



Alison Monahan: Welcome back to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're excited to have Hamada Zahawi here with us to talk about law school applications. Your Law School Toolbox host today is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience, so that you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be. 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 to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're excited to have Hamada Zahawi here with us to talk about law school applications.

Hamada Zahawi: Thank you for having me on the Law School Toolbox. This is a great opportunity and I'm always excited to talk about law school admissions.

Alison Monahan: Oh, who doesn't love law school admissions? Well, to start us off, can you give our listeners just a little bit of background so they've got some context on you?

Hamada Zahawi: Sure. So, I applied and went to law school at UC Berkeley, but that process was just so difficult. And we'll probably talk a little bit about this on the podcast. It's a very difficult part for me, and largely because of the LSAT. I spent a lot of time figuring out how I can still try to get into a top law school, and all came down to the application. And because of that experience, fast forward a couple of years after I applied, I started [Write Track Admissions](#), really with the goal of helping those applicants, especially those who do not do well on the LSAT and still want to stand a fighting chance to get into a top law school based on their application.

Alison Monahan: Awesome. And if people want to learn more about what you do and reach out, how can they do that?

Hamada Zahawi: They could go to our website, www.WriteTrackAdmissions.com. I believe you probably put the website in the show notes. We have an [Instagram account](#), we also have a [YouTube account](#), so we can try to put some of this stuff in little bite sizes for your free viewing pleasure.

Alison Monahan: Awesome. We will definitely link to all of that in the show notes and people can check it out. Well, you mentioned just now that you had a strong GPA, but not really the best LSAT. How did you parlay that into admission at Berkeley, because that's not the easiest place to get into?



Hamada Zahawi: And I have to say, I do not want to just let you guys think that I'm one of those guys that's super humble in the fact that when it came to the LSAT, I got like a 165 and I think I didn't do well. No, no, I did dismally bad. In fact, I did progressively worse. In fact, I took the LSAT in December. Didn't do well to the point that I canceled it back then. This is in 2003. You couldn't get a sense of your score. You pretty much had to either accept it or decline it. So I fast forward, I took the LSAT again in June and got a 155 in the LSAT. I then retook it again in December after I've completed my whole application as a Hail Mary. I'm like, "Look, you know what? I'm going to do everything I can. I'm going to give it one last shot." And in my mind, the way I thought about it is I said, if I was a law school, it could cut both ways. If I take it once and don't do well, and then focus on the application, the law school may say, "Yeah, it was an anomaly. The person's lazy, they didn't try their hardest, they should have taken it again." Possibly. That's one way of thinking about it. For me, I was like, I want to exhaust that possibility. So it could have cut both ways, because the opposite way is, "Wow, this guy took it three times. He did progressively worse. This guy really doesn't know what he's talking about." And I did worse. So I got, I think, a 153 in January, which was really catastrophic for me because I really thought I had a fighting chance, based on my application that I submitted. And when I got that score, I thought it was like a nail in the coffin. And shortly thereafter, I started getting the rejections – Chicago, USC, my alma mater UCLA, Michigan. They all started pouring in. And around February, I still remember because I just said, "You know what? I'm done with this. I'm going to take off." And I went to Brazil for carnival. Again, I was very young at the time. And as I was coming back, I remember landing in the airport, my roommate called me, he said, "You got a fat envelope." I'm like, "Really? Who's it from?" He said, "Berkeley Law School." Berkeley had been one of my top four law schools after Harvard, Yale, Columbia. And I got admitted. It wasn't a wait list, it was a straight admission. I got the call from the dean at the time, Dean Ed Tom. We became good friends afterwards. And I felt like I owed it to Berkeley because they really took a chance with me, because the truth is, Alison, I applied to 17 law schools and got into one.

Alison Monahan: Wow. What do you think made the difference there?

Hamada Zahawi: I would say the application, and when I say application, I really do mean the application. The personal statement took me about four months to write. The diversity statement, likewise took probably two to three months to write. The addendum, I revised it I can't even tell you how many times to make it as airtight and less about excuses and more explanations and ownership. The resume and then what was inside the resume, because I thought that was so, so important to really be able – hopefully we'll have a chance to talk about this



today – to live my story. Because I took two years out of undergrad and because when I graduated undergrad, I had no idea I was planning to apply to law school, I really had to do whatever I could to create an authentic enough story that I could then talk about in the personal statement, in the diversity statement, the addendum, and so forth. So, that total application package – how much time it took me to create it, how much thought went into it – I think really made the difference.

