



Episode 126: How to Get Help with Your Job Search (with ex-BigLaw Recruiter Sadie Jones)

Alison Monahan: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today, we're talking about how to get people to help you with your job search with guest, Sadie Jones, who is an ex-BigLaw recruiter. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically I'm here with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. We're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website, [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a [review](#) or rating on iTunes, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form on lawschooltoolbox.com](#) and we would love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Welcome back. Today, we're talking about how to get people to help you with your job search and how to keep them happy when they do agree to help. We're here with Sadie Jones, who is an ex-BigLaw recruiter. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: Oh, our pleasure. So, first off, let's talk a little bit about who people can really turn to in this job hunt because I think sometimes people have mistaken ideas either that nobody's going to help them and they're totally on their own or sometimes that everyone in the entire world is obligated to help them. So, who are kind of the first people that you think someone should turn to when they're looking for a job?

Sadie Jones: Well, I would say start with your inner circle, so that could be your family, your good friends, co-workers that you're close with. So, I would say start with people who really know and care about you.

Alison Monahan: Right, and those are kind of your strong ties.

Sadie Jones: Yes.

Alison Monahan: And I agree. I mean, these people, many of them have an obvious vested interest in your success. Your parents would probably like you to have a job so you can support yourself, similarly your partner, your other family members. These are core people. Also, I think sometimes people overlook the people who are really paid to help them, for example, career services at your law school. It's astonishing to me how few people really take full advantage of that resource, I think.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I hear that all the time from career services people, that they wish that students would come to them or even alumni. I think they're happy to help and that's their job. They know about it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. That is their job. I mean, I know a number of people in career services, and almost to a person they're pretty frustrated that people don't come and get their advice because they are experts. A lot of these people are going to the NALP conference every year. They're abreast of hiring trends. They're talking to employers. I mean, that's a large part of what a lot of career services people do is they actually talk to people who might want to give you a job.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think as a legal recruiter if we had a good relationship with a career services person we might call up and ask for some people, let's say 3Ls that don't have jobs yet. Is there anyone they could recommend? You want to be on that list with them.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think this is something where it pays to try to get on that person's good side. You want to have an ally to the extent possible in the career services office, so when they get that call you're going to be top of mind when they're thinking ... I mean, sometimes I've heard of judges, for example, calling schools and saying, "Hey. I just had a clerk who has to drop out. I need someone immediately. Do you have anyone you could recommend?"

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: These things definitely happen. I mean, we certainly reached out to people. If we're trying to hire for a specific position, we've reached out to people at schools that we know and say, "Hey. Do you have anybody that would be great for this?"

Sadie Jones: Also, that's part of what you're paying for with the law school.

Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah.

Sadie Jones: So, when you think about it that way, your money is going towards this and part of going to law school is getting a job, so I think you need to think about getting the most bang for your buck.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and these are relationships that you can start to build early or you could build later. I mean, ideally as a 1L, you'll occasionally drop by, and even if you don't think you need help on your resume just let somebody help you. Make an appointment, see what they have to say; you can decide not to pay attention to them later. But it doesn't hurt to stop by with an occasional set of cookies or something. I mean, that might seem extreme, but getting on the good side of people who can help you is a pretty good idea.

Sadie Jones: I agree. I think most of these people are pretty social and like to just chat and that sort of thing, so I think just kind of having them know who you are, and I completely agree the earlier, the better. They remember the 1Ls that were interested in finding out about jobs early.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and oftentimes your career service office at your school have sort of open office hours or things like that that you can just pop into, it doesn't have to be this big deal. If you're walking past the office and you see someone that you talked to a few weeks ago, just wave at them and say, "Hey. How's it going? I hope everything's great." That's all you have to do. It doesn't have to be this big thing.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. Then I think the next level is bringing in a professional. If you have specific issues you want to work on, if you have let's say things you're going to need to explain, then you kind of need a professional to help you come up with a story.

Alison Monahan: By this, do you mean like a career coach? What are you talking about, "a professional"?

Sadie Jones: Yeah, a career coach. I think there's lots of different variations on that. Depending on what you're looking for, there's lots of different professionals who can help you kind of polish off your resume, help you work on cover letters. I think especially if you're in a situation where it's late in the game and you don't have a job and it's kind of a harder search than just going through OCI, I think bringing in a professional can be very helpful.

