Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about finding a 1L summer job in the spring. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me, and Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. 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. 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 excited to have ex-BigLaw recruiter Sadie Jones here with us to talk about finding a 1L summer job in the spring. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, first off, if people are listening to this, say in February, maybe March, should they just give up? I mean, is there any way they're still going to find a summer job?

Sadie Jones: Yes. Definitely, there is a way to find a summer job. They should not give up. I actually think this is the beginning of the process for a lot of people. I think that sometimes a student hears from a classmate that they started applying in December and they already have a job, and then it makes you worried that you're not where they are. But I think that the reality is, most students are waiting for their first semester grades, which is probably the end of January, before they're really applying. So I think you're on target. You should be in the search, but you're not too late.

Alison Monahan: Okay. Yeah, I think that's right. I definitely remember sending out a bunch of resumes December 1st, and then nothing really happened. And then I think I got an interview request after I'd come back to school after Christmas, and then I had to go back to San Francisco in January, and I think that didn't pan out for a while. It's just one of those things. I think I did end up getting a job, maybe in January or February, I can't remember. But I remember a lot of people definitely didn't have anything. And we'll talk about this later, but I think a lot of job fairs and things are even happening in the spring, so I think it's definitely too early to panic here.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think you're right in the thick of it. And just focus on your job search. I would say, don't worry too much about what everyone else is doing.
Alison Monahan: That's always good advice. One question before we really jump in – does it even really matter if students do legal work this summer? Say, it's kind of hard to find a job. Can you just not do one?

Sadie Jones: It definitely matters that you find a job and it should be legal-related. I think it matters less 1L summer probably what the specific job is, because it's not going to most likely lead to a permanent position. So, I do think it should be legal-related. You definitely need to have a job, but I don't know that you need to worry too much about how it connects to your long-term goals if it's not right on track.

Alison Monahan: I think that's right. I mean, sometimes people say, "Oh, well, I want to work in BigLaw. I have to get a BigLaw job my first summer." That is pretty unlikely, let's be honest. I mean, it does happen. However, most people are not doing that. I think the key here is you want to do something that's going to get you some legal experience, really expose you to what the practice of law is actually like in some form or another, and it gives you something you can talk about in these interviews when you are applying for your 2L summer job, which more likely needs to be in that area that you actually want to work in, right?

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I think you need to see where this is going to fit on your resume and on your story, and have something to explain. And you want it to sound substantive what you're talking about, what you did over the summer. So, I think you want to be thinking about that when you're looking for your 1L job.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, but you can definitely talk about almost any type of experience you had in another legal interview. So it doesn't really matter if you're like, "Oh, I worked in the DA's office" or, "I've worked helping the public defenders" or, "I did nonprofit work" or whatever it is. Pretty much all that's fine.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. And I think there also might be a miss that you're sort of going to be judged on what it was. So, if it's public interest or it's government work, that people are going to think that's what you want to do, and if you do want to do BigLaw, "Oh, that won't look good." And that's just not true, because legal employers know that the 1L job market is sort of limited in terms of law firm jobs, that kind of thing. So, 1Ls do generally have these other kinds of experiences and I don't think it really matters in the long run for how they're looking at your story.

Alison Monahan: No. If anything, it just kind of gives you something else to talk about, too.

Sadie Jones: Definitely.

Alison Monahan: And then working for a judge is another popular option. Obviously, that doesn't mean that you want to be a judge.
Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Maybe you do, but you can't really plan for that, unfortunately. Alright, so if people are in this position, they're kind of like, "Alright, it's the spring. I maybe have taken some action [or haven't really taken some action], but nothing's really panned out yet. What should I be doing?"

Sadie Jones: Well, you might be in a variety of situations, so it sort of depends where you are. First, you need to make sure you have good materials. You have a resume and cover letter and probably a writing sample, and you have references or someone maybe is going to write you a letter of recommendation depending on what that requires. So you want to have all that ready to go.

Alison Monahan: Let's maybe pause there for a second.

Sadie Jones: Sure.

Alison Monahan: In case people aren't really that familiar. When you talk about a writing sample, what are you talking about?

Sadie Jones: So, a writing sample is something that you worked on in school. It isn't necessarily the same thing for everyone. It's a piece of writing that you did that is probably not more than 10 pages, and it's something that you can show them like what your legal writing skills are.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Basically, they're just looking for something you wrote. Can you do citations? Does it basically flow? If you're 1L, it's typically going to be probably whatever you wrote for your legal writing class, because you don't have much else. But you might pick a piece of that if it was a very long memo. This is just something you send to people if they ask for it, so they can see the basics of how you write.

