



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're talking with Sadie Jones, an ex-big law recruiter about the top OCI mistakes to avoid. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan and typically, I'm here with Lee Burgess. We're going to de-mystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be, together with the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career related website, [CareerDicta](#).

I also run [The Girls' Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. 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 with Sadie Jones, an ex-big law recruiter, about the top OCI mistakes to avoid. I guess technically speaking, we're talking about the [on-campus interviewing](#), or OCI process, and also the callback process. We'll talk about both of those. Welcome, Sadie. How are you doing?

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: Great, thanks for joining us. So, I'm sure that you have seen some pretty serious screw-ups in your many years as a recruiter. Tell me, what's the worst thing you've seen someone do during the OCI process?

Sadie Jones: It's hard to narrow that down. I've seen some large mistakes. Personally, I would say the thing that most annoyed me in my position was a student that canceled a non-refundable ticket a couple days before, from across the country, to come back for an interview, telling me that he wasn't interested anymore. I was pretty upset. That cost the firm I think over a thousand dollars that we couldn't get back, and couldn't use the ticket, because it was in his name.

So, I think, you know, think ahead about things like that. There's other wardrobe mistakes that send out, like the person who showed up for a callback in capri pants, sandals-

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Sadie Jones: ... and basically a T-shirt.

Alison Monahan: I mean, I've definitely seen business casual, which I feel like is pretty much never appropriate, even ... I mean, the firm I worked at was a little bit misleading, because they had this reputation for, oh, we're so chill and laid back. And I have no doubt that they might have even told people who were interviewing, "Oh, you don't need to wear a suit." Don't listen to that. You should wear a suit.



Sadie Jones: Absolutely. But I also think there's things that might be a little under a suit. You know, like you're not wearing the jacket or something. Which wouldn't be-

Alison Monahan: I feel like you should have a jacket.

Sadie Jones: I agree. But it wouldn't be as odd...

Alison Monahan: I could live without a tie, but I feel like you need maybe a blazer. It doesn't have to be a suit jacket if you're a guy.

Sadie Jones: Right. Well, I think ... Yeah, I think the same for women. You can wear a blazer maybe that isn't the full suit that goes together, although really-

Alison Monahan: Right, that's fine.

Sadie Jones: ... I think you should wear a suit.

Alison Monahan: I think most firms, you should wear a suit. I think if they tell you you don't have to wear a suit, you might consider these other options, but even then, I feel like you're still better off wearing a suit. No one's ever going to be like, "Oh, they wore a suit. Ooh, too bad."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, I don't think ... It's not startup culture or anything like that. But this particular person just really stood out and it was ...

Alison Monahan: Not in a good way.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, yeah. And the thing was that she did okay in every other place, but we felt like it was a judgment issue on her part, like what was she thinking? It just didn't make sense to everybody who ...

Alison Monahan: Well, and some of this, I think is honestly a little bit unfair to the students, because a lot of the time, [no one really tells them this](#).

Sadie Jones: This was someone at a school where I know that they're told a lot of things. It's a very top school, I'll just say.

Alison Monahan: Well, I mean, there they might just assume, of course, you know to wear a suit. But if your background is not ... your family hasn't always gone to Harvard, maybe you don't know that.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, this was just ... This was someone I remember, a situation I remember. Because I had liked her when I met her on campus.



Alison Monahan: Right. I think this is one of those things. If you're not 100% sure, just ask. Ask someone even ... I don't know. Do you think it's ever appropriate to ask, say, the recruiting person-

Sadie Jones: I think that's okay. Yeah, I think if you're really not sure, I think it's better to ask than to show up in the wrong thing.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I guess you could just say, "What's the dress code for this?" They might be kind of like, "It's a suit. Don't you know?" But like you said, it's going to be way better to sort that out beforehand and have them be a little bit like, "That's kind of a weird question."

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and if they're kind of ... think it's silly or whatever, they're not going to say it to anyone else except probably their coworker.

Alison Monahan: They'll just think it privately.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. The other person who really stands out is somebody who changed his transcript, and-

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Sadie Jones: ... that was something that we found out during the interviewing process. And really only because I was sort of looking, because his original one had just been typed out, which some people do if they don't have an official one. But then when I saw the school one, it was just really obvious how different it was. And there was sort of no-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that seems really stupid.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. There was no excuse there, and that's something that can get you kicked out of school, so ...

Alison Monahan: Right, or not admitted to the bar.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Yeah. So that's somebody who stood out just in a crazy way.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I can imagine. I'm a little bit curious about the first one you brought up. Do you think, in that scenario, it was better for the person who knew they had no interest in the firm to come and do the interview anyway?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think that if you really have no interest in the firm, you know that before you're booking your ticket.

Alison Monahan: Well, presumably they got what they considered to be a better offer.



Sadie Jones: Yeah. I guess in that case, I probably would still go. I feel like in that case, give them a shot. You liked them enough that you originally were coming out to see them. And the other thing about it was, usually people bundle trips with other firms. This was someone who had done it where we were the only one on the ticket, so it seemed kind of odder altogether. Because it wasn't like, "Oh, I changed my mind. I'm not going to be in that market anymore."

Alison Monahan: Okay.

Sadie Jones: It was an odd situation. It was also so last minute in terms of the cancellation. So, it all seemed odd. He had also made the ticket, the reservation, right before he canceled it.

