



Feature

On-Campus Interviews Allow Law Firms to Meet Potential Associates

By Heather Jung

In attempts to keep up with the growing demand for attorneys, law firms are stepping up their recruitment processes and going directly to the sources of new attorneys: law schools. Recruiting officers, CEOs, and other leaders from various law firms are conducting on-campus interviews (OCIs) in order to meet the future attorneys of America.



Greenberg Traurig, the seventh-largest American law firm based on number of attorneys, has added more than 20 offices and 1,300 lawyers nationwide in the last nine years. In order to keep up with their growing business, Greenberg Traurig's CEO and other leaders

at the firm created the Fast Track Program, an on-campus recruitment program that looks for summer associates at law schools.

"What we look to do is hire a very diverse population of students, both in terms of regional, in terms of experiences—in all ways diverse," Carol Allen, Chief Recruitment Officer for Greenberg Traurig, said. "Going to campus to meet students is a great way."

While Greenberg Traurig uses on-campus interviews to hire summer associates, other law firms, such as the Washington, DC, intellectual property firm Sterne, Kessler, Goldstein & Fox, also hire student associates (individuals who work at firms during the day and attend classes because their law firms are paying for their tuition) and associates through OCIs. Since its standards are so specific, Sterne Kessler will generally only work with law schools that allow prescreening of OCI candidates.

"OCIs are a great way to meet numerous qualified candidates in a consolidated period of time," Racquel Keller, Professional Development and Recruitment Manager for Sterne Kessler, said. "In addition, one individual is meeting several applicants on the same day, which makes it easier for the interviewer to assess and rank [...] the candidates as far as fit, technical ability, and intelligence."

John Huffman, a 2L at Georgetown, will be working with Greenberg Traurig this summer and feels that OCIs gave him opportunities to learn about firms' unique cultures and find

the firm that best suited him. He says that OCIs—particularly those conducted through the Fast Track Program—are "efficient and effective" ways of meeting potential employers. He acknowledges that, while convenient, OCIs are also difficult for everyone involved.

"I think everyone has a tough job—the interviewers and the students," he said.

Many law schools, such as Chicago-Kent, are initiating programs of their own that invite law firms to interview their students. According to Elizabeth Pohlman, Director of Career Services at Chicago-Kent, the school holds formal on-campus interviews during the fall, but law firms can come to interview students in the spring, as well. Every fall, 2Ls and 3Ls are interviewed by law firms such as Sidley Austin and Mayer, Brown, Rowe & Maw in order to fill summer associate and entry-level positions at the firms. Government organizations and smaller boutique firms also participate in on-campus interviews. Since 1Ls are not allowed to utilize the career services office until November, they are excluded from the fall round of on-campus interviews but can participate in the spring interviews.

"It makes it easier for [the student] if the employers are on campus," Pohlman said.

While on-campus interviews are more convenient than traditional interviews, students must not forget that they are, in fact, still interviews and that they should act accordingly. According to Keller, there are five things students should keep in mind when attending on-campus interviews:

- 1) Make sure you are dressed appropriately. Business attire is still expected, even if an employer has a business-casual dress code for the office. They want to see how you would present to a client or at a networking event.
- 2) Do your research on the firm. You only have 20 minutes to



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make an impression on the interviewer. Make the most of your time by doing your research and, as a result, having a more productive conversation. It sends a clear message that you are interested in working with that employer.

3) Come prepared. Bring an extra copy of your resume; you never know whose luggage got lost or package of materials was undelivered. In addition, most employers require writing samples and transcripts from all of the schools you attended before invitations are extended for interviews. As a bonus, also provide your references. This will help you to get a response more quickly.

4) Be on time. Again, the interviewer only has 20 minutes to decide whether to bring you in and assess how he or she believes you will operate professionally.

5) Call if you can't make it, even if you aren't interested in the employer. The legal community is tightly knit, and lawyers love to keep files for years. So don't burn the bridge before you have even crossed it. You may change your mind about the employer after you get a few years of experience—don't let a youthful mistake cost you future opportunities.

While Allen, like Keller, encouraged students to learn about the law firms they are interviewing with, she also said they should ask relevant questions and "relax, be yourself, engage [the] interviewer in a dialogue that answers their questions."

Although these tips are good to keep in mind, students must also remember that each law firm is different and will be looking closely at different areas in addition to assessing general qualifications. For instance, Greenberg Traurig looks for students with "3-D" skills (legal, business, and leadership), whereas Sterne Kessler looks to hire students with advanced degrees in technical areas who are eligible to take the United States Patent and Trademark Office's patent bar exam.

Melissa Bengston, a 3L at Arizona State University, worked as a summer associate at the Phoenix office of Greenberg Traurig last year, thanks to the Fast Track Program.

"It's a wonderful way to start building relationships with the lawyering community in the area you are going to be working in," Bengston said. "[It gives you] an inside taste of what life in the firms is like."

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