The Psychology of Interviewing

Much of this has been adapted from Paul Anderson's 7/8/09 presentation at WSBA

Creating Rapport

Listen to People: This is especially relevant for Informational Interviews. People want to feel understood. They want to feel like they have something special to offer. Interrupting them with your own opinions, or personal contributions, is a way of competing for airspace. Get out of your own way when creating rapport!

Match Their Behavioral Presentation: There's nothing more uncomfortable then a disconnect between someone standing tall, while the other is relaxed. One person speaking loudly and the other softly. One all dressed up, the other casual. It's awkward. This is an important skill. You want people to feel comfortable. Otherwise they won't want to work with you. Remember—this is not about you! It's about you filling *their need*. So whatever personality signatures you are especially proud of can wait a second. This is your chance to *read* the situation.

Connection is approximately:

- 6% words—what you have to say. This is usually overemphasized.
- 38% tone of speech, tempo, volume and style of expression. You want to match this.
- 55% behavioral—this includes how you dress. How you carry yourself. Are you more serious or smiley? If they look relaxed, then be relaxed too. Are you giving them an *equal* amount of eye contact?

Networking

Meeting other lawyers is critical for your career. For solos about 65% of referrals come from lawyers who are either swamped or don't have your practice area.

For those in firms networking not only can get you a job, but it can elevate your career once you are hired. Social skills go a huge way in terms of bringing competent people into the practice, and in terms of getting those important clients.

But a lot of networking involves two people talking about themselves and wondering if they'll have something in common. In some respects one's objectives can seem muddled: Do I want a job or a friend? Be clear about your objectives. Also be aware that your perspective on your experience will inevitably be influenced by the company you keep. Most of us have a charitable instinct, but if someone is not helpful in terms of satisfying your objectives, know it.

Networking should be a means to an end. The trick to networking, is you have to create a *value proposition.*

That is you have to find a way to be helpful to that person. This goes for jobs, as much as contacts. How are you going to satisfy their need? Can you do work that's helpful for them. Do you have interests that they connect with? Do you know someone they should

meet? This focus upon their need should be the first priority from that very first email exchange. It means your eye is on the ball, and you are not over-absorbed by the formalities around keeping in touch.

This is why passing out resumes at a job fair is pretty pointless. There's no value proposition. You talk about yourself and they say "who cares" and drop your resume in the garbage (since a resume is just words, which only count for 6% of connection).

Elevator Pitches

These are mostly so that you know what you want. This value should not be minimized. Being able to articulate what you are really looking for, why it's exciting to you, and how you might be able to connect with someone else on this topic can really offer you focus. It's not about grabbing some executive by the collar and ranting about your skills. Rather, this might be the moment in the informational interview when you are asked about yourself. It should be individualized for different situations. Each point introduced should be able to serve as a jumping off point to expand the conversation.

When Interviewing for a Job

The person that asks the questions has control of the interview. Practice these questions before you go in.

You want to let them express themselves, then gradually take control. Nick Corcodilos calls this *doing the job in the interview*. If they have a series of prepared questions this can be harder, but not impossible.

When answering their questions, remember the 20 second/2 minute rule. Responses that are less than 20 seconds have been found to arouse suspicion. Responses over 2 minutes and you're likely to overwhelm/digress. The trick here is to have enough to say *and* be able to stop on a dime with your statements.

A great method of taking control is to ask questions that simultaneously demonstrate your expertise. These are called *expertise questions.* I'm not a lawyer, but in psychology I might say:

- Do you prefer to use behavioral activation or cognitive diffusion in working with clients who have panic disorders?
- What are the primary domains of treatment planning that you emphasize when facilitating brief interventions?

Stuff like that. It should not be highfalutin. It should be meaningful. There's obviously a lot technical language in law. Don't bore them, just show you're intelligent and get these concepts in a direct and articulate way. Connect these expert questions to your purpose (of being helpful to them).

Power questions are more to the point of how you're going to solve their problems.

- What have been the major obstacles you've faced in completing xyz transactions?

- What are some important changes your practice has been seeing so far this year, and what are some of the adaptations that have been necessary?

You're trying to show that you are in sync with their needs. Ultimately, by the end of the interview you're going to try to create a brief, elegant summary whereby you can articulate their needs and carve out a role for yourself. See how most of this is not explicitly based on your previous experience, etc.

Address Their Objections

These are the most common objections to the message you are likely sending:

- I don't believe you.
    Demonstrate your credibility. Justify your points in terms of your previous experiences. Objective criteria over subjective criteria.

- I don't have the money.
    Demonstrate to them the cost of *not* addressing their need. Show them how your skills will be profitable for them.

- I don't have the time.
    Likewise, find how you can do the work that will allow them to work on other things.

- It may work for others but it doesn't work for me.

    Demonstrate the flexibility of your approach.

Handling Behavioral Interviews (not for Informational Interviewing)
from Jason Manino's *Career Lessons from My Recruiting Desk Part 2.*

This is a growing trend in interviewing whereby a smart interviewer can skip past subjective responses where you justify your abilities with adjectives about your worth, and figure out how an interviewee thinks on their feet to come up with solutions.

Common questions would be "What were you thinking at that point?" or "What made you decide on that specific action as opposed to another choice?" or "Tell me about a time when you overcame a crisis, solved a problem, dealt with failure, had to manage someone's performance, etc...." This is not difficult. With a little practice you can come up with prepared answers for these questions. Use the STAR approach:

S/T=Describe the Situation or Task

A=Describe the Action you took in the context of the situation or task.

R=What was the Result of your action?