



- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today, we're here with ex-BigLaw recruiter, Sadie Jones, to talk about ways to frame your job search story. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me and normally I'm here with Lee Burgess.
- Alison Monahan: 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. Together 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](#).
- Alison Monahan: 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.
- Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox Podcast. Today we're here with ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones to talk about how to frame your job search story. So welcome, Sadie.
- Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.
- Alison Monahan: Our pleasure. So, some people might be listening to this and thinking, job search story? What are they even talking about? I don't have a story. But we all have a story, and the important thing here is your story needs to make sense in the context you're applying for. Right?
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I think it's something that students don't think about a lot. What their materials say to the employer. Because I think that they need to make sense for the job you're applying for and make sense for your background. And I think that it's a good way to kind of look at your materials and go over it to see it from their point of view.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Because your materials are telling a story. It just might not be the one that you want to be telling for this particular job. So for a lot of people, this is gonna depend on the job you're applying for. For example, my law school roommate was interested in starting a public interest career, but her previous background had been in things like computer programming, and I think she worked for a bank at some point. So she had to think about, "How do I shape this?" Because her real personality was much more public interest and that was actually what she wanted to do. It was totally legit. But she had to think about how to frame all of this so that when you looked at her resume, you weren't just like, "Wait, what's this girl who was in IT at a bank telling me that she wants to do this public interest job? This doesn't make any sense."



- Sadie Jones: Exactly. And I think it can go the other way around. Like you're applying for BigLaw, but you have only public interest on [your resume](#) so they think, "Why would you wanna work here? You're just gonna leave." So I think that it's not really about necessarily taking things out or adding things, although sometimes it is. It's more emphasizing things and making sure that it makes sense for what you're applying for.
- Alison Monahan: Absolutely. Cause she was actually, my roommate was the year below me, and so I'd had some friends go through a similar thing trying to get public interest funding, and they got rejected. And so I kind of told her the story and I was like, "Look, you need to really be sure that your resume says public interest even if that's not what you spent the majority of your time doing because otherwise you're not gonna be successful getting funding." And then she completely changed her resume and did get funding, but she had to emphasize different things.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly. And I think that a lot of people do not like to write [cover letters](#). They avoid them at all costs, and it really is your chance to explain even more than what your resume says. So I think that's another opportunity that people sort of miss.
- Alison Monahan: I think that's right. Some people think like, "Oh, the cover letter is just completely formulaic. I can just pull a template from the internet and drop in my name." And it's like that's not ... that's a missed opportunity.
- Sadie Jones: Exactly.
- Alison Monahan: Because some people, depending on who's reading this, [some people might start with your resume and some people might start with your cover letter](#). I mean, so for example, when we do hiring, we ask people to submit a form with a few questions and answers and a resume. And I will tell you I always read their form first and my business partner always reads the resume. So you don't know what you're gonna get.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, so I think you need to kind of look at things separately and then also together. So you kind of get the big picture, and then you also are making sure that each individual thing is telling the right story. But everything is an opportunity here and when you're talking to them also, in the initial screen or whatever it is, it's another chance to explain anything you wanna explain.
- Alison Monahan: Right. So let's just touch on that for a little. So how can people figure out what story they want to be telling here?



- Sadie Jones: Well first you wanna look at what you're applying for because it should all be specific to that. So you may be only applying to certain jobs, in which case you can kind of just look at the general story you're telling. If all the jobs you're applying for are public interest, and you know that, that's what you wanna do, maybe you're applying for some public interest and you're applying for some law firm jobs, in which case maybe you wanna have two different resumes and cover letters.
- Alison Monahan: Definitely. For sure.
- Sadie Jones: So there are people who know exactly what direction they wanna go, and there's other people who are kind of keeping their options open. So I think what you wanna start with is, what's the job I'm applying for, what are they gonna wanna look for in me, and how can I come across as the best candidate for this job with the experience I have? Because it needs to all be true.
- Alison Monahan: Right. Exactly. You're not allowed to make things up.
- Sadie Jones: We're not telling anyone to make things up. Exactly. That's the worst thing you can so, so never do that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. You can emphasize-
- Sadie Jones: But really it's [marketing](#). You're selling yourself.
- Alison Monahan: My sister, when I was helping her apply to graduate school, her summer where she was basically following Phish. Sorry if anyone at Columbia is listening to this. But she was following Phish around the country and that became a tour of the national parks and monuments of America, which was not untrue. They did go to a lot of them.
- Sadie Jones: Well, I think, yeah, there's a best light. Putting it in the best light. There's always a way to phrase things or kind of say it in a certain way and keep it true, but also make sure that it's relevant.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think you need to be able to talk about it too in a way that makes sense. So, and one small note. If you do have multiple versions of your resume, you wanna be careful about what you name them because you don't want the person who's getting this resume thinking, "A teaching resume. Well what else are they applying for?"
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. It should be a name that just sounds like it goes with the job you're applying for.



Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you can have whatever you want on your computer, but when you do your final PDF version to send off, it probably should just be Alison Monahan resume. Nothing more than that because you don't wanna raise suspicions about public interest resume when you're sending it to a firm or something.

Sadie Jones: And make sure that you keep them straight though for yourself so that you're not ... that you're sending the right resume to the right place.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Absolutely. So, yeah, I think ... I guess sometimes people aren't sure kind of how to find out what the job might be looking for. So I mean, I think the things you're looking for here, some of them are obvious. I mean, what skills are they asking you for, what experience are they asking you for? Obviously this stuff matters but it's also kind of a bigger picture that you have to kind of have to take a step back and think about. What kind of character traits are they looking for here? What type of life experiences might they be looking for? So if you are applying for a certain type of public interest role and you have had personal life experience in that area, say it's something about working with people who are homeless or something like that and you happen to be homeless or you know an adoptee and you were adopted, or foster child or whatever, then all these things really come into part of your story too. Right?

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I think the reverse of that is also true, which is that I do sometimes find that with kind of jobs that are at a for-profit place, like a law firm, the people will emphasize all their volunteer work and all this other stuff, and I always say, "Let's just take that off." Because especially, if there's room for it, fine and you can have some of that, but what you wanna say is that they're looking more at the academic side, they're looking at that you wanna work for a place where the objective is that they're a business that wants to make money. And that you understand that, that you've worked hard at things, and I think that people sometimes don't think about that when they're putting it together.

Alison Monahan: I think that's absolutely right. And this is one of those cases where we often have to mention that probably not the greatest interview question at a law firm, particularly not in the first rounds is, "How much pro bono work do you do?" Or, "Tell me about your pro bono programs." Obviously, they might like to talk about that, but it also plants the seed, particularly if your resume is pointing towards you were in the Peace Corps and all of your jobs have been public interest type jobs, they're thinking, "Huh. Does this person really just wanna come here and somehow think that they're gonna do pro bono work all the time? Huh."

Sadie Jones: Or also, I think the other thing that probably all of these jobs are looking for is that you want to do this job and stay there. And whether or not that's true, I don't know if that's relevant right now but you need to try to make the case that



you do. And so that's what your resume, your cover letter should say and if they ask you, that's what you should say. I don't think it's a great idea to say "I wanna work here for a couple years and pay off some student loans."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, get some experience and then go somewhere else with that experience.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: I mean, even if people know that's what's likely to happen, they don't wanna hear it.

Sadie Jones: And that's where the city can come into play too. You wanna make it clear that, that's where you wanna be. And so I think we've talked about this before, but if it's somewhere where you don't have a strong connection, you need to try to play up whatever you do have and make it very clear that you are sure this is where you wanna be.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's one of those where if you are pretty sure you wanna work in a city you've never worked in before, two years down the road you probably wanna start making some ties to that area. Maybe your first summer of law school so that it then is a story that makes sense. "Oh, you know, you're right. I hadn't really lived here before, but I'd always wanted to. And then my first summer I got a job here and I really enjoyed it and I made some connections in the legal community. And I really liked it. And so now I wanna come back and work here again." That's a story that people will buy.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely, and I tell people that for the 1L summer, that's something you really should think about because your options in a way are more open and since you're not looking for that crucial 2L job and you just need something, you can kind of work in another city and make that happen. So I think that's something to kind of consider earlier rather than later if it's somewhere that you don't have a connection to.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think that's absolutely right. Cause it's all part of your story. A believable story, really we're looking for credibility. You need to be able to make a credible case that this is something that you're actually legitimately interested in doing for at least the semi-long term. And of course, no one expects you to make life decisions that are completely binding, but you need to have some idea what you're talking about.