Alison Monahan: I agree. I mean, I know people even who I worked at the firm with who were looking to transition to a different job who hired career coaches because they said, "You know, look, this is not my area of expertise. I know certain things about how to run a patent lawsuit and get your expert witness to write a report, but I don't know the nitty-gritty of figuring out what I want to do with the rest of my life, and then getting that job and repositioning my experience." There's no harm in reaching out to someone, even if it's just a session or two, just to get their thoughts. These are people who ... this is what they spend their time thinking about. They're thinking about how you can update your LinkedIn profile or how can you use that -- all of these things that you may not have time or interest in really diving into. There are people out there who have.

Sadie Jones: I also think paying somebody to do it means they have a different interest in it than just someone that you're asking to help you out, then it's really their job. So, I think that could be useful in the right situation.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and we actually ... we help people with that, so I think your point that having somebody who has that outside eye even if it's a brief couple of hours or just a certain amount of time that they're going to be working on something can really put you in a different path and just with a little bit more targeted help

than you're probably going to get from career services who are dealing with hundreds of people, all of whom are basically looking for the same jobs and they may not be quite as vested in your personal interest as someone that you specifically hire for this task.

Sadie Jones: I would say the same thing if you're, let's say, later in the process and you have an outside recruiter working with you who's being paid by the employer. I don't know if they're going to spend as much time on your materials, so I would be a little careful about having them be really the person that's reviewing your resume and cover letter.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think with the recruiters you have to be a little bit careful because you've got to think about what their interest are, and their interest basically is filling that seat so they get paid and it may not be that they're thinking quite as much about what you might end up wanting or what might be the best fit for you. I mean, obviously they want to find a job that you're happy enough to stay in for a while, but it may not be quite the same level of attention to your needs as you would get from a career coach.

Sadie Jones: I agree.

Alison Monahan: All right. So, those are kind of the people that are obvious. Clearly you can go to your parents if they have resources, to your uncle who happens to be a lawyer, he's probably going to help you out. Then there's these other people, they have a less obvious, but it's still a real interest, and I think often they can be overlooked, for example, your professors or other people at your school, particularly if they'd been in a mentoring-type of relationship to you. Anyone at your school, at your law school, has a vested interest in finding you a job.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: It looks better for them. I mean, basically you're going to be a happier alumnus, you're probably going to donate more money, and your professor's then going to have their nice endowed chair if you have a job. So, you can definitely go to these people too and just kind of ask them for help. You might even need their help to get a job, for example, letters of recommendation, that kind of thing. Don't be afraid to kind of approach these people either.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think you really need to think about your network and anyone who even is slightly in this area. I think it can never hurt to just reach out.

Alison Monahan: Well, what about former employers? I mean, what would you think if, say, someone who summered at a firm you were working at maybe didn't take the job there for whatever reason if they came and asked for help? Is that something you think people would have been receptive to?

Sadie Jones: I think so, as long as there was no issue at the end or bad blood or anything like that. I think as long as you left everything nicely. I think it's in their interest to help you as well, like you were saying. You never know where things are going to come around again, where you're going to end up. Who knows, you could end up at a client later on. It's in everyone's interest to try to make sure that someone winds up in a job.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think sometimes if you're thinking of a different type of job, say for example you worked at a firm and you're looking at clerkship options, oftentimes they're thrilled to help you get that clerkship because it looks better for them to have people who clerked.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I think some law students miss that and think that somehow a firm is upset that you didn't go back or that's what you're looking for, and I agree that clerkships are always a positive and law firms want positive relationships with judges, so I think that they'll absolutely help you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and this is another good reason never to make enemies if you can avoid it at a job. I mean, I definitely have heard stories of friends who moved on to go in-house some place and then they start getting calls and resumes from people they used to work with who maybe weren't very nice to them. That's not the situation that you want to be in.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think sometimes people forget that at the end of a job, maybe they are upset about something. I think you should always think into the future -- "Is this worth bringing up? Is this worth leaving on a bad note?"

Alison Monahan: Yeah. The exit interview is really not actually the place to air your grievances, whatever they are, however legitimate they are. That's not the place to really rehash things that may or may not have happened. That's the place to say, "You know, I really appreciate all the relationships I've had here, all the great experience, but it's time for me to move on."