Alison Monahan: Huh. That's strange.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, so it just felt kind of weird altogether. I can see the dilemma that a student would be in if you've made a reservation and then you realize that you're going to go with another firm, but what I would say is, you have sort of made a commitment to go and give them a chance if you've done something like had them pay for your travel. So I do feel like it's fair to give them a full shot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I could I could see-

Sadie Jones: You know, I could imagine people not agreeing with me on that one.

Alison Monahan: Well, I can see the argument of, okay, the ticket is basically a sunk cost. But you know, this way they would avoid the hotel cost, and they wouldn't have to take me to lunch, and they wouldn't have to spend their time. I'm not saying it's a great argument either way. I think basically, the point that you are making, which is a valid one, is don't commit to an interview that you're not sure you want to do.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, especially if there's travel.

Alison Monahan: Right, out of town.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. We have people in town cancel all the time last minute.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Like if you're in New York and you're interviewing New York firms, and you're like, "Oh, I can't go tomorrow," they're going to be like, "Okay, great. Slightly disappointing, but at least we don't use billable time on you."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. No, and I feel like we do feel like that a lot about those sort of situations. But to me, it's a little bit different if you've done travel, especially if you're asking one firm to pay for the whole trip. Another piece of advice there would



be, you should try to do one trip where you're splitting it among multiple firms, if you are seeing more than one firm.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I had a friend in law school who I was in school in New York, he was interviewing in San Francisco, and he just literally went there for two weeks and did tons of interviews. But the firms prefer that, because then they can split up those expenses.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely.

Alison Monahan: All right, well, what about some other common but not quite as terrible things that you've seen?

Sadie Jones: I see small mistakes in terms of wardrobe a lot. As we were talking about, I think it's always best to just go with the suit. I would also pick something that doesn't stand out a ton. Pick a basic color. I think it's fine if you're wearing a little bit of jewelry. I just don't think you want to be remembered for things like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I had a ... Maybe it's my personality. I was just like, I can't do the totally boring suit thing. So I got really conservative suits, but then I wore a really loud set of Thomas Pink shirts under them, and pink and purple stripes and all this stuff, and people were literally like, "Wow, that's interesting." But I don't know. I felt like it gave me a little bit of personality, but it wasn't too over the top.

Sadie Jones: How do you feel about that looking now though, if you were doing it again?

Alison Monahan: I'm happy I did it, to be honest.

Sadie Jones: Okay.

Alison Monahan: I think, A) I think people did actually remember it. Like, "Oh, that was the girl in the purple shirt." Because I think even a couple people mentioned it to me later, like if I did callbacks, and there was a firm I went to or something, they're like, "Oh, I love that shirt." Someone was like, "Oh, that's so brave." I'm like, that's ridiculous. It's a shirt. But to be fair, only a couple of inches of it were really showing under the very, very conservative Brooks Brothers black suit or whatever I was wearing.

Sadie Jones: I was going to say, that seems not super, super loud. I remember somebody was wearing a maroon suit. It wasn't very stylish, was one thing. But second, it kind of stood out as odd. So I think I mean more like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I would say mine was a little borderline, but I was also just like, I don't really care. One of these people is going to give me a job. I'm on law review. Whatever. I'll wear the shirt.



- Sadie Jones: Well, and I think there is something to be said for showing who you are. You know, somewhat. So I don't necessarily think that that's that big of a deal. Or I think you can wear shoes that are a little bit loud.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, fun socks or something. You can show a little personality. That's allowed.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. But I think you need to keep it in check.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think err on the side of conservative if you're not sure what to wear.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I think that goes for men and women. If men are picking a tie or something.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, probably not pocket squares, that kind of thing. It's just a little distracting.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. You want to look just like you fit in there, and you want them not to notice that particular piece of it too much.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that can particularly be an issue for people who maybe their background doesn't necessarily fit in there. Then you almost have to go above and beyond to be like, "No, I'm one of you guys." I mean, Justice Sotomayor talks about this in her book. Was she at Yale or Harvard? Yale, I think. But she didn't get an offer from OCI, and she's like, "Basically, because I wasn't the right fit there." This is one of those scenarios where you've kind of got to fake it till you make it, if this is the career you want. You can go to some sort of very mainstream store, like Brooks Brothers or Banana Republic, and just have them dress you, basically.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, I think in this case, you can wear the same outfit to different firms.
- Alison Monahan: For sure.
- Sadie Jones: I don't think it's a huge investment.
- Alison Monahan: No. Basically, you need a suit, and if you're a woman, probably you want pants and a skirt, because it gives you a little more flexibility, and a couple of shirts, and that's basically it. Nice pair of shoes, maybe a handbag of some kind. Go to Ross Dress for Less or whatever and pick one up that looks fine. It doesn't have to be this super expensive, crazy thing.
- Sadie Jones: Yep. And I would think about the bag you bring, if you're going to be carrying it around during your interviews.
- Alison Monahan: For sure.



