

**Interviewing-Part II: Conduct***By Melanie G. Lammers*

For the past couple of weeks, we have covered the ins and outs of *physically* preparing for an interview. However, we have not begun to cover the territory of mental preparation. Every interview, just like every cover letter, should be approached with a specific intention that is tailored to the employer and the position. Your interview is the first face-to-face interaction you will have with the firm, and the more you know ahead of time the better.

Obviously, we have discussed finding out the names of those who have influence or the power to make decisions in the hiring process as well as any additional information about the specificities of the position, but doing your research is not half as important as what you choose to do with the information you have gathered. Everything, from the greeting you give when you walk through the door to the look on your face when the interviewer asks you questions, has the potential to impact the firm's view of you as a person and a candidate.

There is a down-to-business approach that many firms prefer to employ during actual interviews, but you may encounter a less formal setting in which the hiring partners attempt to get to know more about your personality than your legal expertise. The approach that will be taken can

often be easily predicted based on the time and place of the appointed interview. If you are meeting hiring partners in a restaurant, bar, or any other social setting, your etiquette should always be professional, but you may be more inclined to discuss personal information, whereas setting up a meeting in the conference room of the firm's headquarters may result in a more position-based and impersonal conversation.

You can also easily gauge what topics you should talk about by observing the interviewers. If they are all talking about their children and weekend plans, a well-placed comment about your own interests may be appropriate. However, do not, under any circumstances, consider these leading conversations permission for you to delve into detailed descriptions of evening soirées or stories about specific qualities in others that annoy you. Anything that could be considered judgmental should be kept under wraps.

Concerning answers to specific interview questions, as I have previously mentioned, honesty is always the best policy, but telling your life story is only helpful when listeners want to hear it. Try to take as many social cues from those around you as possible.

Demonstrating attentiveness is almost, if not more, important than having an impressive professional background. One man said that being hired for his first in-house position seemed like an extremely relaxed process but that he was so nervous about the interview that he sat stiffly in his chair throughout the entire encounter. Years later, he learned from his boss that he was hired despite a lack of qualifications due to his posture during the interview. He had appeared so eager and interested that they thought he would be a good fit for the position.

Lastly, everybody wants to know the perfect way to conclude an interview when the inevitable "Do you have any questions for us?" moment comes. The short answer is "Yes and no." There are some general questions that any interviewee can ask in order to appear interested in the position he or she is applying for, but you should be sure that those interviewing you have not previously answered them; if they have, you will seem to have not been paying attention. Here are a few examples of appropriate questions:

What are your specific expectations of an employee in this position?

What are the specific responsibilities involved in this position?

How soon will you be making a decision about filling this position?

If you want to appear intelligent, though, you might try bringing a notebook or pad in with you. There seems to be an unspoken rule that interviewees must not move during interviews, but taking notes on information gathered that may lead to follow-up questions has never been a faux pas. In fact, jotting down a couple of key ideas for later on can help you stay focused and end the interview on a high note with pointedly specific questions that demonstrate a sense of genuine interest and appreciation for the organization's time.