Sadie Jones: I agree. I think have a conversation with a friend or a family member about the things you're upset about and do maybe a mock exit interview, and then in the real one just be nice.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. There's no point in hashing over things that you didn't like about whatever job. You never know where you're going to run into people. Other people who have an interest ... you could talk to alumni from your college or from your law school. Certain undergraduate institutions are really known for the strength of their alumni network, and if you went to one of those schools, again, that's one of the things you're paying for.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I mean, I think that's the place to start, and obviously they probably have the most connection to law firms and things like that or the legal field. I think the next level is kind of to think of people who know people that you

know. What I really like is to go onto your LinkedIn and see who knows who and start there, like make a little map, see if you can get an introduction so someone. I think a lot of times people who don't even know you are willing to help you. Why not if it's not a big deal?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that's the surprising thing. So, the first category you talked about is these strong ties, the people you probably think are going to help you just because, but then you've got this whole other world of the weak ties or even in some case kind of no ties other than perhaps shared commonality of interest. But a lot of research actually suggests that these weak ties are really where people find job opportunities because these are people who may have opportunities that you're not already aware of. Your inner circle probably knows about the same thing you know, but someone that you maybe went to undergrad with who's working in a totally different city, they have access to a whole other network, and so I think thinking about how to leverage these weak ties and get people in those networks to want to help you can be very beneficial.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think that's where it's how you approach them. It's your behavior. It's what you're asking for that really matters because if they want to help you, they realize that maybe you'll help them at some point. Everyone knows that having these connections could lead to things that are mutually beneficial.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think honestly a lot of people are really just altruistic. They don't have any real reason to help you. I mean, I've helped random people that have written to me just because they were nice, they seemed like nice people. It wasn't a huge big deal for me to make an introduction for them or whatever it was that they were asking for. People actually are often willing to help, but like you said a lot of it is in how you approach them.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I was going to say I'm sure you've chosen not to help other people that have approached you in the wrong way as have I.

Alison Monahan: For sure. Yeah, for sure. I mean, that's just life. If somebody comes to me and they're demanding ... and these are literally people that I have absolutely no connection to and come to me, send an email demanding these things and they seem really obnoxious and I'm just like, "Are you joking?" But if that same person sends a really nice email that's like, "Hey. I've always listened to the podcast and I listened to this one episode and you said this and that really made an impact on me. Here's what I'm thinking of doing." Make a very specific ask that's not a huge big deal for me, like, "Is there any way you could put me in touch with the guest on this podcast because I thought she was really amazing?" That's no big deal. I'll probably do that.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I was going to say I think that some people kind of miss the line between being eager and trying to sort of be proactive and then being pushy and sort of obnoxious.

Alison Monahan: For sure.

Sadie Jones: I think it can be a really fine line, and so to me I would always pull back. There's a way to sound excited and you really appreciate it and not sounding like you expect someone to do something for you.

Alison Monahan: No, I think that's a great point. I think people also have to sort of recognize the power dynamic in what they're asking for. If you're asking someone you barely know, or say someone you met once at a networking event or a friend of a friend ... these are people who are doing you a favor.

Sadie Jones: Yes. I mean, even people ... I would say actually even people in your inner circle. Keep in mind that they're doing you a favor.

Alison Monahan: True. I think that's a great point. I mean, all of these people need to be approached from a position of sort of humbleness that, "I understand that I'm asking you for something and I would really appreciate your help," and just kind of put it out there like that, not like, "Hey. I need you to do this thing for me."

Sadie Jones: Exactly, and I think always start with something small that you're asking for. Maybe you develop a relationship, maybe they seem really interested in helping you and it becomes something bigger, but don't ask too much at the beginning.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think that's a great point. I mean, if you are emailing a total stranger that you happen to see is a friend of a friend on LinkedIn, which, "A", I probably wouldn't do that. I would probably approach the person who knows them. But say for example you know somebody you want to ask for an informational interview. So, I have a whole series on The Girl's Guide to Law School that really details how you can approach a total stranger or someone you have a very weak tie for and actually get them to have an informational interview with you. But I wouldn't ask them to dinner, you know?

Sadie Jones: Definitely.

Alison Monahan: You kind of got to work up to it.

Sadie Jones: I also think a key point here is if you're asking someone to do a favor, you are paying for it.

Alison Monahan: Oh, and you need to make it easy for them.

Sadie Jones: Yes. I am surprised at people who invite me to coffee and then don't pay for my coffee.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or don't want to come to you-

Sadie Jones: It's not a big deal, but it's rude.