Alison Monahan: I'm just curious here, do you think Berkeley is a place that maybe looks beyond that a little bit? I went there for a different graduate degree, so I know it's a little bit of a quirky place. I'd imagine there are certain schools that are maybe less numbers driven than certain other places. Is that accurate?

Hamada Zahawi: Yes. I don't know about Berkeley anymore. Remember, I matriculated in 2004, graduated in 2008, because in the middle of law school, I took a year out and did a master's degree in England, in Cambridge. I took an extra year, so it was four years. But back then I really felt like there was probably more emphasis. I think it was still state funded, so there was still a push to be less profit driven, because they had state funding. And because of that, so many of my colleagues ended up being DAs and PDs going into non-profit work, doing a lot of pro bono stuff, going into international institutions and less law firms, which I think has changed. And because of that, and to maintain its ranking and so forth, I think the LSAT has been a lot more of a focus for Berkeley and a lot of other schools than before.

Alison Monahan: I think that's fair. I was looking at some statistics today on some of the LSAT averages at the top schools, and they are really high now, like 173, 174. I mean, they are crazy high. Well, let's talk about that a little later, I mean what people can do if they're facing down not the greatest LSAT ever. But I want to hear more about this idea of the story. So, why is that important and how can people figure out, A) what story they want to tell or should be telling, and B) how can they make it credible?

Hamada Zahawi: So again, it all comes down to – and the word has been thrown around a lot – authenticity. But the idea is that you want to go to law school for the right reasons as much as possible. Obviously a lot of people have no idea what they're going to end up in. If you ask me what I did in law school, what I focused on and what I did in the course of my life, it is beyond incongruent. As Steve Jobs says, you have to look backwards to see how the dots connect, because it just didn't make sense at the time. It still, in some ways, doesn't make a lot of sense of how kind of everything panned out. That being said, what I figured is, look, it's 2002 when I was thinking about taking the LSAT. But I really didn't have much of a storyline. I had my background, my upbringing and so forth, so that



made it easy for the diversity statement. Because in the diversity statement you're not trying to explain why law school. You're explaining how you're going to add value to a school that turns out to be law school. That turns out to be about critical thinking, thinking about policies, thinking about people, thinking about justice. So, it's less about law school and more about being in an environment that really sparks that kind of discussion and debate. That's the diversity statement. That's not that hard because you're really going to talk about it from your life experience. But the personal statement as to why you want to go to law school – that's a different animal. And that really is, why law school, why now, why you, why them. And for me, I didn't have much of a discussion. And so what I ended up doing is after I graduated, about eight months later, I got a job with a law firm so that I can get some legal experience, cut my teeth on some real law, so when I say I want to go to law school, it's actually based on something. I also started doing a lot of non-profit related work, especially on the international front, because I knew my personal statement was going to be in that angle. So I created the scope of where I want it to be kind of generally. I would say it's naive to say, but it was obviously on the international law perspective, maybe constitutional international law. And a lot of people, I don't think really understand what we mean by "international law". But in my mind, I was like, I want to do something that is comparing constitutions, that is really talking about comparing policies and legal frameworks between two countries – my country of origin and the United States, as a hyphenated identity. I created that theme. And when I say that I lived my story is every single opportunity I could have, I embraced it, knowing that each one of those pieces was going to fill an element of continuity that would tell your story. And Alison, let me quickly say just for our listeners and hopefully viewers – I live in Santa Monica. I'm right behind Hollywood, so I always think about the storyline. So you're thinking about the storyline. How does it start? Alison, you've seen this a hundred times. Let's use Star Wars as an example. You've got character development, story development, the crescendo, a decision needs to be made. In comes a guide, the guide helps you in the decision you've made, and hopefully to success. Again, using Star Wars – the Jedi, having all kinds of issues, decides to become a Jedi. In comes Yoda, Yoda helps him along the route, and then he defeats the evil empire. Okay, same thing here. Think about your life story.

