
CALL BACK INTERVIEWS

Office of Career & Professional Development
© 2016, UC Hastings College of the Law

WHAT IS A CALL BACK INTERVIEW?

- **A longer interview than the screening** - most often at the employer's office. Typically, you will meet with 4-6 attorneys for about thirty minutes each. Each employer creates its own format for the call back, so do be sure to ask beforehand. **The call back interview sometimes includes a lunch** (more on this below).
- **An indication of significant interest** in you by the employer.
- **A chance for the employer to see if you fit** with the rest of the team.

WHEN YOU RECEIVE A CALL BACK, YOU SHOULD:

- **Feel confident** that you've already impressed the employer.
- **Know the employer has decided you can do the work** and that you appear to fit the office culture.
- **Relax and be yourself!** The employer needs to see you in the office and interacting with office members, to decide if that "fit" really exists. The best approach, therefore, is to relax and be yourself!
- **Interview the employer** at the same time they are interviewing you. See whether the organization meets your needs. Examine the culture:
 - Is the atmosphere to your liking?
 - Are doors open or closed?
 - How are attorneys relating to support staff?
 - How do partners relate to associates?
 - Are attorneys chatting in the hallways, in their offices, or simply passing each other by?

HOW TO SET UP A CALL BACK:

1. **Respond within 24 hours** to the invitation (whether accepting or declining).
2. **Set up the call back for as soon as your schedule permits.** (Tip: if the call back is with an employer that is not one of your top choices, consider scheduling it a bit farther out so that you can schedule earlier call backs with your top choices.)

Choice of Dates: Generally you'll be given a choice of dates for your call back.

Rolling Basis: Many employers make their hiring decisions on a rolling basis, so fewer spots are open toward the end of the season.

3. **Ask for the schedule and names of the interviewing attorneys.**

If the schedule has not been set yet, ask if you may call back a day or two ahead of time to get the names of your interviewers.

Research: Asking for your interviewers' names allows you to research the background of your interviewers. (See Research section below.)

Requests: You might be asked if you would like to meet with attorneys in specific practice areas. Feel free to *politely request* interviewers from your preferred practice area.

4. **Out-of-Area Callbacks: Notify firms of other interviews in the same city.** If you are interviewing out of town and receive more than one call back for the same city, ***try to set up all interviews for the same trip*** (so firms can share expenses). Understandably, firms do not want to learn that they paid the entire cost for a trip that involved other call backs.

Handling Expenses: Most firms cover all expenses directly related to an out-of-area call back (e.g., transportation out of the area, hotel accommodation, meals, etc.) Some will make the arrangements up front, while others will expect you to cover the initial outlay and then seek reimbursement.

When in doubt - ask! It is always appropriate to ask for clarification of each firm's particular system for reimbursing travel expenses. If making the initial outlay would impose a financial hardship, speak with the recruiting coordinator about your specific situation. Ask questions such as:

-Since travel will be involved, how does your firm handle such arrangements?

-What expenses are covered/appropriate?

-Since my interview is on a Friday and I'll be staying with family, would it be appropriate to extend my stay until Sunday night *so long as it doesn't add to the firm's expense?*

Use your best judgment in expense-reporting. Remember that your expense report reflects on your candidacy. Cab fare to interviews within commuting distance, hotel bills for long distance phone calls, or in-room movies are examples of expenses firms will not cover.

5. **If you choose to DECLINE the call back interview** - still respond within 24-48 hours of receiving the invitation. Be diplomatic.

6. **If you decide to CANCEL a call back** - be sure to communicate your decision to the appropriate person ***as soon as possible***. Be gracious and professional.

INTERVIEWING TIPS FOR THE CALL BACK:

Learn how to say the employer's name. If you are unsure how to pronounce it, call the main line and listen to how the receptionist says the name. You can also call after hours and listen to the recording to hear the pronunciation.

Arrive early! By at least 10 minutes. Notify the receptionist of who you are, and who you are there to meet with first (usually the recruiting coordinator).