Alison Monahan: It is rude. I mean, you need to ... That's the whole thing. You've got to recognize that this person is doing you a favor. They're taking time out of their day. If you're a law student and you are having an informational interview with somebody who works at a law firm, they might well insist on paying for coffee and that's fine. You can let them do that -- no problem -- but you need to offer.

Sadie Jones: That's exactly what I was going to say. You just need to offer. It's fine to accept them paying for you, and pick something small. If worse comes to worst, you can pay for the two coffees.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Exactly. Again, you don't want to invite them out to a really fancy dinner, but even a law student, you can pay for someone's tea or coffee. All right, so let's give people some tips on kind of how to get people to help you, and I think really these cover weak ties and strong ties. One of the things that bugs me the most that I really encourage people not to do is you want to make it clear that you've done the leg work and you've covered the really obvious stuff. By that, I mean sometimes people will reach out and say, "What kind of job should I get?" And I'm like, "I don't know." How would I know? I don't know.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. That's an example where if that's really what you need, you need to pay a professional to help you. That's a bigger issue than anyone that we're talking about who's just doing you a favor is going to do.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: They're not your therapist.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. They're not your therapist. They're not your career coach. I mean, maybe your parents or your partner might be willing to have these conversations with you, but I feel like even honestly going to career services in a law school and just being like, "I have no idea what type of job I want. Can you help me?" It just doesn't look that great.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, because I think there's plenty you can do on your own to figure out what the different options are. I think it's okay to go to someone and say, "I'm deciding between these two things, and these are my issues on both sides," because that says what you just said, which is you've done the leg work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I think it's even fair to go to someone and say, "Look. I'm really struggling with whether I should do public interest work this summer for my 1L summer or whether I should try to get some other type of job. Here's what I'm kind of thinking my long-term plan is." That's something someone can work with. I mean, it's still a little vague, but at least there's kind of a structure for helping you answer these questions.

Sadie Jones: I also think it depends on who you're talking to. If you've done the work to know what their career path has been and you ask them a question maybe that

relates to a decision that they made, they'll probably be excited to chat with you about it because people like to talk about themselves. So, if you're saying, "How did you choose this path?" I think that's an okay question, but, yeah, it's not okay to just say, "What should I do with my life?"

Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure. I think it's totally flattering for someone if you say, "Oh, I've looked at your career path and it was really interesting to me that you made this choice to go from job "A" to job "B". How did you make that decision? And how did it happen like that?" That's a specific question. Somebody can go, "Oh, well, when I was making this decision blah, blah, blah." You're going to get some interesting information probably. So, the more specific you can get with your question and the more specific the help, I think the more likely you are to get something useful back.

Sadie Jones: I was also going to say in those situations really listen to what they have to say because maybe that's going to lead you to, "Oh, do you know someone in this area?" Don't come in too specific about what you're looking for that you're not even listening to what the other person is saying.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think that's a great point. I mean, coming in so specifically about, like, "Well, I'm looking for a summer job working for this type of company in this location, in this blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, with 18 requirements and I need it to start at this time of the day. I need it to be located here and I want to be able to take the subway and get off at this stop." So many people would be like, "Okay. I can't help you with that. That's a unicorn. You're on your own." It's got to be specific enough that you can get good information, but vague enough, and also in their area of expertise enough, that someone can actually help you. If somebody's a litigator and you come to them asking specific questions about getting an M&A job, they're probably going to be like, "Uh, I don't really know much about this. You need to talk to someone who's an M&A lawyer."

Sadie Jones: And this is just like if you're in a real interview, make sure you've done the homework on the person, especially if you don't know them that well, and that includes like let's say a friend of your parents. Maybe you grew up, they came over to your house, but you don't know that much about their career, figure it out before you talk to them.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think people just want to have the sense that you have made the effort and that you're not going to be wasting their time, particularly lawyers do not want to have their time wasted.

Sadie Jones: Along the same lines, if you come in, you want some resume help let's say, which I think a lot of people are willing to look at your resume, make sure that what you're giving them is your version of the final resume. So, they might have edits, but it shouldn't have typos, it shouldn't seem like just a draft. It should be what you want an employer to see.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's just like you don't do bad first drafts in a law job. You might do them, but you don't turn them in as your final work product. Anything you're presenting to someone in this sort of scenario, be it an informational interview or something a little less formal, needs to put your best foot forward.

Sadie Jones: Yep.

