The Call Back Interview

The "call-back" or second interview is more serious than the initial interview and indicates the employer's increased interest in you. During the call-back interview the employer will have the opportunity to further evaluate your skills, to clarify information on your resume, to determine your "fit" with the firm and to sell the firm or organization to you. At the same time you are being recruited and evaluated, you should be evaluating the employer. The call-back interview can take place in a variety of different formats and forums. For example, you may be asked to meet with a group of attorneys at one time, or you may be invited to dine with a group of attorneys, or you may meet with several attorneys one-on-one.

1. Acknowledging the Call-Back Invitation:

Your call-back invitation may come by phone call, usually made by the attorney who initially interviewed you, or by letter from the firm or organization. Acknowledge this invitation as soon as possible, preferably by telephone unless the firm has indicated you should reply by letter. The firm will then help you make the necessary arrangements for your call-back interview.

2. Scheduling the Call-Back Interview:

Many employers make hiring decisions on a revolving basis. It is to your advantage, once you have received a call-back invitation, to arrange to visit the firm at the earliest possible date.

If you have an interest in a special area of practice, let the recruitment coordinator know of this interest at the time you schedule the call-back. It is easier for the coordinator to develop a meaningful schedule for you when you give the firm advance notice of your interests.

Call-back interviews may last from several hours to an entire day. For planning purposes, ask beforehand how long the interview is expected to last.

Whenever possible, schedule one call-back interview per day. A call-back interview may last longer than anticipated and you may be exhausted afterwards. If you have two call-backs in one day it might be difficult for you to be your best for both of them.

3. Preparation:

Whenever possible, have more detailed information about the firm than you knew in the initial interview. Faculty members, local practitioners and other students who have worked there may have valuable information about firm partners, prominent clients and recent cases.

Think about answers to expected questions. Your answers to all questions should reflect the reasons you are well qualified for a position with the firm and show the employer that you possess the attributes that the firm is seeking.

Always bring multiple copies of your resume, writing sample, transcript and reference list to call-back interviews.
4. **The Players:**

On the day before your call-back interview, call to confirm arrangements and ask the recruiting coordinator for the names of the people you will be seeing. Firms usually do not have final schedules of interviewers until the day before.

You may see both partners and associates during the call-back interview. Firms may try to have you meet Loyola alumni, alumni from your undergraduate institution or people with whom you have other things in common. If you meet with a panel or group of interviewers, just be sure to make eye-contact with everyone in the group.

All attorneys who interview you are doing so because the firm values their judgment regardless of their job title, area of practice, or length of time with the firm. Within the recruitment committee, the general rule is one person, one vote, although if there is a disagreement among interviewers, the partners' feelings usually prevail. Similarly, recruitment coordinators may sit on hiring committees and, while they may not have a vote, they have the ability to affect a decision. Their opinions are particularly valued because, unlike any of the attorneys, they see all applicants. Therefore, treat all individuals you meet with respect. Do not overlook the receptionist. Also, be aware that recruiting coordinators know each other and converse on a regular basis.

5. **The Interview:**

Do not be surprised if you are asked some of the same questions that were asked during the initial interview, or if you are asked the same question by more than one attorney at the call-back interview. If you feel you have answered a question well and another attorney asks you the same question, feel free to use the same answer again. Avoid changing the substance of your answer as interviewers within the firm may discuss the interviewee's answers. The attorneys who interview you during your call-back interview will complete review forms regarding their impressions of you. These forms may include evaluations of your demeanor, your ability to do associate-level work at the firm, the level of your interest in the firm and whether you will fit in at the firm. Many forms also ask the interviewer whether you should receive an offer from the firm.

6. **Stress:**

Sometimes employers use a “stress interview” to assess your reaction to stressful situations. If this happens to you, your aim should be to keep your cool. For example, if interviewers introduce controversial topics, or use lengthy silences or merely ask unexpected questions (such as, if you were a tree, what kind would you be?). Levelheadedness, mature judgment and quick thinking will be key factors for you in these kinds of situations.