Sadie Jones: And actually, if you're a 2L, you may use something that you wrote during your 1L summer if you're able to. So, your writing sample can change over time. But you should have one ready to go that you've made sure has no mistakes, it's perfect, it's ready to be sent off.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Typically, you're going to need to do some edits on whatever it is that you turned in. Hopefully that was as perfect as you could make it, but you need to make it even more perfect, particularly on things like citations. Lawyers are pretty picky and they're probably not going to really read the details of everything, but they are probably going to look and see if you can do the basics of citations, because they don't want to follow up and do that work for you later.
Sadie Jones: And I will say that not everyone reads the writing sample, but in my experience, they're sort of looking for the negative more than the positive.

Alison Monahan: Right, exactly.

Sadie Jones: So, they don't expect it to be brilliant.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. It's your 1L memo.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. But they will notice if there's something wrong, especially if maybe they're using it to double check because they have some kind of concerns, like maybe there was a grade issue, whatever it was. So, I would keep that in mind too.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. You want this to put your best foot forward, but it is kind of that thing. It's probably not going to get you the job, but it could prevent you from having the job.

Sadie Jones: Yes, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright, so you've got all your materials in order. Do you think it's too late at this point to be picky? Should people just sort of be applying to any possible job, or is it still fair to focus your efforts?

Sadie Jones: I still think it's the time of year where you should focus your efforts. I think that sometimes people sort of get desperate too early and start applying everywhere, and, like you said, don't have any focus. I think it's still the time of the year where you should have a plan and stick with it and kind of focus on certain areas. We've discussed working for a judge maybe, or a DA's office, public defender. These are all sort of popular 1L options, and I think that it is not too late. There may be a time of year where it is too late, but we're not there yet.

Alison Monahan: If you're listening to this in April, I would say, you just need to be applying to everything and take whatever shows up.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: But February, March, you're still good.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright. What are some resources that people can draw upon for leads if they maybe have some concept of what they want, but they have no idea where to go about finding those jobs?
Sadie Jones: I think first you should be talking to your career services – they're there to help you. A lot of students don't take advantage of, I think, that option. They may know of things, they can kind of point you in the right direction. There may be things listed there. Job fairs, I think, are great, and there are specific ones that may be focused on 1Ls or focused on a certain area – public interest, government work – certain areas that you may be looking.

Alison Monahan: I know there's a really big one, or at least there was, in New York City. And all the schools in New York sent their students to that job fair and there were lots and lots of people that people could talk with.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think most big markets have those types of things. Also, just the basic online things where you would look for any jobs – they'll have these listed, too.

Alison Monahan: What about NALP? Doesn't NALP have a directory that you can search if they're taking 1L applications?

Sadie Jones: NALP does. I will say it can be misleading because a lot of firms may put that they are... I think it's listed as "considering 1Ls" or something like that. So, a lot of firms maybe will put "Yes" because they think it makes them look better, but they're not really considering 1Ls.

Alison Monahan: Maybe once every five years they hire the friend of somebody who's a partner or something.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And actually, this might be a time to talk just about this because NALP does govern different things, but it's mostly law firms and bigger law firms. So, law firms who are hiring 1Ls are generally hiring them from schools where they want to recruit later on, and then maybe schools where they haven't had someone in a while, they really want to build that up. So, a 1L from a school's an ambassador to a law firm, and I think that sometimes 1Ls don't realize that and they sort of consider it the same as a 2L. "They're just hiring me, I have good grades, I'm from the area", whatever it is. It's sort of a different criteria. Generally, law firms are looking for 1Ls that are really involved in clubs and different things on campus. It's just sometimes a different profile than a 2L, and there's very little 1L hiring at the BigLaw firms. So I just think that law students should keep that in mind.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Very rarely, your school might be hosting a 1L OCI thing. But generally speaking, this is not going to be a realistic option for most people at this point.
Sadie Jones: Yeah, so I just don't think that students should waste too much time on that route. Now, there may be smaller firms or mid-range firms that would hire you, so that's another route to go and look them up and just apply to them.

Alison Monahan: I know somebody who wanted to work in a city that she'd never worked in before, and she knew she wanted to be there for her 2L job. And so she used her 1L job basically to reposition herself in that city and just applied to every small firm – probably not solo practice, but anyone with two and up type of thing. And found somebody who was willing to employ her, I don't think for very much money, if any. But that's another option, if you can just pound the pavement, send out a ton of resumes in a city where your school is not, or something like that.