Sadie Jones: And I think that they also kind of wanna see what's your trajectory. And so you could have done different things and it's not a linear path, but I do think that telling the story is saying, "This is what got me from here to there to there."



- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Sadie Jones: And I think especially for people where law school doesn't seem like the obvious next step for you, you should be able though to tell a story where it makes sense. Why did you go?
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, cause I think you are always the one who needs to be ready to overcome these potential obstacles or objections to your candidacy. So for example, for me, I mean, I had a really weird background. I went from Sociology to a Master's in Architecture, and then I worked as a programmer, and then I went to law school. So you can imagine when interviewing for jobs, people they see my resume and they just kind of get this look. They kind of look at the resume and then they look at me and they look back at the resume and they look back at me and they go, "Huh. Sociology to architecture to programming to law. Tell me about that." Or something along those lines.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah.
- Alison Monahan: And they're not necessarily ... it's not disqualifying. It's really more of just puzzlement. Of like, "This seems like a strange path to be on. Explain this to me." So I had to be ready to tell them, "Oh, you know. Designing a database is basically the same thing as designing a house is the same thing as designing a brief and all these skills that I learned in this sort of weird path, they actually all will come together in making me this amazing employee that you would love to hire." And they're kinda like, "Oh, okay. That's interesting. I get that." And then they move on.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think that's an important point too, which is that it sounds like you are confident in your story, and you're confident in what you've done and how you've gotten here. I think there are people sometimes where they do have things that seem off base, and they're sort of trying to hide them or downplay them or not have a reason why it makes sense. And I think you should feel like you're proud of your background and the things you've done. Whether or not it all did make sense at the time, you can always go back and figure it out.
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Sadie Jones: How you're gonna explain it. But I think you should feel like you can explain to someone why this was good experience and how is this gonna help me because I think so many different skills can help you as a lawyer or whatever job you're applying for. And you just need to figure out what the things are that you're gonna emphasize in those or other degree that you've had or anything else.



- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Absolutely. And I think everybody has something that's probably less favorable in their background or on their resume, whether it's people ... There are lots of things people could get defensive about, whether it's you have too much experience so you feel like you're gonna be rejected for that on those grounds or maybe you're coming straight from undergrad so you feel like you don't have enough experience and you get defensive about that. There's no need to get defensive about any of this. You just need to think about how you're gonna respond if somebody starts to ask about this or push on this. Even if you're coming straight from undergrad and you're in an interview with some crusty partner who's like, "Well, it doesn't look like you really have any work experience to speak off. You've got just one internship." You need to have a response to that, which is, "Well, I did this and I did this and I did this, and I had leadership positions here and these are the ways that I'm developing these skills. I'm doing pro bono work," or whatever. Honestly, they don't really care. They just wanna hear something.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I think it's definitely more about your answer than what the facts are. It's like how are you handling this?
- Alison Monahan: Right.
- Sadie Jones: I also think with a story there's sort of two aspects, which is one you want your materials to tell a story so that they want to at least bring you in or pick you or whatever the first round is. And then if you get past that, I think you also need to be able to explain it more in-depth and there might be other questions.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Exactly. I mean, in terms of the things that you can use to kind of shape this story and the things that you are really in control of, obviously your resume, your cover letter, you can put whatever you like on them as long as it's true or basically true.
- Alison Monahan: But I think even the jobs that you decide to apply for. That can shape the story that you're telling because you're deciding that okay, this particular job is interesting to me. Well, why is it interesting to you? I mean, maybe it's just, well it pays a lot. Okay, that's probably not the greatest reason. But hopefully there's something else about the role that you think, "Oh yeah. I could do this. I wanna do this." So that can be part of your story as well, and that's really the kind of things that come up in your interview where you need to have thought through why is this a good fit for me.
- Sadie Jones: And I do think that it comes across when you're passionate about something or it's obvious that, that's what you wanna do. I think that employers see that. I think that's something that you ... It's an opportunity to do that. And sometimes you're applying for things, right, where it wasn't your first choice.