Expect a busy office setting. While you are interviewing it is likely people will go in and out with messages, and the attorney may take urgent phone calls. Disruptions can provide you a break to relax, regroup, and scan the office for small talk topics.

You may repeat yourself.

If you have one anecdote which is a particularly good illustration of your skills, try to weave that story into each interview. **Relive the story each time you tell it;** actually picture it in your mind rather than simply saying the words. This will keep you fresh instead of sounding canned.

Be conscious of your energy level.

The call back is an endurance test. Not only will you be repeating yourself throughout the day, but you'll need to be "on" for several hours. Your energy level needs to be (as much as possible) as high at the end of the day as it was in the beginning. **Get a good night's sleep the night before.** Don't take the red eye flight and head right to your interview! And don't load up on too much caffeine.

Be nice to support staff. Your interaction with staff is often a hiring factor.

The call back is all about fit. The call back is an opportunity for the attorneys to see you in *their* setting and to see how you fit. Your interview continues while you are walking from one office to the next, speaking with support staff, and at lunch.

Prepare for your Achilles heel. Know the question you dread the most and be prepared for it! Also, determine what question you wish they'd ask you, and make sure you get that information across. Career counselors can brainstorm with you on appropriate responses to these questions.

Stop by to see your initial interviewer. They got you invited into the firm, so check in to say thanks.

Keep your comments on a positive, upbeat level, whether speaking about past employers, course work or any other subject. **Be discreet** about sharing information that would not be an asset to your candidacy. Do you hope to be teaching scuba diving in Hawaii five years from now? If so, you might want to avoid sharing that when asked about long range plans.

Always ask about next steps. Employers gauge the level of a student's interest by whether the student asks about the anticipated date for a hiring decision. You can ask the recruiter (who will often meet with you at the end) or your last interviewer.

Send thank you notes within 24 hours of the call back. Either write a separate (i.e. truly different) and *error-free* letter to each person with whom you met, or write one letter to the person with whom you established the best rapport and "cc" the recruiter. See the **Cover Letters** handout for tips on thank you letters.

Do not ask about salary or vacation until you have an offer in hand.

HANDLING THE CALL BACK LUNCH:

Treat the lunch as part of the interview. Sometimes call backs include lunch. The lunch is simply an opportunity for the attorneys to see you in a different setting. While the conversation often seems more relaxed and casual, your behavior and conversation during lunch will be evaluated in the hiring decision.

-Order something non-messy: You'll generally be asked to order first. Keep it simple and easy to eat!

-Avoid alcohol even if others order drinks. Stick with water, iced tea, soda, and lemonade.

-Avoid the most expensive item on the menu (but you don't have to order the cheapest item on the menu either).

-Eat well before your interview, because you likely won't get to eat very much during the lunch as you'll be speaking a lot!

CALL BACK RESEARCH:

Do more research than you did for the screening phase. The following are possible sources for additional information on employers:

- 1. Promotional materials.** Many recruiting brochures are available on employers' websites.
- 2. Surveys.** Read the student summer surveys available on [HCO](#) (beginning with Summer 2006) and in hard copy from 1997 to 2005. Contact the students who completed the surveys to ask follow-up questions, starting with current 3Ls.
- 3. On-line databases.** Martindale Hubbell (www.martindale.com), Lexis (advanced martindale searches), and Westlaw Legal Directory (WLD) can provide useful information about the professional background of attorneys. In addition, in Lexis and Westlaw news databases you can search for recent news articles about legal employers. You can also Google the firm and the attorneys with whom you will interview.
- 4. Alumni.** Check for Hastings alumni at the firm. Consider calling recent graduates to ask about their work, level of responsibility, client contact, etc.

- 5. Read Published Articles.** A great way to flatter interviewers is to have reviewed articles they wrote and to have a discussion about it, especially if the attorney wrote a recent article in your area of interest.

Contact the Career Office to make an appointment with a counselor. Good luck!