- Sadie Jones: I would think about things like that, too.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you probably want a very basic ... If you're a woman, you want a basic, probably black bag, that's big enough that you can fit some things into it, but isn't totally crazy. Men, this is one of the few cases where they have a more complicated scenario, because I don't really think they want to show up with a briefcase. They don't want to have a man bag. It's going to be a little bit harder for you to figure out how to carry your stuff, but at least you have pockets.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think most men do a messenger bag kind of thing, which I think works okay. But yeah.
- Alison Monahan: That's fine.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think it's hard to find something that's perfect in that situation. The other big mistake is definitely being late-
- Alison Monahan: Oh, for sure.
- Sadie Jones: ... to any of them. I've seen a ton of people do it, and I don't understand.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's one of the scenarios where not only do you not want to be late, which should be obvious, but you also don't want to show up super early. But you want to be five minutes early, I would say.
- Sadie Jones: Well, and the other thing is, if you're right on time but you were running. I've seen people come all sweaty, or ... you know? You don't want to ...
- Alison Monahan: If it's a big building, you may have to check in. It might take a while. You want to give yourself plenty of time. But, you also don't want to show up 30 minutes early.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely. The other piece of advice along with that is, let's say you are late. Let's say something crazy happened. Let's say that you got caught in some accident, and it took two hours, whatever. I would say maybe it's okay to say it right in the beginning. "I'm so sorry for whatever reason," but then let it go. Because I did have one student who was very late, had called us and told us that, and it was okay. There was an emergency kind of thing. But she couldn't stop talking about it in all of the callback interviews, and it was like everyone said that they could barely talk to her about anything else, because all she was talking about was how horrified she was she was late. So, she kind of just bombed the whole thing, and it wasn't really because she was late. It was because she couldn't let it go.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's not something you want to draw attention to. I think in that scenario, if you can get out a call or a message. I mean, if you're stuck on the subway underground, you may not be able to get that out. As soon as possible. If you send a message that's like, "Hey, this is the situation. This is when I think I'm going to arrive. I'm really sorry. Do you want to reschedule, or should I still come? And then, yeah, drop it.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I mean, another big mistake is not doing your homework on either the people you're interviewing with, if you know them ahead of time, or the firm, or anything like that. You should come prepared as you can, and you're doing lots of interviews. But every firm should feel like that is where you want to be.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think we're going to talk about that in a few minutes, but that's definitely a very key point.
- Sadie Jones: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Those are some of my biggest.
- Alison Monahan: I think I fully agree with all of those. Well, let's talk about a few common scenarios where things can go wrong, and some more mistakes that might pop up, and maybe some solutions so people can avoid making these, or correct for them if, God forbid, they do get stuck on the subway. All right. What if somebody's totally new to the professional workplace, and this is the first time they've really done grown-up job interviews? How can they make sure they're not going to make rookie mistakes?
- Sadie Jones: I think this happens a lot with law students. A lot of people go straight through law school, so maybe they've had a summer job or something, but they haven't been in a professional environment. So I would say what we talked about in terms of how to dress is important. And I would think about it, depending on your age, I think you should think about not wanting to come across as too young. You can't really help if that's your look, but I think there are things you can do.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, for sure. That's what I was just going to say. Particularly if you're a woman, maybe you pull your hair back and you put it in a bun or something like that, that makes you look a little bit more mature. Maybe you put on glasses, even if they're fake glasses.
- Sadie Jones: I was going to say, I do know a lot of students that had fake glasses, and it really does make you look older.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, it sounds silly, but it definitely ... It makes you look different. Well, and makeup, too. Your makeup should probably be more subdued. You probably don't want to have bright blue eyeshadow on and things like that. Not



flashy nails. Probably even a more conservative outfit than other people might be wearing. None of these things are particularly fair, but it is what it is.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, absolutely. I also think that you kind of just need to own where you are. I think another thing that people without a lot of experience sometimes do is try to really, really play up things that don't really mean that much.

Alison Monahan: Like an internship or something.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. I think your resume, it's going to be what it's going to be, and it's going to have whatever you've really done on it. But I think you have to go in prepared for, you realize that you're new to this and you're straight through, and that's the path you chose. I think it gives you an opportunity to explain why this is what you really want to do, and you knew that, so you just wanted to go straight through. I think you can spin it a certain way. But you don't want to come across like you know everything in those situations. I think some people go that route, because they're very ... feel insecure about it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think sometimes people too get nervous, and they feel like they really have to sell themselves, which is not something that lawyers really respond to all that well. Really, in these interviews, people are looking for someone who's fairly chill, that they can see themselves spending weeks with at trial in a dirty conference room and not wanting to kill.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I think they want to see who you are as a person, and I think that if you're overplaying what you know at this point, it's not going to go across well.

Alison Monahan: Right, exactly. Like, "Oh, I know everything about this area of law, because I took a class as an undergraduate." It's like, "Okay, you don't know everything. I practice in this area." You know?

Sadie Jones: Yeah, no matter how much ... I mean, even if you're someone with lots of past experience, you're still new to this, and at the same level.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: They want to train you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think in a situation like that, I think it's totally fair to say, "Hey, I'm really interested in this practice area that you work in. I would love the opportunity to learn from you. I took a class as an undergraduate. I really enjoyed it." That's great. Not like, "Oh, I'm an expert."



- Sadie Jones: Yup. Absolutely. I think you need to kind of be where you are, and there's nothing more you can do to pretend like you know more than you do. You're there to learn.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think, too, this is a great opportunity [if your school offers mock interviews](#) and that kind of thing, that you take advantage of that. Because you haven't had as much practice as other people. You're probably not going to be as strong straight out of the gates at doing these interviews, and the problem with the on campus interviewing process is, you're going to do a lot of them altogether, and if you are really terrible for the first two days, well, too bad; that was the entire process.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. You should do all your pre-work to go into the first real one, ready to go.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and if your school doesn't offer that, have a friend or someone videotape you with their phone while you're answering questions. Just practice until you feel confident. You practice these questions that you think might come up. You can obviously predict them. Oh, looks like you went straight through. Huh. You know. And you're like, "Yes, I did, and here's why." You need to be prepared to jump in. This applies to anyone, and everybody's going to have something on their resume that's going to elicit this type of question. But you need to be prepared with an answer, and it doesn't really matter that much what the answer is, but you need to deliver that answer confidently.
- Sadie Jones: And I think there is sort of a bias, I think, for people that went straight through these days. But what I would say is, the question that you really need to be explaining is, you're not just testing this out because you couldn't think of something else to do, or you didn't want to start getting a job right away. Because I think that is the mindset.
- Alison Monahan: I was an English major.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. So that's the thing you're trying to explain, and I think there's lots of ways to do that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You just want to make it clear you've thought about this, and you're committed to it, at least temporarily as a course of action, and that you understand what you're getting into. I think that's a big one, because not only have you never worked in a law firm environment, you've never worked in a professional environment. You've never really worked a full-time job for a year at a time or whatever, so I think people just want to feel comfortable, and okay, this person is not totally naïve. Like, "Oh, I've heard law is so amazing. I totally expect to be doing a jury trial my first year." It's like, that's not the way this works.



- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think you need to go in and explain, you know where your place is going to be.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. Well, conversely, what about non-traditional law students, particularly people who may be older, have extensive work experience, perhaps in a different area? Do they face any potential minefields, and what can they do about it?
- Sadie Jones: You know, I think they do, although I will say that in my experience, those people a lot of times have an advantage. I actually think a lot of that is looked kindly on by law firms. You know, I was at a firm that said they really didn't want anyone that went straight through. They wanted people with work experience, which doesn't mean we never got people who fit that category, but we also liked certain law schools that seemed more popular with people who had experience. So, I would say you do in a similar way need to explain how you got from where you were before to here. What is it about the law that you were interested in after, let's say, doing something completely different?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because let me tell you, that will come up.
- Sadie Jones: Yes.
- Alison Monahan: I have a very weird background. I went from architecture to programming to law. Obviously, for very obvious reasons, the first question everyone asked me is, "So, tell me about this." And again, I just had to have a story prepared. It didn't really ... I had to make sense of that for people. And if I could do that, nobody really challenged it and they moved on. But if you don't have that story ready and you're kind of stumbling around, trying to figure out how you got from being a teacher into law school, and they're thinking you just want to make more money, probably not going to go well.
- Sadie Jones: Well, and I also think I would give some thought to things you did before that kind of have to do with the law or a certain practice area, or something you're interested in. Because a lot of times, you can make that connection, even if it doesn't seem obvious. I would do all that work ahead of time.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, or just the skills. My storyline was basically, "Hey, what's the difference really between designing a building, designing a database, and designing a legal brief? They're all the same thought process."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I also think that no one in an interview is allowed to ask you questions like, "How old are you?" Or, "Do you have a family?" Or there's lots of things they can't ask. They can't ask where you're from. So, the thing is, it's on you to bring it up if it's something that you want to discuss. Like, if you want to discuss that you're an older law student or this is a second career, you came back to it,



or whatever it is, that's on you to bring up. So you should think about that also, what's the story?

Alison Monahan: Right. Let's talk about the interviews. That was one of the questions I was going to ask you; what should people do if the interviewer starts talking about something inappropriate, like for example, your family, status, your ethnic background? Maybe they say something really racist, or really sexist. How should people handle that?

Sadie Jones: Well, that's horrifying as a recruiter to think that they would send somebody in an interview that would do that. But there also are things that are borderline, that some people just don't realize. But I would say, I think it's perfectly acceptable to say that you're uncomfortable with something that someone said, the same way you would in real life if someone said something that you wanted to speak up about.

That being said, you have to decide in that moment, do you want to bring it up? Or do you just want to leave the room and not mention it to them? I think you could also mention it to the recruiter or somebody else there afterwards, or you can follow up. I guess it's kind of on you to decide, do you want to deal with it in the moment? How bad is it? How extreme? Also, do you want to work somewhere where that person is?

Alison Monahan: Right, I mean-

Sadie Jones: Maybe it's something you're not interested in anymore.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, the very first ... like, literally the first OCI interview I did, the screening interview, was this lecherous old partner who was hitting on me the entire time. And it was just one of those things where you're sitting there like, "This is horrifying." I completed the interview, walked out, and they tried to give me a callback, and I was like, "Absolutely not," and the recruiter asked me why, and I told her, and she was appropriately horrified. But of course I didn't want to work there.

Sadie Jones: Right. That's what I would assume if something is really extreme. Therefore, do you want to bring it up in the interview? Or is it just like, "Oh, I'm done with this place anyway"?

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Which, I mean, depending on how many other options you have, I think that's going to play in. I think that's just something to possibly think about beforehand, too. How might you handle this sort of scenario? All right, well, what if the interviewer or interviewers, they just aren't very good at asking questions or they don't seem to be listening to your answers? How can people handle that?