- Alison Monahan: But it better be a choice.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. I think it can be harder, but I think whether or not it was your first choice, you need to go into it like it was. You need to muster some excitement and make it all make sense and really what you're doing is just picking, I think, the skills and experience that you wanna emphasize that go with what that was. So that's why we're saying you're not lying about anything or misleading people. You're just focusing on one thing over another thing.
- Alison Monahan: Right. So I mean, you can find these pieces in a lot of different places. Sometimes people think, "Oh it's just a job that I had," or maybe just the degree that I did, but it's really a lot beyond that. So what kind of other things can people talk about?
- Sadie Jones: Well you can talk about experiences outside of the legal world or law school. So, just things you're generally interested in or like we were talking about volunteer work sometimes. Things that you've actually given your time and effort to, cause some of those things are gonna be directly relevant to the jobs you're looking at. Travel, other personal life experiences that you've had, things like that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you can go beyond just the degree and education, list out specific classes that you've taken that maybe are relevant or if you did a major paper as an undergraduate that was relevant or probably really anything that you did to a major paper, whether it was relevant or not should probably be on there. Cause part of what you're doing, you're not selling just, "Oh, I have the exact experience." You're selling, "Oh, I'm a person who can execute a large research project," so even if the paper that you wrote wasn't directly related to law, it's still something people might wanna know about.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. But I will say on that, like you said it should be a major paper or-
- Alison Monahan: an honors thesis or something.
- Sadie Jones: But I do find some people, if they feel they don't have a lot, they put a ton of undergrad classes that they've taken, random things, and I'll say that from the employer side, you kind of look at it like just a big muck of what is this.
- Alison Monahan: Right, cause they're not just writing everything down.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. So I think it can get kind of confusing in there, so make sure the things you're putting are important.



- Alison Monahan: Right, and that they're relevant. I think you have to be careful about certain undergraduate experiences, particularly around fraternities and sororities and things like that. That can be a trigger for different people who might be looking at this positive or negative. So you've gotta know your audience.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely. And those things are hard because I do find that different people will just react differently to them, but it may not be worth the risk unless it's super important for some reason.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think if you're in a leadership role, that's different, but if you're just like, "I was a member of this fraternity," it's like, "Okay, great. Thanks. What am I supposed to do with this?"
- Sadie Jones: Some people are gonna ding you for that. Yeah. And maybe that's not fair, but they will.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think it could be the same thing with affinity groups and things in law school. That can be a way to signal what might be unique about your life experience, and I think that's absolutely, if it makes sense in the context of the story you're telling, is a great thing.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely.
- Alison Monahan: But again, you have to know your audience. If you're applying to super conservative judges and you're very active in student politics or something like that, you would think probably, "Well, is this gonna help my application?" You might also think, "Do I actually wanna work for this person?" If you feel like you're hiding things that are important to you because you don't think it's gonna help you make a case that this is the right job for you, then maybe it's actually just not the right job.
- Sadie Jones: Especially because if you were in that group or that club or whatever it is, it probably is something that's important to you, enough that you did that.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Sometimes too you see some funny stuff, like people put that they're in both the American Constitutional Society and The Federalist Society. And you're like, "Okay, you can't really be both of those."
- Sadie Jones: Not quite a bit. Yeah, it's very odd. And you have to then expect the question.
- Alison Monahan: Right. I think it's one of those where again, know your audience. I don't care if you're in both clubs because you're a social climber and you just wanna put them on your resume, but only put one of them on there and think about which one makes the most sense for this position.



- Sadie Jones: Yeah. I agree.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, things like hobbies and stuff too, particularly something you're serious about. I was an Olympic athlete. It's like, oh. That might not be directly relevant to the job you're applying for, but that says something about your character. It says that you can work hard. It says you're diligent. It says a lot of things, so that's something that ideally people are gonna look at and go, "Wow, that's impressive." Plus it's interesting. Somebody might wanna talk to you about it.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Or even college athletics or if you've done something where you had to work really hard at it or again, you had a leadership position, I think that people don't even realize that the employer side really does look at those things as a positive and it matters.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think too, depending on the role, so for example if you're applying for a role that's gonna have a lot of client facing interaction, then you wanna be thinking about, "Well, what's in my background that would show that I'm an empathetic person who can talk to other people?" Because that's not actually that common with a lot of lawyers and law students. So there may be volunteer positions you had where you explained what you were doing. If you were doing one-on-one work with people because that's the sort of skill set that somebody might be looking for in that role.
- Sadie Jones: Absolutely. Or something that demonstrates your writing skills or something else. So think about what the experience is and what it shows people. I was gonna say something to be careful about is languages. So let's say there's something where you think a language would be helpful. Make sure you're only putting it down if you feel comfortable enough in it that you could speak in a business setting because I think that can be tricky because they could test you right away.
- Alison Monahan: Oh, I've heard many, many stories of people going into job interviews with someone who expected to speak to them exclusively in the language that they put they were fluent in and it's like, "Well, you weren't actually really fluent."
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Cause I think it could be great to have a language on there, but be careful.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah. Absolutely. And sometimes people wonder what to do about jobs that maybe don't seem as prestigious, like say for example you worked your way through undergrad and you had a job that was 20 or 30 hours a week, but it was something like working in the library or food service or something like that and they wonder, "Should I leave this off?" I mean, my opinion on that is if it was something you spent that much time on, you put it on your resume and you own it. And you say, "Yeah, I'm proud that I worked my way through college."