Sadie Jones: I think that is a great point. And if you are interested in being in a different city and you don't have any other connection, or even if you do have another connection, really you should be there your 1L summer. You should focus on that.

Alison Monahan: It's definitely not going to hurt.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, for sure.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I feel like these jobs, you'll find them in all kinds of places. So even these random things like Craigslist or something, you might find somebody who's looking for maybe a legal assistant or something for their summer. What about personal connections? Do you feel like that ever really works, just telling people you're looking for a job?

Sadie Jones: I think that really does work. And I think it's surprising to people, but, like you said, it can be really random. And so, I would definitely make sure that everyone you know in your network... And you can do that personally. There are obviously options on social media and LinkedIn and things like that. But I think you should make it clear that this is what you're looking for and definitely, if you have an area of focus that you could even reference, I think that's fine. You're just looking for a legal job for your 1L summer. I think you should let everyone you know know. You don't know if they're going to have someone else that they can connect you with. So kind of what we've talked about before, in terms of just general networking – that should be on your radar right now.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I remember when I was in my first graduate school in architecture, I sort of did that and just told everybody I'm looking, and then a friend's mother actually ended up reaching out to a friend of hers who was hiring people for the summer for this architecture position. And literally it was like, "Oh, call this person. She'll give you a job."
Sadie Jones: Wow.

Alison Monahan: So I called the person and they gave me a job. Just one of those things.

Sadie Jones: And I bet you never would have predicted that that is how it was going to happen.

Alison Monahan: No, no, not at all. It was one of those. I think I went and talked to her mother who was also an architect. She was like, "Well, we're not really hiring for the summer at this level, but hey, let me look through my cards and see. I'm sure somebody wants a student to help them." And yeah, sure enough, she called me back and was like, "Hey. Yep, call this person. She wants to hire you." I'm like, "Great!" I don't think law stuff's necessarily that easy, but you never know. Maybe if it's a small firm or somebody's looking for somebody just to help for the summer, that definitely can happen.

Sadie Jones: I completely agree. And I think the key here is really to take multiple routes at the same time. So, you should be doing this while also talking to career services and applying to things online. And if you do have a focus, you know you really want to work in the government in some way, you just look on all those websites and apply. It's going to say what you need to do to send in your stuff.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think people definitely should talk to their career services because they are an under-utilized resource. If you go in and you tell them, "I want to work in a government job", they are going to be able to tell you what databases to look in.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. There are some things where you can apply once and it'll put you in for a bunch of different jobs. So, I think there are ways to do this that they can explain to you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think flexibility is the key. You don't want to just be applying everywhere, but you also don't want to get too picky and decide that you're only going to take a firm job that pays you $3,000 plus a week. That's probably not realistic.

Sadie Jones: Yes, 100%. Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, let's switch gears a little bit and talk about some common problems and solutions. So, let's say that you've sent out a bunch of resumes and you're just not getting any responses or interviews. What do you do? What's the problem?
Sadie Jones: I think there could be a few problems here. First, I would think that maybe you'd want to have somebody else look at your resume and your materials, your cover letter. Is there anything going on that makes it confusing for people?

Alison Monahan: Right. Do you have typos...

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly. For sure, if there's just basic, some things are incorrect. Because a lot of employers just would ding you for having typos on your resume and they wouldn't even consider you. So that's first. And then just maybe your resume sort of reads in a way that it's not clear what direction you're going, for whatever reason. I would just have an outside person, who maybe hasn't looked at it before, review your materials and say, "Is there anything here that I think is the reason that it's not happening?" And then I think the other part of this might be where you're applying – that it's not broad enough, it doesn't really fit with your background in whatever way. I think there are some times where people just don't have the right targets.

Alison Monahan: Right. Yeah, and one thing too to think about is, is your resume really in the format that legal employers are looking for? Because if you've come out of undergrad or even from a different career, there may be different expectations, so it might just not look right.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I also have noticed there can be something where people are trying to get creative with their resumes. It seems to be a new trend, maybe in the last year or two. Don't do that. I don't think legal employers want to see these charts and colors and just strange things. They really want it to be just a plain old resume that I can read, that makes sense, that has no typos, that tells me the different jobs you've done.

Alison Monahan: Right. Basically, probably starts with your education and moves to your jobs, unless you have a very good reason to do that, and it's one page and whatever. So, I agree with you. Have somebody else take an objective look at this, and then listen to what they tell you.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Alright. What if I've gotten some interviews or some interest, but I haven't actually gotten a job yet?