Alison Monahan: One thing you mentioned that I think is totally worth following up on is asking people who else you should talk to. This is something that I know Lee has talked a lot about. She recommends it as the last question or one of the last questions you ask anybody that you're talking to in this job search process, "Is there anybody else you think would be a good person for me to talk to?" And then you need to follow up.

Sadie Jones: Well, because you don't know where that's going to lead to.

Alison Monahan: Exactly.

Sadie Jones: It could lead to things you could never anticipate. Also, I find that people actually like to figure that out. It's interesting to people to be like, "Oh, who do I know in that area?" And then all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, I really want to help you. I'm on this with you."

Alison Monahan: Yeah. They have like a vested interest, but if they're like, "Oh, you should really talk to Bob Smith. Bob is a great guy. We go way back. I know he would talk to you and I know he'd help you," you don't want to drop the ball there.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. This is actually my biggest pet peeve, is when I've put someone in touch with someone, and maybe that means that I've sent an email connecting them or I've just given them the contact information, I tend to usually follow up on my own just because I spent the time to do it, and I've been surprised at people who just don't follow up with the person -- don't even respond to the email where I've connected them -- and it really bothers me. I know that that happened with someone I know, and I never helped this person again because she did it with like three separate contacts.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you're putting yourself out there at that point. You're basically saying, "I'm offering you this person in my network," and then it just looks bad if the person that you're saying, "Oh, I've met this new, eager person who seems really great," and then that person doesn't behave like a person who's being really great and then suddenly your friend is questioning your judgment. It just doesn't look good.

Sadie Jones: Exactly, and then I'm apologizing to the person I've put them in touch with. "Sorry that she didn't follow up."

Alison Monahan: Right, and even if you don't do a connecting email, if you just give the person the contact information, I almost always reach out behind the scenes to the person. And to be frank, I almost never give someone contact information unless I've confirmed it's okay with my friend.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And, I mean, I think you are kind of taking a risk if you don't know the person that well that's coming to you for advice. "Do I know they're going to follow up?" It's like I want to be pleasantly surprised that they do. I want that person to make a good impression on me.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you're basically spending your social capital to help them.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. So, I think that is a really big deal and I understand that in these situations you might be networking with lots of people and there might be tons of people they've put you in touch with -- it's on you to keep that organized. Maybe you make a list right after the meeting.

Alison Monahan: Put that on a Trello board.

Sadie Jones: Yep. A board.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. You've got to stay organized. You're the one who has to keep these connections, whether it's a spreadsheet or a Trello board or a piece of paper -- whatever it is -- but you need to know where you are in the process with these people that you have been put in touch with. It's totally fine, say, that you meet with someone and then the next day they get a job. That's great. They can update you on that piece of information and then they can also send a quick email to the person you've put them in touch with being like, "Hey. I really appreciate that you were willing to speak with me. I just wanted to let you know everything's worked out great. I got my dream job, and so I won't be needing to have this informational interview with you, but I really appreciate that you were willing to do it."

Sadie Jones: Absolutely, and no one's going to be upset about that.

Alison Monahan: No, they're going to be like, "Great. Congratulations."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Exactly. So, I think it's on you to keep that going. The other thing along those lines is if someone gives you contact information or puts you in touch with, and let's say the person they've put you in touch with doesn't respond, I think you can follow up one time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: If they don't respond again, you need to let it go. Don't bug the person.

Alison Monahan: Well, and also one thing that I find personally annoying is if somebody I know reaches out to me and says, "Hey. Would you be willing to talk with this person that I met who seems like you're really connected?" I'm like, "Yeah. I'd be happy to give them advice over email. That's what I'm willing to do," and then they put me in touch and the person they put me in touch with is like, "Great. When can we schedule a phone call?" And I'm like, "I didn't agree to a phone call. I agreed to an email," you know?

Sadie Jones: Yes, and that's why we're talking about always start out small, I think, with what you're asking.

Alison Monahan: I mean, "A", I think that's absolutely right. You should always ... A small ask is probably going to get you better results than a big ask, but also if someone who's agreed to one thing, don't push it. Why would you do that? Just ask a question over email and then if we give you some good advice and you're like, "Oh, that was so helpful. I really appreciate it. Is there any way we could possibly have a call about that?" I'm probably more likely to do that because I've already invested in you.

Sadie Jones: Yep. I mean, I also think it shows that you're listening to what the other person wants.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and again you're approaching it respectfully and from a humble position of, "You're helping me. You're doing me a favor," and not vice versa.