Sadie Jones: Completely. I'm a big believer in that. And I think that you should try to explain in it, especially if you put yourself through school doing it, you worked that hard and you were doing well in school, I think that's great. On the other hand, if you just worked a retail job during the summer-

Alison Monahan: Right. I was a lifeguard.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I did not put lifeguard on my law school job applications.

Sadie Jones: But I think some people also, especially if you went straight through, I think you're trying to find filler. People spot that, and they don't really like it. There's other ways that you can kind of beef up a resume without putting that kind of thing in.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Exactly. All right. Well, let's move on to that point since we're getting close to time now. So, now you've thought about it, you've figured out, "Okay, this is the story I wanna tell," how can people start making sure everything's consistent? What do they need to think about and look at?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think the best thing you can do is ask somebody else to look at it.

Alison Monahan: True.

Sadie Jones: Because it's really hard for you to see something you've been working on a long time. And I would have different people look at it, and I would be prepared for real feedback, and don't be defensive. And you're gonna get different feedback from different people. But I think the best thing you can do is to have a fresh eye on it.

Sadie Jones: I also think that you can kind of ask yourself what are the basic questions you'd ask in an interview and how does my story answer that. And I think there's two different steps again. There's the, "Okay, what would they just be looking for to bring me in?" Cause that you can't talk. You just have your written materials. So I think you have to say, "What does this say to them?" If I were looking through, I would go step by step, "Okay, it says this is where I started, this is where I went next. Will this make sense? Is there a gap in it that I'm gonna have to explain in the cover letter pretty much?" If it's before you get in. And then I think there's the next step, which is what might they ask me in an interview based on this? What do I think the holes are, the red flags are, things like that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Absolutely. I mean, everything needs to work together here so your resume, it needs to be consistent with your cover letter. You don't wanna be



talking about something in your cover letter that's not on your resume. And then things that are online I think are also fair game that you have to be paying attention to. So number one, you need a LinkedIn profile. That LinkedIn profile needs to be consistent with what is on your resume. That can get a little tricky. If you're having multiple versions of your resume and somebody goes to LinkedIn and they find out that actually, "Oh, you did this other thing for five years," so you gotta think carefully about how to frame that if you're gonna be dropping things off your resume. I mean, obviously that's probably you don't wanna do that at that point, but and the other thing is you gotta Google yourself.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: You need to know what's out there. Maybe there's somebody with the same name who has done things that are not favorable. You just need to be aware so if somebody says, "Oh we Googled you and found out you're a bank robber." You're like, "No, actually that person is not me."

Sadie Jones: But you know that.

Alison Monahan: And [social media](#) to the extent it's public. I mean, it's amazing what people put on Instagram. Let me just say that.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And even things that aren't public, I think you should still be careful about because someone might know someone who's friends with you or if you look on Facebook, sometimes ... They're always updating their privacy settings, and so sometimes you don't know which things are public or not. What's your profile picture? I can't believe some of the things I see.

Alison Monahan: Well, if you say something super offensive in a group and people screen shot it and sent it to Above the Law, I mean, all these things happen.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think it's hard to know everything that's out there about you, but I think you can do your best to keep it in check. And you should probably be thinking about this before you even go to law school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. Something like LinkedIn, or sorry, about Instagram, that's one of those where you can just change your screen name so it's not that easy to find you. I mean, I don't think you can find me on Instagram. Not that I'm hiding anything, just because I kind of was like, "Oh, I really don't want my real name here." Particularly, depending on what you're posting, that could be a very good idea.