7. **The Meal:**

The call-back schedule may include lunch or dinner, which offers an opportunity, in a more relaxed environment, for the firm to see you as an individual with a distinct personality. Your
meal hosts will be determining whether you:

- Fit into their firm;
- Have good interpersonal skills;
- Can converse easily;
- Are enjoyable to be with;
- Present a professional image; and
- Appear mature and self confident.

Often, junior associates will take you to lunch on the theory that you will be more comfortable asking questions of someone who was recently in your position. Though that is often the case, you should not assume that young associates are good friends. Feel free to discuss subjects of mutual interest outside the law and engage in casual conversation. Do not ask inappropriate questions or make inappropriate comments. You should maintain a professional image throughout your interview. Alcoholic beverages at social events should be limited to one drink, if at all.

Here are some dining tips:

- What is proper etiquette with your napkin?
  -Put napkin on your lap as soon as seated.
  -Unfold medium size lunch napkin entirely.
  -Unfold large dinner napkin in half.
  -Use napkin to pat mouth before drinking.
  -Put napkin on chair if excusing yourself from the table for a few minutes.

- What is the proper way to eat soup?
  -Soup should be sipped from the side of the spoon.
  -It is appropriate to tip bowl away from you to get the last spoonful.
  -When finished, place the soup spoon on service plate.

- What is the proper etiquette for bread and rolls?
  -Bread and butter plate will be on the upper left of place setting.
  -Use dinner knife for buttering if butter knife is not available.
  -When finished, put knife across top of plate with blade toward you.
  -Break off a small piece of bread and butter it; eat only one piece at a time.

- Order something easy to eat. Avoid pasta that must be twirled; sauces that may drip or splash; shellfish that must be broken or opened; and meals that have pieces that can get caught in your teeth.

- What is the table set-up?
  -Solids on the left (bread & butter, salad), liquids on the right (water goblet).
  -If in doubt about which silverware to use, always work from the outside in.
8. Expenses:

Among the myriad of details to pay attention to in arranging and going on a call-back interview, areas of great concern for both students and employers are cost and reimbursement. Firms have different policies regarding call-back expenses; do not make assumptions about a firm's expense policies. The first rule in dealing with expenses is to ask. It is best to ask about a firm's expense policies prior to actually making arrangements for your visit. The person at the firm who handles these details is usually the recruitment coordinator or someone on the recruitment coordinator's staff.

Firms generally pay for all normal business expenses directly associated with your trip. Reimbursable expenses include:

a. Round Trip Coach Airfares

Some firms make the travel arrangements and will send you a ticket; others prefer applicants to make their own arrangements. Check with the firm to determine its policies.

b. Hotel Accommodations

As with travel arrangements, many firms prefer to make the hotel arrangements and have an established, direct billing agreement with a hotel. If the firm suggests you make your own reservations, you should ask the recruitment coordinator for a list of recommended hotels.

c. Meals

Firms will pay for meals that are reasonable and expected during the call-back visit. Firms will not pay for meals that are exorbitant, for example a $45.00 room service breakfast.

d. Ground Transportation

Cab fares and airport parking costs are necessary and reimbursable expenses. Car rental may be excessive unless the city or location of the firm makes such rental a necessity.

e. Multiple Call-Backs in One City

If you have call-backs with more than one firm in the same city, the firms will expect to share your expenses if they have all agreed in advance to pay for the trip. Before you make your trip, find out whether the firms will take care of prorating your expenses and doing the accounting, or whether you will be required to do so.

f. Record-Keeping

Keep accurate records of expenses and save all receipts. Make copies of your receipts in case questions or problems arise. To help you organize your expenses, the firm may give you a travel
expense form. If a form is not provided by the firm, see a career counselor as they can provide you with one of the NALP expense reimbursement forms.

g. Miscellaneous

Such items as the cost of a friend's dinner and theater tickets are non-reimbursable expenses. Recognize that expenses not directly related to the call-back interview should not be charged to employers.

Staying an extra day or days in a particular city in order to meet with another firm for a first interview (or to see friends and relatives) is permitted as long as you have a genuine interest in the firm that is paying for the trip. That employer can be billed for the full cost of your transportation to and from the city and any charges directly attributable to your call-back interview. However, you obviously cannot charge that firm for expenses that result from personal visits or from an initial interview with another firm.