Alison Monahan: Same, exactly the same thing. You're going to go to law school and defeat the evil empire. There you go.

Hamada Zahawi: And the guide is the law school who's helping you along the route to succeed. And so, you want to think about that plan, and then you want each one of those lived experiences to fit that, so when you sit down and brainstorm your essay, it all comes together beautifully. And what doesn't get included in the personal



statement can be put in the diversity or the addendum, or the catch-all – the resume.

Alison Monahan: I think that's great advice, I always talk about the story too. It's funny, I have a post on my original website from quite a long time ago using the exact same framework of, "Why here? Why now? Why you?" These are the questions you need to be answering, for this to make any sense. So yeah, I think it's interesting your point, that you can kind of develop that story. In my case, I had a really odd background, so for me, it was more about how does this make any sense that this would be my next step? I went from Sociology to Architecture to Programming. And so I kind of took a step back and said, "Okay, what about this would make sense? Alright, I want to do tech law and tech policy." I didn't necessarily take those classes, although ironically I ended up practicing as a patent litigator, despite taking no IP classes. So maybe the story did make sense. But I think there are those two ways to go about it – either you work with what you have, if you have a lot to work with, or you kind of create it if you don't.

Hamada Zahawi: Exactly. Your example right now is fantastic. Another one I give people is a client we were helping that had gone to the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandise or whatever it's called, FIDM, and she wanted to go to law school. And I'm like, "I don't even know how to even construct this", but I kept digging deeper and we had two options. One was to go into, again, trademarks, copyright, because it's fashion. One was to go into employment and providing safe environments for those people that are in the garment industry. And the final path, I believe was something about helping small businesses who are in fashion to avoid bankruptcy because they don't know how to deal with the legalities of starting businesses and so forth. So, we really kind of played that up and one of those avenues fit the trajectory that she was going down.

Alison Monahan: I think that's great, because really, any of those could've worked. And I think that's kind of the point. Sometimes people think "Oh, I have to have the one perfect statement or the one perfect thing they're looking for", but really, I feel like law schools are actually just looking for something that kind of makes sense and is sort of interesting. I don't know, what's your opinion?

Hamada Zahawi: I think that's exactly right. Look, at the end of the day, they know that people are going to pivot many times. They also know that people that go to law school don't practice law thereafter; not everyone does. And if they do, probably within, I don't know, three, five, 10 years, they're already out of it. So, it's not inconceivable that people will change their course. I think they just want to see that this wasn't a haphazard decision, that this is not a 31 flavors – like this is the flavor of the month that right now they decide to go to law school, and tomorrow they do policy, and the day after do something else, and then they



fail out of law school. They want to know you're committed to law. They want to know that you have certain traits and attributes that will help you succeed in law – strong oratory skills, strong critical writing and analytical skills, a strong sense of empathy and community. These are key qualities that they're going to look for, so you want to make sure that those are included in there.

Alison Monahan: Right. A large part of being a lawyer is telling a compelling story about something, so if you can't tell that in your application, this is probably not the right fit for you. Alright, well, let's dive into a bit of the nitty-gitty of some of the pieces of the application. So, you've already kind of addressed this, but what are you thinking about when somebody comes to you, to work with you, and you're like, "Alright, what are we going to write the personal statement about?" How do people start to figure that out?

Hamada Zahawi: So I think the first thing we do as a company is, it's a lot about ideation and brainstorming. So, before we even get on a call with them and say, "Hey, let's brainstorm your personal statement", we give them a questionnaire that's really in-depth, that tries their – I'm not going to say it's like psychometric in that way, but we get them into the mode of thinking. What gets them excited? What really activates them? What gets them to the flow state? What kind of things are they really passionate about? What were the classes that they took in college that informed their trajectory for law school? So we give them this pretty in-depth questionnaire, they fill it out, and the expert and them start going through it. Well, excuse me, the expert goes through, he gets a better sense of the person's background. And then there's a conversation. And I swear to you, Alison, if I could write a book on it, I would, but I do not believe that there is one surefire way of basically pulling out the personal statement and the story from someone. It is purely and utterly intuitive, which is why the motto of our company is, "Discover your story. Get admitted." There is something to be said about the fact that it's an intuitive process, and you've got to have a strong sense of empathy and compassion as a company or as an expert or consultant to slowly pull that out. So if I was sitting with you, Alison, and you were telling me, "Yeah, I started doing Sociology and shifted over to Architecture, and now I'm thinking about law" – I'm going to have to dig really deep and find that thread. And it's on me to find that thread. And once you find it, I swear to you, Alison, and you remember this – you got goosebumps. There was something that must've said, "Wow, yeah, that's probably it." And it doesn't have to be the be-all-end-all keystone, but there is something that gives you a little bit of like, "Wow, this is an awesome story." And then putting it onto paper. And your job is to do the best you can on the application. The rest, you've got to leave it to a higher power that's going to let you get in, because it really comes down to so many factors – the time of year you're applying, what your ethnic background is, what your major is, where did you go to school, what were your grades?