- Sadie Jones: I think this happens a lot.
- Alison Monahan: Right, I agree.
- Sadie Jones: And I think sometimes, the interviewers end up talking about themselves more than they're really asking you questions. What I would say is, it sort of depends on the situation. It is on you a little bit to keep it going.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you should have some stories in your pocket about something.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly, especially if there's dead space or, you know.
- Alison Monahan: Well, I think this is also a great place that you can start asking questions. I think people really need to have a fairly robust set of questions prepared, in case they need to kill some time.
- Sadie Jones: I agree. Also, a big no-no is if they ask you if you have any questions, and you say no. You should never say that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, you should never say that. The thing is, these don't need to be particularly creative, and you can ask the same thing to every person, within reason. But even something as simple as, "What type of work do you do in an average day?" That can kill five minutes.
- Sadie Jones: And, you keep in mind, like I said, they really like talking about themselves.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, so if you seem interested, I mean, I don't care if you're interested or not in the practice area. But oh, you know, what type of things have you been doing in the last few months? What type of work are you working on? Oh, tell me more about what is it like to write a brief? You can kill a lot of time with things like this.
- Sadie Jones: I think that's great. I also would say that you're going to probably be meeting with one person on campus, and then if you do a [callback](#), you're probably meeting with five or six people. If you have one or even two that are sort of like that, they'll be other people that you can probably talk to more if they're spending the whole time talking about themselves or that kind of thing. So, I think it kind of depends on the situation.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and typically, the people are talking about themselves, they end up liking you in the end, so it's not a bad thing.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. And you can always ask your follow-up questions later.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. The thing, too, to understand is after you do the callback, and assuming you get an offer, at that point, almost every firm, I think, would be happy to have you either come back or even talk to people on the phone or whatever, so you don't have to get every single real question answered in these callbacks. In fact, a lot of times, you don't want to bring up things that might be more controversial, like hours worked, or-
- Sadie Jones: Pro-bono.
- Alison Monahan: ... work life balance, or if you can work from home, these sort of things. Probably not great topics to talk about until you have the offer.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, because I think what students should keep in mind is, the whole process up through the callback interview is you trying to get them to like you. Obviously you want to learn things about the firm, and see how you feel, but the whole balance structure switches once you get an offer.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Once you have an offer, you can go back and you can have frank conversations with people. But I don't think the callback interview is the time to start really talking about, "How many hours are you expected to bill every year? Do you have to work weekends?" That kind of thing. You can wait on that.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. I wouldn't even touch that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, don't go there. What if the interviewer starts being really aggressive? Say you have a bad grade on your transcript. Maybe you're not at the highest ranked law school, this type of thing.
- Sadie Jones: Well, what I would say is, you probably know what those dangers are going into it, so you should be prepared with your story, your answer. And if they keep pushing you on it, I would keep giving them the same answer.
- Alison Monahan: Sometimes people do this, particularly litigators, almost out of habit. It's just what they do. They go for the jugular, and they don't really care what your answer is. They just want to see if you freak out or not.
- Sadie Jones: Well, and I've heard of or dealt with a firm where they specifically had one interviewer do something where they basically asked about the same topic over and over again, called a structured interview. And the student didn't know going into it. They usually were told about it as they walk in the room, the interviewer would tell them. So it was really like you're saying, a way to just see how they're going to answer it. It wasn't so much about what the answer was. It's like, how are they going to handle this?



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I remember having one of those in San Francisco, where they're like, "Oh, it's now a firm policy that I have to ask you these questions. I think it's kind of stupid, but I'm going to ask them to you anyway." And I'm like, okay, I'll play along. You know?
- Sadie Jones: That's the thing. The person doing it probably doesn't really want to have gotten stuck with the structured interview either.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. But you know, sometimes people are like, "I see you got a C in contracts. What happened here? Why should we hire you to be a business litigator?"
- Sadie Jones: Well, and I think what you have to keep in mind is, you give them the answer that you prepare that you're comfortable with, and it's either going to be an answer they can take or not. There's only so much you can do.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think just owning it. Not to make light of it, but just try to keep it light. Like, "Yeah, you know, it happens. This was my first semester. This was a class I didn't feel that comfortable in, and unfortunately, I didn't get the greatest grade."
- Sadie Jones: But then you could talk about how, "Oh, but my grades really improved second semester."
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Or, "This next year, to make sure I'm really solid in the subject, I'm planning on taking advanced contract drafting," or whatever. Make something up, I don't care. Nobody's going to check.
- Sadie Jones: Well, and I also think that if you go in feeling really defensive about it, or insecure about it, that's going to come out.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, for sure.
- Sadie Jones: So don't go in with that attitude.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think it's the same thing with substantive questions. Every now and then, you'll hit somebody who really wants to ask you substantive stuff or gives you a legal scenario, and wants to see how you think through it. The judge that I worked for did this. Luckily, I had warnings. I talked to some of his former clerks. But again, you just roll with it. That's all you can do.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, because I think a lot of that stuff, like we were saying before, is a lot more about how you handle it than that your answer's perfect.



- Alison Monahan: Right, and if it's not an area of law you particularly remember, you're going to kind of be flailing. But I think they also just want to ... sometimes, they want to see your thought process.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think it's okay to say at the beginning that it's not something you're really comfortable with, but you'll give it a shot-
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly.
- Sadie Jones: ... and see what you can do. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. All right, well, this is something sometimes people worry about. What if they tell you you're going on a callback, they've told you, "Okay, you're going to be interviewing with this person, this person, this person." But then that person, some of those people were switched out for other people. Is this a sign that the firm just doesn't care about you as a candidate? Should you take this personally?
- Sadie Jones: No.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly.
- Sadie Jones: It's a sign that lawyers bail on this stuff all the time, and the poor recruiter was probably there late trying to make the schedule happen.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I've done callback interviews as the interviewer where I got a call from the recruiting coordinator five minutes before, begging me to talk to this person. Somebody's sick, somebody had to go to court, whatever it is. It's totally normal, and it does not mean anything.
- Sadie Jones: No, it really doesn't. Time slots switch, or sometimes, you ask for someone in a certain practice group and you didn't get to talk to them. Don't make a big deal about it.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, just talk to whoever you show up to, and again, if you don't know anything, obviously they know that you didn't know you were interviewing with them. You can ask them what type of work they do, and kind of go from there.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think they might even make a joke about it or something.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I mean, I've had situations where I didn't have a resume, I had no idea who this person was, I had no information about them, and ... Which actually brings me to another point. What if somebody asks you for a resume, a writing sample, a transcript, that kind of thing; you didn't bring any?