Sadie Jones: I think actually, the other way around, if the person somehow wants a phone call or wants an in-person meeting and you're local because that's more how they do things, don't send them a whole list of questions on email.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think a lot of this is just about being understanding of what people might be willing to do for you and then being receptive and appreciative of whatever it is they're willing to give to you and not demanding more and more and more because that's unlikely to end well.

Sadie Jones: Yes.

Alison Monahan: Well, I also think another thing that sometimes can happen is people just really have to be realistic about what any one person can do for them. Sometimes there's this idea of like, "Oh, if I just connect with the right person who's really famous, they'll get me the perfect job and my life will be amazing." That's just not the way things work.

Sadie Jones: Yes, and I think sometimes the reward is later, sometimes that doesn't lead to the first job, but later on in life when you're looking for a lateral move, "Oh, I talked to this person when I was in law school."

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Nobody has a magic wand that they can wave to just produce a job for you, and so it can be a little frustrating if you're on the side of the person who's trying to help someone and you're like, "Look, I'm giving you good advice here. I'm giving you everything I can, but I cannot produce a job for you, so stop asking for that."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, I think you have to realize that this is just part of the job process and that you should be doing multiple things.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. You can't put all of your eggs in one basket -- "If I can just get connected to the CEO of this company, I know that they're going to make me in-house counsel." It's probably unlikely.

Sadie Jones: And a lot of times you're talking to people who don't have a position right now, especially like you need to know the difference between an informational interview and a real interview. Don't ask for more, like you're saying, than what they have to give.

Alison Monahan: Right, and I think the informational interview can be a really powerful tool, but it also has a lot of possibility for going badly wrong if you approach it not as an informational interview, but as like a secret real interview. That can be really frustrating.

Sadie Jones: The other thing is, I think, make sure that you're taking feedback people are giving you 'cause in these situations people may give you feedback that you wouldn't get in a real interview or in a different situation when you're kind of asking for advice from people -- they may give it to you. So, make sure you're not being defensive. Make sure ... especially if people are saying a similar thing over and over again. Maybe evaluate what you're putting out there. "Is this helpful?" Take it all as constructive criticism.

Alison Monahan: Right, and, you know, sometimes lawyers aren't the best about how they phrase things, which can be a little bit intimidating or maybe not so pleasant, but I think you've always got to approach it in the spirit of, "This person is doing their best to help me." Maybe I don't like what they're saying, but maybe what they're saying has some merit and I should just sit with that for a while and think about it. But right now, in the moment I just need to say, "All right. Thanks. I really appreciate your opinion. I'm going to take it under advisement. Is there anybody else I should talk to?"

Sadie Jones: I think that's the perfect response, and have something prepared like that, that you know you're going to say.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because even if somebody you think that they're not being as nice as they could be to you, they're still doing you a favor. I mean, that's the reality of it, and maybe it is harsh to hear that, "Look, your grades are not good enough to get the position that you want right now."

Sadie Jones: But that's actually helpful.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. That's valuable information and you need to know that. I mean, if somebody's willing to tell you something like that, I think that actually is ... they're doing a nice thing for you even if it doesn't seem like it 'cause a lot of people would just lie to you and be like, "Well, you know, I mean I think straight C's ... Yeah, you could get a Supreme Court clerkship. I mean, anything's possible." It's like no, that's not happening. Figure out your next move.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, be realistic, or what things can you do to eventually get the dream job, the thing you want later on -- what are you going to have to do first?

Alison Monahan: Right. I think you've got to ... Understanding the position you're in is really valuable and if someone can help you do that and they're willing to help you do that even if it seems harsh, I think it's actually constructive.

Sadie Jones: Agree.

Alison Monahan: All right, so we want people to follow up. I think another thing that's really nice, in terms of getting people on your side, is just to keep them updated on your progress and really say thank you.

Sadie Jones: I agree. I'm actually surprised at how few people do that. I have mixed feelings about a thank you note after a job interview. I think I've talked about that before because I think there's situations where it can do more harm than good. In this situation, I don't think that's possible, so I think you always send a thank you. It can be an email. I actually really love getting a real card from somebody when I did them a favor. I think it's a really nice thing to do. And then the other thing is I do wonder what happened to them, and so I think it is really nice to say, "Hey. I had a couple interviews, or I did get a job, or whatever. Thank you so much." That means a lot.

Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely. I mean, we've gotten some emails recently from people who have found out that they passed the bar exam, and these were not even students of ours, they were just people who maybe had emailed us in the past about something else, or they'd emailed for a little bit of advice that we gave them. I mean, literally in some cases it's a year or more later. I mean, I've completely forgotten that we ever got the first email and then we get something like, "I just wanted to let you know, I just found out I passed the bar," and we're like, "Oh, my gosh. I am so excited. This is so great."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think everyone wants to hear that. So, I wonder sometimes if people don't follow up because they don't want to bug somebody, or they assume you won't remember them. I think it's always a good thing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's never going to be a bad thing. I mean, even someone in career services, you can pop by and just say, "Hey. I just wanted to let you know I still

haven't found my dream job, but I have had a couple of interviews and I appreciate your tips on helping me get ready for those." You don't even have to ask for anything, but then your top of mind, you get in there thinking, "Wow. That person is so professional and so nice. Is there anything I can do to kind of help them out a little bit more? Is there anybody I could reach out to?" It's just being a reasonable person can really go a long way.

Sadie Jones: I think along the same lines, if there's anything you could do for that person that might help them out. You know, remember what they did for you, and maybe there isn't anything, but you always want to feel like you left it in some kind of reciprocal way and just saying thank you can be that. But if anyone did anything to help you in any way in the job process, you should always find a way to say thank you.

Alison Monahan: Right, and it might be something as simple as you did an informational interview with someone who works in a very specific area of the law. You happen to see an article about a new case or a new situation or whatever it is that could be relevant to them, and you send them an email like, "Hey. Just happened to see this. I thought you might find it interesting. Hope everything's great."

Sadie Jones: Yep. I also think that says you're the kind of person that listens and remembers things. I think everyone remembers that person.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. You just remember those people who are like, "Wow. That person ... They just seem on top of things. I like them."

Sadie Jones: Yes, and you should want to be that person to everyone you meet.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. You want to be that person where you're like, "Yeah. I like that person. They do good stuff." That's all it needs to be. It doesn't have to be like, "Wow. They're like the greatest person I've ever known in my entire life." It's just like, "Ah, I kind of like them. I would help them if I had a chance. Why not?"

Sadie Jones: And I think something along those lines, because I think this process can be hard and it can feel like a lot of rejection especially if you're late in it and you still don't have a job -- I understand that, but you should be a positive person.

Alison Monahan: Sure.

Sadie Jones: So, don't go in feeling sorry for yourself. You can do that at home. But you should always ... No one wants to be around that person, and that's part of the reason you may not be getting a job.

Alison Monahan: That's a really good point. I think this emotional self-regulation in a challenging situation, it may seem like, "Oh, of course I'm so entitled to be depressed here," but the reality is you're going to face a lot of difficult situations as a lawyer, and part of what people are looking for is can you kind of keep it together and

overcome these challenges and still be a good worker and a good team player and still be positive and not just drag everyone down. I mean, this is something you've got to work on if this is an issue for you.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think that a lot of people can kind of get trapped in that, and I understand, and maybe you're just having a bad day, but you can't have that bad day with that person.

Alison Monahan: No. I think if you're going into an informational interview or even if you're sending an email and you're having a bad day and you're asking questions, take a step back, maybe take a walk around the block -- clear your head, watch a funny movie, watch a YouTube video that makes you smile so that you are in that positive place and you can reach out in a way that makes the person be more receptive to what you're asking for because if you're super negative, that's not going to play well.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: All right. We're almost out of time here, but let's talk really briefly -- how can people approach people that they don't actually know, 'cause that can be a real challenge, but it can also be beneficial?

Sadie Jones: I mean, I think in most situations you're probably sending an email.

Alison Monahan: Agreed. You're probably not picking up the phone.

Sadie Jones: I think that's always the way to start.

Alison Monahan: Nobody enters an unknown phone number.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I was going to say that that's not going to go well, just calling up somebody randomly.

Alison Monahan: "Hey. What's up?" Like, "Excuse me? Who is this? Is this the bank? What do you want to sell me?"

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and it's just awkward, but I think very few people do that. So, I'd send an email. I'd make it brief. I'd explain ... you know, I'm assuming there is some kind of mutual connection, so it's like an alumnus from your school or you have a mutual LinkedIn person or ... You want to find whatever the commonality is even if it's a little stretched.

