The Four Top Enemies of a Paralegal Job Seeker

Because hiring is both subjective and objective, much of interviewing is out of our control. New paralegals must say: "I can affect certain things in this interviewing process, and there are many things I cannot affect. I am going to affect what I can affect." The stage, the dialogue, the plot are all fairly predictable; the most important variable is your performance. It is surely the main thing you can affect. As Shakespeare said through Cassius in "Julius Caesar":

Men at some time are masters of their fates: The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Warning: the primrose path to interviewing maladies

It is a strong temptation to let the interviewing process just happen. There are many reasons for this, but let us focus on four enemies to preparation. If you can avoid going down this primrose path, you can be well on your way to being an effective legal interviewee.

THE PRIMROSE PATH TO INTERVIEWING MALADIES

Why it is "human" not to prepare well for interviews

Enemy #1-The "Natural Interview" Is a Defeating Myth Yes, you must act "natural." And they will act "natural." And everyone will concentrate on being as friendly and warm as they can be to add to the atmosphere of "naturalness"; but in fact, the legal interview is an unnatural contrivance. We think, "I can't do anything but go in there and be my natural, witty, spontaneous self." This assumption is what creates a lack of preparation.

Enemy #2-Fatalism Haunts the Interview Process

Working in tandem with this erroneous assumption that the interview is "natural," we have the basic fatalistic assumption of the potential paralegal: "If I am meant to get the job, it will go well; if it doesn't-oh, well, I wasn't meant to get the job." Expecting good fortune goes hand-in-hand with fatalism. The paralegal who is as prepared as possible can change the odds. This person creates more and better opportunities for self and career.

Enemy #3-The Absence of a "Feedback" System Gives You an Illusion of Success

An unseen factor in the interview process is that you never know when you have done poorly. Why were you disqualified? Unless you ask, you will never know, and if you ask, most will not tell. So, when you hear people talk about interviewing, they are talking about their successes, which they can point to, and not their failures, which have not been disclosed to them.

Enemy #4-The Job Search Process Is Arduous

Those who are fatalistic, anxious, and paralyzed about the job search process will probably have the same attitudes toward interviewing. Working on a polished presentation is your best prescription. (We will discuss this in more detail in the section on your bio below.) Just being optimistic and nervous is like whistling in the dark.

You can be the masters of your fate by preparing for the interview. And then, all the while, we can still live with the way the "cards are stacked." Consider that the interview is a card game. Imagine for a moment that you saunter into Dodge City and walk into the Long Branch Saloon. Kitty is smiling as you come in. Everyone at the card table is staring at you; their cards are against their chests. You sit. They know your name; you are introduced to them. As you set your weight into the chair, they say, "We'll tell you the game bit by bit." You smile and pick up your cards. The interview begins.
In spite of all variables that you cannot control, you still must embrace the interview process, as if you are fully and actively the master of your fate. It does not help to feel passive and fatalistic. The way to stay positive is to determine that you will prepare and that you will not succumb to the natural enemies that keep us from preparation.