- Sadie Jones: Well, I would say then you weren't prepared enough.
- Alison Monahan: I would say, A) bring them.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I would say that's something you can prevent, because you should always have a ton of them. But you know, that's okay. I think what you say is, "I've run out. I don't have enough with me. But I'd be happy to send it to you. Can you let me know where I can email it?" Or maybe if it's, let's say, an OCI suite, during interviews, you could say, "Oh, I'm going to run back to my room and get it." I think the important part here is to follow up with it.
- Alison Monahan: I think, too, in the moment, you can say, "Oh, I'm really sorry. I've handed all this out, but let me tell you a little bit about myself."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, nobody's going to care. I mean, the person asking you really is just asking you because they need something to work off of.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, or they have a checklist. Right? Of, oh, we're supposed to have this for all our candidates or something. But also, I was going to say about resumes or anything, if you have something that's changed, let's say, since the last time you gave it to them, make sure you give them an updated copy. Because that's always important. Maybe you have an award you didn't have before or something.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I'm not sure if you're doing a callback, you need to hand that to every single person you interview with, but definitely-
- Sadie Jones: No, just at the beginning.
- Alison Monahan: ... you want to make sure the recruiting person has it.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly, that's what I mean.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, I do think if you've recently gotten on law review or something, and that's not on your original resume, there might be ways to kind of work that in. I'd be careful with that, but ...
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, you don't want to sound like ...
- Alison Monahan: If it comes up, you know? If somebody asks you, "It doesn't look like you're on a journal. Is that the case?" Which, if that's true, is a question you should be prepared for. You can say, "Oh, actually, I am on the journal of environmental law. I've given my updated resume to the recruiter."



- Sadie Jones: Yep.
- Alison Monahan: Just be cool. You don't have to freak out.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, I would say with all of this stuff, that would be the key piece of advice, is just not to freak out.
- Alison Monahan: Exactly, stay chill.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: One thing that actually I found more than once is people who just were totally unprepared to talk about things on their own resume, which is maddening, as an interviewer. Because again, half the time, you're just trying to fill up the 20 to 30 minutes, and you're like, oh, we have nothing to talk about. Tell me about this interest in whatever. And you're like, "Well, I'm not really interested in that." It's like, "Then why is it on your resume?"
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, or you forget. I've seen people forget that they did something, or that they have no idea what we're talking about.
- Sadie Jones: Everything on your resume, you should be really prepared for and able to talk about, and comfortable with, and that includes interests. Don't put something ... It may not be the thing you do every day, and maybe you just thought it'd be interesting to put on there, but you should be prepared to discuss it, for sure.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You're the expert on your own interests. If you can't talk to me about what you like to cook, and you put cooking, it's going to be like, okay, why am I having this conversation? I could be billing time right now.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, because really, that person just has that to go on, and they're trying to, like you said, fill up 30 minutes.
- Alison Monahan: Well, it is a genuine curiosity. Talk to me about something that's not academic, or not professional. Oh, looks like you've been to India. How interesting. I've been to India, too. Where have you been? And then it turns out you only stopped over at the airport, whatever.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: The other thing, oh my gosh, languages. Do not put a language on your resume unless you legitimately can have the conversation in that language.
- Sadie Jones: Oh, that's a really good point.



Alison Monahan: I've seen that happen. I've seen people who claim they were fluent in a certain language, and the firm's either suspected they weren't, or thought, "Oh, it'll be great. They can commune with our countryman or whatever in Hindi," and then they show up to the interview and they're literally planning to do it in that language.

Sadie Jones: Wow. Well, also, I probably wouldn't even put a language on my resume unless it was something that I was really comfortable with. I don't even like when people write, "Conversational."

Alison Monahan: No, but I think that's the point. You need to be solid in that language. You need to basically be able to carry on a professional conversation in that language if you are putting it on your resume, and otherwise, don't put it on your resume.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: All right, well, we're running short on time. Let me just touch on a couple of things. Generally speaking, I would say my biggest mistakes in this process tended to come from situations where I had not ... either hadn't done sufficient research about the firm, or for whatever reason, I had gotten confused about who I was interviewing with. You know, which office, what practice areas, et cetera. Do you have any practical tips for people who want to do their homework and learn how to keep all these firms straight?

Sadie Jones: I would say find a system that works for you. It may not be the system that works for everybody. I know some people keep everything in an Excel chart. You probably want to do something where it's connected to the actual calendar invite, or thing on your calendar, so you know that the research you're doing is for the right firm, and all of that. I think there's lots of different ways to organize it, or flash cards. But I would say that I would make sure you sort of have a list of things that you're doing for every firm, things you're looking up, like where their office is, what are their practice groups? Especially once you get the interviewers, that you look up key information about them.

I would kind of make sure that you sort of have a list of things that you think are important for every firm, and that you're keeping it in one place, straight, and that you're giving yourself enough time to review it before you go in.

Alison Monahan: I totally agree. I think a spreadsheet could work. I think a Trello board could be really effective, flash cards. Whatever it is, just have some system and make sure that you're going to be able to access this information. This is more of an issue for on-campus interviewing, when you're doing a bunch. Hopefully, by the time you're in a callback stage, you know something about the firm. But I guess people don't. You know? They've said some crazy things.