Sadie Jones: So, I think here, you probably have to look at your interviewing skills. Now, there could be a reason you haven't heard back from them – that they just haven't made a decision yet. And I think it's always fine to follow up. So that's probably first thing.
Alison Monahan: Right. Have you actually been rejected or you just haven't actually heard? If it's been a while after the interview and you haven't heard, I think go ahead and reach out and be like, "Hey, I'm just following up on this", etcetera.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, that's completely fine. You don't want to harass them, but it's fine to follow up once or twice. I think there's also a piece of this where you don't know what else is going on there. I think students sometimes sort of make up a story in their head of all these things that have happened, or the reason that they don't like them – lots of things that aren't true. Yeah, maybe you were second choice and they're waiting on somebody else – that's okay, that's life. And maybe you still will get it and that's fine.

Alison Monahan: Or maybe the whole firm's at trial and this is in a pile of stuff to deal with later.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. There are so many reasons, so I think following up is great. But I also think this is an opportunity if you're actually getting rejected a lot, and you got the interview – so your stuff was okay enough to get the interview – to evaluate your interview skills to make sure that you're telling a cohesive story, to make sure that you're conveying why you want to work there. So I think this is a chance for some self-work.

Alison Monahan: Right, totally agree. I think you don't want to be too hard on yourself, but you also want to recognize it like, "Oh, maybe this didn't go so well and I can do better in the future".

Sadie Jones: Exactly, especially if this is happening a lot.

Alison Monahan: Right, yeah. If something happens once or twice – okay, fine, things happen. If it's a trend and you've done a lot of interviews and you've got no offers, there's probably something going on.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. I've also noticed, I think sometimes people are unrealistic about how many applications it takes to get a job.

Alison Monahan: For sure.

Sadie Jones: So someone, let's say they were very discouraged maybe, and wow, they sent out 10 resumes and haven't heard anything back. That actually is not a lot. It's very few.

Alison Monahan: It's not a lot. I sent hundreds, literally. I recall hundreds, and I think out of those hundreds, got one interview.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, so don't get discouraged if the sample size is really small.
Alison Monahan: And I think that particular interview ended up rejecting me eventually anyway. Well, I already had a different job, but it literally took two months for them to even reject me, not that I was angry about that. Alright. So what if I do actually have a job offer – whew! – but it’s not exactly what I want to do or it doesn't pay or it doesn't pay a lot?

Sadie Jones: Well, first of all, a lot of these 1L jobs don’t pay, and definitely don’t pay a lot, so I wouldn’t expect that they do. I know that this can be hard financially, but really, the ideal is that you don't need to worry about that and you just are doing the job and kind of thinking about it as part of your education. That may not be doable for everybody, but I think that’s just a reality of 1L jobs in this market. But if it's not exactly what you want, it does kind of depend how late it is. Like we've said, if it's February and you really feel like you have a lot of other possibilities, you have a lot of places you still need to apply to and it's really far off, then maybe you want to take that chance and wait for something else. But I will say that nothing is perfect. And I think if it's a legal job and it's in the place you want, city-wise, and you feel like you are going to be able to talk about it in your interviews, I think there's something to be said for walking that in and being okay with it not being perfect.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I would probably say unless you have some other pretty strong possibilities – like you already have an interview set up and it's your dream job or something – then I think maybe you ask for extra time, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. I think I agree with you that generally speaking, you’re better off with that bird in the hand, so you can just start focusing on the rest of the semester rather than focusing on some ideal job that may or may not ever appear for you.

Sadie Jones: Exactly, because I think 1L year, you want to make sure that you are number one, focused on classes and doing well.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and this can get pretty distracting if you are still applying in April and panicking. Alright, final scenario. So I actually have several offers and I’m thinking maybe I want to split my summer. Do you think this is a good idea?

Sadie Jones: I think this depends. I am very anti-splitting your 2L summer. I think that's a bad idea. But your 1L summer, I think that there are situations where it may make sense to split it. I would want to make sure that you’re spending enough time in each place that you sort of make relationships, are actually doing work, again, have something to talk about. But I think that there are situations where that might be okay depending on what the experience is, because that may give you more to talk about. Like I said, most likely the 1L summer isn’t something where you’re going to get a permanent job offer from it, which is the reason that I would say not to split during your 2L summer. So, I think that this is something that may work for people.
Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think sometimes you do have more flexibility than you think. I'm recalling a podcast I did recently with Carla Luna, who actually switched. She had a position lined up as I recall, and then got a better position, and then essentially called up the first place and was like, "Hey, I'd really like to keep working for you in some capacity. Can I split?" And they were like, "Oh, why don't you do an externship with us next fall?" And so, that ended up working out great, because if I remember correctly, it was a firm position and gets paid over the summer, and then do the job that she'd wanted to do anyway as an externship. So I thought that was pretty clever, just by asking.