There're so many factors that happen in one year that are completely different from another year. So you just have to do the best you can on that personal statement, but spend time on it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. We often say you control the input, you don't control the output. We work with people taking the bar and things like that, or law school exams, and you control what you're putting into this process, but you don't control the output. You have to let go of that. Alright, tell me a little about some other essays. You've mentioned the diversity, an addendum, maybe some school-specific stuff. What is even the difference between these and should everyone be doing these, or just certain people? How does this work?

Hamada Zahawi: I will always say, "Look, some schools are not going to ask you for the diversity statement." I say "Do it", because people are like, "Well, I'm Caucasian and I grew up in an affluent neighborhood, there weren't that many people of color around me." I'm going to be like, "That's not diversity only." Diversity is a bazillion factors – sexual orientation, medical tribulation, international life experiences, volunteer experiences. There're all kinds of things. Maybe you took care of an elderly parent or a sick person. There're so many different variants of it. So, I believe that everyone should, because again, what did we just say? Diversity statement is how you can add value to the class. Personal statement is, why law school? So, how do you add value to a community of individuals that are highly motivated and like debating? Think about that. I firmly believe that the diversity statement is mission-critical and you should do it.

The personal statement, the best way I can do it – and let me quickly say this, Alison – I have something called the "ABC of the personal statement". The same thing kind of applies to the diversity statement, but it's tweaked a little bit. So with the personal statement, the ABCs are Attention-grabber, Background, Career, D is for Direction, E is for Educational institution, and F is for Finale. A – Attention-grabber – pull them in, lure them in. It's like a movie. We just talked about it – character development, story development, crescendo, and so forth. So how do you pull them in? What's the action sequence? How are you going to get them excited? Then go for B – Background. Now that you've told them and you've kind of teased them about the fact that you want to go to law school, now let's take a step back. Think about that movie – now it fades to black and now you've got the character, and you're developing the character. We're now starting to fall in love with Alison. Why? Because she's younger and she's doing Sociology, she now wants to know about human dynamics and so forth. So we start seeing that, where does that come from, right? So we start creating that root, that construct of who that person is, their narrative. From Background, we go into Career. Now that we know what you want to do and who you are, or teased you with what you want to do, and now we know about who you are,



your values – now we figure out now how did your values actually come to life? Authenticity, living by what you believe. And that's C – Career. And when I say career, I say academic career, it could be extracurricular career. It could be anything that you are doing that's in manifestation of your values. Now that we figured out who you are and what you've done, we need to figure out where you want to go. That's D – Direction, that's the crescendo. And with D – Direction, now you say, "Given what I've done, given where I want to go, I can only do it with law school. And here's why, and here's what I want to do." That takes you to E – Educational institution, which then I use CLAP. I know this is going to sound nuts, I love mnemonics. I'm sure you do too, Alison.

Alison Monahan: Actually, I hate them, to be honest. I'm a visual learner, but... Never made sense to me.

Hamada Zahawi: That's the only way I passed the bar, it was through mnemonics.

Alison Monahan: I'm all about the colored flowcharts.