- Sadie Jones: Also, I would say if you're there and you're not sure, don't say it. It'd be better not to say it, and know less, than to probably say the wrong thing.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, you don't want to be like, "Oh, I'm really looking forward to working bankruptcy," and then they're like, "We don't do bankruptcy."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. I think the practice area is a big deal. Or talking about some office they don't have.
- Alison Monahan: Right, or a practice group that just left a few months ago, that kind of thing. Make sure you're up-to-date on what their websites says.
- Sadie Jones: I was going to say, I would also probably look up some recent cases and things like that. See if there was anything in the news about them. It could be a really quick search, but that's always important.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, a lot of firms will list key cases on the bios of people, so you could be like, "Oh, you worked on this case. That sounds interesting. Tell me about that." You don't have to brown-nose that much, but everybody's going to feel flattered that you know something about them.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. No, I think ... and if you have the information ahead of time, then you really should look something up. You don't always.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, again, within reason. It's kind of creepy if it's clear that somebody's been completely stalking you for hours on the internet. I think this is stuff that a quick Google search could reveal, is totally valid. But if you're going an hour per person, and you're talking about a tweet they sent five years ago, that's creepy.
- Sadie Jones: Yes, absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: All right, a couple of other things. Do you think people should take notes in an interview?
- Sadie Jones: I actually don't.
- Alison Monahan: I agree.
- Sadie Jones: I don't know if everyone would agree with me there, but I feel like you should be listening.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I feel like, what are you writing down?
- Sadie Jones: And you can always find out stuff later. Yeah. It looks fake to me.



- Alison Monahan: It looks weird. I mean, you're not making eye contact at that point, you're not really focusing. Obviously, do not be making notes ... Well, I should say hopefully obviously, do not be taking notes on your phone. Do not take your phone in at all, probably, or if you do, put it literally on silent. Turn it off. Put it in airplane mode. You need to be focused on this interview for that amount of time.
- Sadie Jones: I also like the idea of what you said about not even bringing your phone, because I think just having it, even if you think it's off, can be this straw, like you are wondering what it's doing.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, that should not be your focus, basically.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you take it, put it in airplane mode before you enter the building.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: I mean, you might want to take it, just in case you got stuck in traffic or something, but ... I'm willing to give you that much.
- Sadie Jones: Yep.
- Alison Monahan: How about business cards? Do you think people need to worry about that?
- Sadie Jones: I think that it can be a little bit weird, but there are situations where I think it makes sense. If you're meeting people during OCI or something like that. I don't know. I think it'd be odd during a callback to give everybody you meet a business card or something like that.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, they've got your resume. Has your information on it.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Yeah, so they're just going to throw it away.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I agree. I don't really think they're necessary. I know a lot of schools put a lot of focus on this, and make you pay a lot to get these really fancy ones. If you're networking, sure. But in an interview, I feel like it's weird.
- Sadie Jones: I think there's times during the on-campus interviewing process where you might be kind of networking, mingling with people. Then I think it's fine. But I don't think you should do it in an interview.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Anytime somebody gave me one, it was like, "Okay, great, thanks." Straight into the trash, like, "What am I supposed to do with this?"



Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: All right, and finally, wrapping up, what about thank you notes? I know this is a big topic of discussion. Good idea, bad idea? Necessary, not necessary?

Sadie Jones: I lean slightly to no on this question. But I know that people will disagree with me there, and I completely respect people who write thank you notes. I think that if you're going to write them, that they should be short and to the point, and proofread a bunch of times.

Alison Monahan: Yes.

Sadie Jones: Meaning, you show someone else your thank you cards. Also, if you're handwriting them, make sure they're legible.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: I think there's just a lot of ways that you can go wrong in a thank you card, and while I do think that you can go right, especially if you particularly connected with somebody, but I do think that it can kind of be a trap. There was somebody that wrote a thank you card that had so many grammatical issues and was so odd-

Alison Monahan: Whoops.

Sadie Jones: ... that we almost didn't make them an offer that they were going to have, until we got the thank you note.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I've gotten some handwritten cards that were kind of short, sweet, to the point, and were fine, but they showed up three days later, and by then, I'd probably already given my feedback. I think more effective is maybe sending an email where you mention a certain thing you talked about. There, you have to absolutely make sure you keep straight who you talked to about what, so you probably should be making notes if you're in the restroom between interviews or something. Jot down a few things you want to talk about. I don't think they're necessary at all. I think they have a lot of potential to go wrong. I don't think they're going to move the needle that positively, but they definitely have the potential to move the needle very negatively.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I might be biased here, but I'm going to put in a plug for, it's really nice to send a thank you to the recruiter that organized this for you.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's right.
- Sadie Jones: They appreciate that. I can tell you that I got not that many, but I remember the ones I got. Especially you see something like, "Wow, what a great schedule." Even if you didn't think it was. It makes them feel like all their work was for something. And this is somebody who actually has an effect on whether or not you get an offer.
- Alison Monahan: I think it's a great point. I think if you're going to butter someone up, buttering up the recruiter is probably the way to go.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, but I think a lot of law students don't realize that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, because too, that's what you do. Like, that's your focus. If I'm a lawyer doing an interview, this is one out of seven million things I'm doing. If I get an email, I'm like, "Oh, that's nice, thanks." But for you, it actually would mean something.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. So, I was going to say if you're going to send one, I would send one to that person. Still proofread it, make sure it's good. But ...
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Basically, it needs to be something like, "Hey, thanks so much for ..." Well, probably not hey. You know. "Dear whomever, I really enjoyed coming to the firm and meeting such interesting lawyers. The schedule was really fantastic, and lunch was amazing. Thanks so much. If you have any additional information you want, feel free to follow up."
- Sadie Jones: I think that's perfect.
- Alison Monahan: Don't have to go too in depth here. This is like etiquette 101.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: And this also may be regional. In the south, maybe you do need to send thank you notes. Ask your school.
- Sadie Jones: I agree.
- Alison Monahan: All right, well, we are way over time, so any final thoughts before we wrap up here?
- Sadie Jones: My final thought is something you just mentioned, which is that lunch on an interview can be-
- Alison Monahan: Ah, yes, we didn't even get to lunch.