Sadie Jones: That is. And I think it can't really hurt to ask about these things. As long as you're doing it in a way where you're not letting anyone down or have committed to something that's sort of leaving them in the lurch or anything like that. But I do think what you said is accurate, that your 1L summer really is sort of a time to be more flexible, so you should appreciate that.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think you can use it to explore options that maybe you find interesting, but you don't think you'd want to do straight off the bat. Like we said, people just don't really judge that carefully, like what you did. I understand, you basically probably took whatever job came your way and you learned something from it, and then it's all about the story that you tell, about what you learned and how great this was and what a fantastic experience it was. Hopefully, you make some good connections, hopefully you possibly get a writing sample. These are all the things that you're getting out of this job that are not just like, "Oh, it's a direct line to what I want to do when I graduate".

Sadie Jones: And I think there's some freedom in that, that you're not necessarily waiting for a job offer. I also think in a way it can be a time to explore something that you're not necessarily thinking that you want to do long-term, but you wanted to learn about or you wanted to see.

Alison Monahan: Or just seems interesting.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, and I think that's a perfectly fine thing to explain to people.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, this comes up sometimes with clerkships because people sometimes say, "Oh well..." Judges are very different on this. Some judges absolutely will not hire someone who worked for them before, and then other ones love to do it. So sometimes people get really worked up about, "Oh, I've heard that this judge won't hire their externs, so maybe I shouldn't work for them this summer". And it's like, life is short. If somebody offers you a job and the judge seems nice, I would probably just take it. You can't predict. And also, if you do a good job, presumably they're going to refer you to their other judge friends. They all talk to each other. Then other judges love to hire people that intern for them, so it just totally depends.
Sadie Jones: And I think even if they don’t, you never know what else that's going to lead to.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you just really don't know, basically. So, find something to do and I would say don't stress over the exact details of it that much. Alright, before we wrap up, what if nothing is working? At what point should you really start to panic here?

Sadie Jones: Well, I think around the time we talked about earlier – April, and even there are people in May who don't have anything. I think that's the time where you just need to lock something in. And I do think there's a point in the year where it may not even be that legal related, but you need a job.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: And so, you just take it, because you can't have a blank on your resume. And I do think there are jobs for everyone, especially 1L jobs where you’re not getting paid a lot of times. So I think there's always something for everyone, and that is where maybe you even need to work for a professor. I think there are other things. And also, again, talk to career services: "I just need something."

Alison Monahan: Like, "What can you find for me or help me find?" And I think sometimes you can do things like look at the Bar Association. Do they have a serious pro bono project you could get involved in over the summer? I think that at some point becomes completely legitimate, because then at least it's like, "Oh, I spent the summer doing lots of pro bono work on this topic, and here's what I learned." That is fine.

Sadie Jones: Definitely. I think the only thing that isn't fine is not doing anything.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I wouldn't encourage summer study abroad, either.

Sadie Jones: No.

Alison Monahan: We've already talked about that. Yeah, so find a professor, find something. Again, throw yourself at the mercy of career services – basically be like, "I will take anything. What can you help me find?"

Sadie Jones: And there is something – that's the other thing. There is no reason to ever completely lose hope, because everyone finds something.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think you just have to keep trying at that point and be very flexible. And again, it doesn't even have to be 40 hours a week. Maybe you work 20 hours a week, and then you work as a barista or whatever on the side, or drive for Uber. There are ways to make this work. You just need something on your resume.
Sadie Jones: And no one's really going to know that. It's not going to be an issue later.

Alison Monahan: They're not going to ask you how many hours you worked.

Sadie Jones: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: They're never going to know.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: So, find something; don't panic yet. But if you're listening to this in April, find something really fast.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, with that, unfortunately we are out of time. Thank you so much for joining us.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. For more career help and the opportunity to work one-on-one with us, including finding a summer job, check out 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. If you have any questions or comments, please 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. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!

RESOURCES:

CareerDicta
NALP
Craigslist
Podcast Episode 24: Job Search Basics for 1Ls
Podcast Episode 27: Job Interview Basics
Podcast Episode 120: Preparing for the 1L Job Hunt (with ex-BigLaw Recruiter Sadie Jones)
Podcast Episode 203: Job Search Q&A (w/ex-BigLaw Recruiter Sadie Jones)
Podcast Episode 223: 1L Year at Harvard Law (w/guest Carla Luna)