Sadie Jones: I think you should also not use your main email address.



- Alison Monahan: True, yes. Cuz they link up everything.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. Cause you know someone looks at their contacts or has your email or whatever.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah.
- Sadie Jones: And some of it, I think it's okay if there are things you wanna be outspoken about that you don't mind people seeing. And there are times where it's relevant. Where being political is okay. I just think you need to know what it is and how it's out there. A lot of people have their own blogs, so think about that. Think about comments that people write and how you're responding.
- Alison Monahan: Well, and all of this is part of your story. So if your story is that I'm an activist and I'm posting highly political content day and night on all sorts of social media, that might be fine if that aligns with the jobs that you're applying for. It might not be fine if you are applying for a large law firm in a conservative city. So, it's just up to you what you wanna be ... have out there.
- Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I think you should think about also on LinkedIn, what's your photo, cause it should be professional looking.
- Alison Monahan: Yes, definitely. And not having a photo on LinkedIn is really not acceptable, so put on a nice blazer or something and have a friend take a picture of you in front of a wall with your iPhone or something. It doesn't have to be anything fancy.
- Sadie Jones: I'm not saying you should get professional pictures.
- Alison Monahan: No, it doesn't need to be fancy but you do need something. I feel like it ... whenever people ask to connect with me on LinkedIn and they don't have a photo, I just immediately assume it's a scam.
- Sadie Jones: Definitely.
- Alison Monahan: All right, well before we wrap up, so what if people just don't have the story that they wanna be telling? Maybe they're making a career transition or something. How can they start to develop the story that they want?
- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think that's okay. Not everyone has been thinking about this their whole life. Not everyone knows exactly what their trajectory is.
- Alison Monahan: The perfect law student.



- Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I'm sure like when you were talking about your story, that you made the story for it later, but I'm sure as you were going, you weren't like, "Okay, this is gonna make sense."
- Alison Monahan: No, I mean I didn't start architecture school thinking that in five years I'd go to law school.
- Sadie Jones: Right. Because it's the same thing. So I think that part of it is going backwards and figuring out what led to what. But I think what we were saying earlier about [sort of planning a little bit](#) and adding some things in so ... like going to the city you wanna be in before you're at your 2L summer I think is great.
- Sadie Jones: I think it's also fine to get some experience. Let's say your 1L summer in government work or public interest work and still it's okay to then apply in a law firm after because the story is, "That's the job I could get 1L summer and I got great experience there," and you talk about what you did. And it didn't mean that that was your plan all along.
- Sadie Jones: So I think you have to think about the things you have control over that can show your interest in whatever it is. And I think there are a lot of things. There are clubs you can get involved in at school. Maybe there's a practice area you're really interested in, and you can get on a journal or something like that or in a club or whatever it is. So I think you have to think about the things you can control, and then in the end you have to go back and look at the reality of it and say, "What are the pieces I'm taking out of these different experiences and how am I putting them together to get me to, you know, I wanna work at the Public Defender's Office."
- Alison Monahan: Exactly. It's really not that hard to become a member of the board of a certain club. You don't have to do that much to be the Vice President of whatever as a 1L or 2L. Yeah, I think also looking at your background in a different light so maybe you don't have some of those check box things because you took time off for family reasons for example. Well, you weren't just sitting around. What skills did you develop through this experience? Did it make you a more empathetic person? Did you become more organized because you had twins? Whatever this is, sometimes you will think, "Oh I can't mention any of this." This is probably more for an interview type scenario. But they think, "Oh I can't mention any of this." But I think you can if you make it part of that story of, "I took this time off. Here's what I did, and I joined volunteer groups and I joined the board of this organization. I made connections and whatever." I mean, not that you had to do that, but you probably weren't just sitting around.
- Sadie Jones: I also think that employers are not looking for one specific person, and I think that some law students think that. I need to be this person. That's what they



want. And I just don't think that's true. And different law firms have personalities, and other jobs have personalities. And I think that they usually want a mix of people who wanna be there and who can do the job. So, I think rather than hide things like you were saying, that you may not think are relevant, find a way to make it relevant.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, because you wanna-

Sadie Jones: There always is.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you wanna be able to show up to this position as a whole person. Because that's the way that you're gonna be happy in this job and succeed. Maybe you can find a job where you're not gonna be able to show up like that, but you're probably not gonna really be that successful because you're not gonna be comfortable.

