. (If you had a legal job this past summer, make sure OCS knows that you would be willing to talk to other students as well.)
- Finally, read the news about your firm using the large news databases on **Westlaw** and **Nexis**. Utilize both legal newspapers and the local newspapers. Insert the employer's name as your search term and retrieve articles from newspapers across the country about cases and events in which the employer has been involved as well as interesting attorneys and their activities. Because most students do not take the time to do this type of research, employers will be impressed when a student is aware of their current events.