Alison Monahan: Right, and maybe it's just a shared interest, but that'd better be a pretty strong shared interest that's pretty specific.

Sadie Jones: So, I would start out with that. Then I'd make sure you're complimenting the person in some kind of way, you know? Say something about their position and

where they work -- say something positive that's some type of compliment, which is why you want to talk to them because they're an expert in X, Y, or Z. And then propose what you're asking, so are you asking for, like you said, just advice over an email? Are you asking them for a coffee? Are you ... Be specific about what you're looking for and that's it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and one of my pet peeves is don't just ask someone, "Could I pick your brain?"

Sadie Jones: Uh.

Alison Monahan: Uh.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Like, no. No, you cannot pick my brain. I would like to keep my brain, thank you. You've got to think a little bit about the language you're using and what it's going to sound like, particularly with lawyers. Lawyers are extremely busy people and they don't want to commit to something that's open-ended, that could take up "X" number of six-minute increments of billing that they could be billing a client. You've got to keep it focused. And if they say no, don't take that as a total rejection and be polite about it because you might run into this person again. You might be able to turn it around. If they say, "Oh, I'm at trial. There's just really no way I can do this," you need to write back and be like, "Look, I totally understand. I really appreciate you taking the time to even consider my offer. Maybe we can chat sometime in the future."

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I mean, you should always write back in those situations, I think, to say you appreciated them even responding 'cause some people might not respond at all.

Alison Monahan: Lots of people might, and again you don't get to follow up indefinitely, you know? I know now you can get in things that will just follow up for you. I don't recommend that as a course of action. If someone hasn't responded to one or two of your emails, you're just annoying them at that point.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think ... Yeah. Some people just aren't going to respond. The other thing I was going to say is make sure you're really thinking about what the subject line is because that's what they're going to see first, so give that some careful thought.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, honestly, I think most people don't even open the vast majority of their email at this point. That's why I think one follow up is okay to be like, "Hey. I don't know if you saw this," although even then it's probably slightly getting annoying, but you got to-

Sadie Jones: I think one ... You're entitled to be slightly annoying and I think you just keep it brief and only one follow up.

Alison Monahan: One follow up, and also if there's any connection you have personally before then you want to work that connection before you send that first email. So, if it's a LinkedIn person, reach out to the person you know on LinkedIn saying, "Hey. I notice you're connected to this person. Here's why I would like to speak with them. Let me know if you wouldn't mind reaching out on my behalf or even if you can just tell me more information about them." I mean, that's actually a pretty good LinkedIn ask. I've had sometimes people that I knew but I wasn't super close to say, "Hey. I see that you're connected to this person. Can you give me a little bit more information about them or how you think it might be best to approach them?" Rather than just asking me to put them in touch.

Sadie Jones: I agree, and I actually almost never say no to those sorts of things. So, I think that most people, like we've said before, they want to help you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. You just have to-

Sadie Jones: But I think you're going to be much more successful if you do have some kind of common, like we said ... that someone else has put you in touch. Just a totally cold, coming out of nowhere email a lot of the time people aren't going to respond.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or they'll just respond and say, "Hey. Here's my answer to your question. Please leave me alone," or maybe not. If you're nice about it and you follow up and then six months later you ask them again ... You've got to think of this as a process and that you're building these relationships even if it's just a couple of emails or one coffee. You never know where somebody's going to lead, so it's important to always be polite and always be accommodating and be that person that somebody wants to help. I mean, I think that's the key takeaway here is make yourself that person that somebody wants to help and feels good about helping, and you're probably going to get more assistance.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think ... For example, if someone wrote something or they tweeted something or they put something out there that you really like, people really appreciate if you ... "I love that post you wrote about this subject, and I'd love to talk to you about something else." People like compliments.

Alison Monahan: Everyone wants to be flattered. That's the little secret here.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: If you write to me and Sadie saying, "Oh, my gosh. I love that podcast you guys did," we'll probably write back to you because it's flattering, right?

Sadie Jones: Absolutely, and maybe it wasn't your favorite thing, but just put it out there that it was.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. Well, unfortunately with that, we are out of time. Thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciate it.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox Podcast, please take a second to [leave a review and rating](#) on iTunes or your favorite app because we'd really appreciate it, and be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or to Lee at Lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or Alison@lawschooltoolbox.com, or you could always contact us via our [website contact form at LawSchoolToolbox.com](#). Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.