Sadie Jones: Well, and I'll say on the employer side, if I were looking at a resume, I wouldn't necessarily just want someone who went to

Alison Monahan: As a paralegal.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And then applied to law school. Did really well on the LSAT. Went to school. Did these exact things. That's not necessarily what employers are looking for.

Alison Monahan: You might want one of those people.

Sadie Jones: They like interesting people.

Alison Monahan: You could put one or two of those people in a summer class, but you don't wanna fill your summer class with 20 people who that's what they did because that's not ... you're not getting a diversity of perspectives at that point. I think that-

Sadie Jones: There's room for lots of people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Also, I think you can ask a friend ... you mentioned having people look at your resume and everything too, but you can also just sort of ask them, "What traits do you think I have that would be valuable for an employer?" Cause they're probably gonna point out things that you maybe didn't think of or ... at least they're gonna be nicer than you probably are to yourself.

Sadie Jones: True. Or if you've had another job, maybe you can go back and look at a review you had. If there's some good things or if you're still friendly with people you



worked with, hear what they have to say. They think that you're ... that your good qualities are, things you excelled in. Because I'm sure some of those things are gonna be relevant.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I think too, before we wrap up, I think it's important to remember some of the gender aspects of this. So for example, women have a tendency to underplay their accomplishments, and they also typically apply only for jobs that they feel 100% qualified for. So for all the women listening to this, please don't do that. Be aware there are other people out there, they are applying with full confidence and they are only 60%, maybe 70% qualified. You are more than qualified to apply for any job that you wanna apply for. I'm not saying you'll get it, but just apply.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think that there's really nothing to lose for applying. And that's what I always tell people, especially if there's a certain area you want. Why not cast a wide net?

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, you don't wanna only apply for jobs that you think you're a stretch for, but if there are jobs where you feel like, "Ah, I have 80% of the things they're looking for but maybe I don't have these one or two things," just apply because no one is really gonna care.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I also think something to keep in mind is you may not get the job you're 100% qualified for.

Alison Monahan: Right. There's no guarantee.

Sadie Jones: That happens all the time.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, over-qualified.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. I think that happens a lot. So I think that you never know, there could be someone who's like, "Oh, this is kind of a different candidate than everyone else."

Alison Monahan: That's interesting. I wanna talk to them.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So I agree that, that's definitely an issue between genders.

Alison Monahan: Any final thoughts before we wrap up?

Sadie Jones: My final thoughts are ... Well, what I always say, which is make sure there's no mistakes on any of your materials.



Alison Monahan: If you wanna immediately sink your story, have a lot of typos.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So I'm gonna go back to that, which is that no one's even gonna look at your story if it's full of mistakes.

Alison Monahan: The story is gonna be this person is not detail-oriented.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I mean, that's a story you tell with typos.

Sadie Jones: That says a lot, and that's on anything you're submitting to them. So that means your resume, your cover letter, an email that you wrote-

Alison Monahan: Writing sample.

Sadie Jones: Things like that, yeah.

Alison Monahan: I think that's a great point because that is really one of those areas where you might be the most qualified candidate, but if you submit materials full of typos to a law firm or a lawyer or anyone, they're gonna be like, "Ah, I wouldn't trust this person. I wouldn't put my name on this. No way." So you've gotta be careful.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: Well Sadie, thank you so much for joining us.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: Our pleasure. With that, we are unfortunately out of time. If you'd like more career help or the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, you can check out [careerdicta.com](https://www.careerdicta.com).

Alison Monahan: 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.

Alison Monahan: If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at lee@lawschooltoolbox.com or alison@lawschooltoolbox.com. Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at [lawschooltoolbox.com](https://www.lawschooltoolbox.com). Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon.



RESOURCES:

- [CareerDicta](#)
- [Building a Resume in Law School](#)
- [Six Essential Cover Letter Tips for Law Students](#)
- [Podcast Episode 111: Resumes and Cover Letters \(with an Ex-BigLaw recruiter\)](#)
- [The Foundations of Marketing Yourself: The Mission Statement](#)
- [Ahead of the Curve: Setting up Your Social Media – Getting a Fresh, Professional Start to Law School](#)
- [Ahead of the Curve: Get a Head Start on Your Career](#)