- Sadie Jones: It can be like the third rail. I would say, just be careful. Just some quick tips on lunch. One, don't ever drink. Doesn't even matter if the associate orders drinks. You don't order drinks.
- Alison Monahan: Never.
- Sadie Jones: And really, the associates shouldn't either. Yeah, absolutely. Two, I would mirror what the other people are ordering. If they order appetizers and entrees, or a dessert, it's okay for you to order all three, and it might be probably good, so that you're all at the same point. But if they're not doing that, and maybe they're in a rush, don't start ordering a lot of extra stuff.
- Alison Monahan: No, and I think this is one of those where it's totally fair to ask before the waiter returns, "What are you guys thinking about?"
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. Because really, you're taking your cues from them, except for alcohol.
- Alison Monahan: And they may ask you. They may be like, "Well, I'm not really sure. Do you want to have a starter?" And then you can say yes or no, whatever, doesn't really matter. But yeah, you don't want to be the one ordering three courses while they're getting a sandwich.
- Sadie Jones: And also, pick something that's easy and neat to eat. Don't pick anything that's complicated. Don't pick spaghetti that's going to get on your shirt, things like that. I would-
- Alison Monahan: I just had a paella for lunch, and I'm sitting there picking off the shells of stuff. Probably not a good look for your law firm interview.
- Sadie Jones: Or anything that's really smelly. Just things you might not think about normally at lunch, you should think about because it's a job interview. Also, another thing is, wear shoes that you know you can walk from the office to the lunch.
- Alison Monahan: True.
- Sadie Jones: I've had a bunch of people take off their shoes.
- Alison Monahan: What?
- Sadie Jones: And I get that sometimes you might do that in-
- Alison Monahan: What? What do they do? They walk in their stockings?
- Sadie Jones: They put on flip flops or something.



Alison Monahan: What? No, do not do that.

Sadie Jones: No. But you'd be surprised. Because people do that-

Alison Monahan: I would be surprised. I would be like, "What are you doing? You're on an interview."

Sadie Jones: Well, then of course that's going to be in the person's review of you.

Alison Monahan: Of course. People need to understand.

Sadie Jones: Like, I don't know what happened, but I saw their feet.

Alison Monahan: Everybody you meet is going to write about you, so you do not want the person seeing, "Oh yeah, they came out of the restroom with no stockings on, no hose on, and flip flops."

Sadie Jones: Yes. "And they were carrying their shoes in their hands," or something.

Alison Monahan: Oh my god. Why would people ... I can't even ... That's the worst.

Sadie Jones: You need to be able to walk in whatever you came in. And then my final piece of advice on lunch is, it's still an interview. It's not just lunch with your friends. Don't say things that you wouldn't say in the office. Be careful.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's not the time to let your guard down at all. Yeah, these people are probably closer in age to you. Maybe it feels less formal. It's still an interview.

Sadie Jones: And maybe they're testing you. I feel like-

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah.

Sadie Jones: ... sometimes, they try to put it out there to see if you're going to take the bait. Don't do it.

Alison Monahan: Oh, I definitely ... I know for a fact of one interview that I did not get an offer because of something I said at lunch.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. No, that happens a lot. That's actually why, as a recruiter, I preferred the morning interviews, so that the person did go to lunch. Because I felt like we found out better information.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And if you have any sort of dietary restrictions sort of things-

Sadie Jones: Yes.



Alison Monahan: ... that's completely valid. But you want to mention them in advance to the recruiter so they can plan around that.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And a lot of times, you'll be asked that question. But also, don't be weird about that, either. I understand if it's something like, "I'm a vegetarian," or a vegan, or, "I'm allergic to shellfish," maybe, so they don't take you to a seafood place. But I've also had people say really weird random stuff, you know? "I don't like onions." It's like, that's not going to affect how-

Alison Monahan: Like, great, thanks for sharing.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. Just don't be weird.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you keep kosher, if you're a vegetarian, gluten-free, all these things I think are completely valid. And again, if you don't mention it or they take you somewhere that's a little inappropriate, there's probably going to be something that you can order and kind of pick at. And you can go get lunch later.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, don't make it weird.

Alison Monahan: Just don't make a big deal out of it. If you're vegetarian and they take you to a steakhouse, it's like, "Oh, I don't actually eat meat, but I'm totally happy having the salad and the bread."

Sadie Jones: Yeah. It's very rare you go somewhere where there's nothing you can eat.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: Again, it's still an interview. That's my final piece of advice.

Alison Monahan: No, I'm glad you brought that up, because that was on my list, and I actually skipped it. All right, well, with that, we are truly out of time. If you'd like more career help, or the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, check out our career website, [CareerDicta.com](https://www.CareerDicta.com). If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox Podcast, please take a second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And, be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything.

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