Hamada Zahawi: There you go. I wish I could think that way. So with CLAP, it's Community, Location, Academics, and Personal. So you want to cover those core areas of why that school, using those four prongs. And then, finally, Finale brings the whole story back full circle. That's been the secret to success of how we get the personal statement created, designed, outlined, and thought through. Let me just take one part of that, which is E for Educational institution. You asked me "Why our school", right? As one of the essays. Diversity statement, personal statement, why our school? That is a "why our school" essay, but just shortened into one paragraph, the penultimate paragraph of your statement. So, you are just going to amplify that for the school, and we know now, a lot of schools are asking for this: "Why our school?" Again, community, everything around you that's outside the classroom, location. NYU is extremely different to Cornell Law, right? Out in the middle of nowhere, versus completely NYU smack in the middle of the city. Academics, professors, centers, research, classes, all that kind of stuff. And then finally, the personal, which is like the "je-ne-sais-quoi". I went to Berkeley. So if I had a kid who wants to go to school, they can say, "My dad went to Berkeley Law." If you took a class at Berkeley Law, if you knew someone there that talked to you about it – that's your "je-ne-sais-quoi", that's your X Factor. And you want to put that in because that also creates closer proximity and makes you a little bit different.

Alison Monahan: It also makes it look like you actually tried and you're not just sending this application off to 20 different schools that are sort of in the same range that you think you might get accepted at. Everybody wants to feel special.



- Hamada Zahawi: Exactly, exactly.
- Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, talk to me a little bit about the resume, because I think that could be an underlooked piece of this. People think like, "Oh, it doesn't really matter." They just put whatever in it. How does that play into the application or the story as well?
- Hamada Zahawi: It's your catch-all. So, if you don't include something in your applications, in your addendum or your personal statement, your diversity statement, and you're like, "Man, I want to shove this in somewhere" – it's going to be in your resume. But you always want to still bring it back to those core qualities. Well, I'll ask you, Alison. I said three of them, I'm thinking I'm missing one. What do law schools look for?
- Alison Monahan: Oh gosh. I mean, they're looking for a lot of things, but basically why here, why now, why me? I don't know, you tell me the rest. You're the applications guy.
- Hamada Zahawi: Alright, but if I asked you, what skills are they looking for?
- Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, they're looking for obviously critical reasoning skills, logical reasoning skills, writing, speaking, all of the things that lawyers do.
- Hamada Zahawi: Okay. So, you want to make sure that your resume screams those. If you've got anything that you've done in terms of research, anything that you've done in terms of publications, anything that you've shown that you have had leadership, so that you've kind of talked about that empathy, that compassion, that kind of interconnectedness, team player, anything about oratory skills, any debate or anything like that. Those are key qualities you want to make sure your resume screams. You don't want to put any random thing and just shove it in there and be like, "They'll figure it out." The way that we've structured it is, education, professional, volunteer, catch-all activities, any certificates, licenses, anything to that effect. And then finally ending it with skills and interests. And then depends if you don't have any publications, you don't put any publications there, but that's the way that you would shape it up.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think the most key thing here is, this really needs to be professional. Sometimes people think they should have every job. I was a lifeguard for a while – that probably didn't make my law school resume.
- Hamada Zahawi: But Alison, if you talk about being a lifeguard and then somebody drowned and there was a liability or something like that, you bring it in.



Alison Monahan: Sure, of course. It could. Yeah. If I was writing my personal statement about the time I had to rescue a child and then went to court to talk about it – definitely, I want to be able to really flesh out that lifeguard position to make sure... Again, it needs to be credible. These are people who look at evidence.

Hamada Zahawi: Exactly. Exactly right.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, let's shift gears a little bit. Tell me about the recommenders, because I know that can trip some people up, particularly maybe if they've been out of school for a while, or they didn't really have super close relationships. What are some of the things that you think about here?

Hamada Zahawi: So, you want to for sure for law school have at least one academic recommender. Now, some people, it's taken them a long time or they're applying way afterwards. It's still absolutely mission critical that there's somebody that can attest to the fact that we have those key qualities that you just said – critical reasoning and writing, oratory skills, ability to contribute to class discussions, and so forth. We have to have at least one academic. If you're in school, you can get two. The third recommender could be a professional, or it could be a volunteer that you go for. So now that you've identified the world – two academics and a volunteer, or two academics and a professional, two academics and a coach, extracurricular, now you start digging a little bit deeper. You say, "Okay, who can I ask for that would be a recommender?" Well, ideally you want a professor, not a TA. Ideally, but if you had a choice between a professor who doesn't know you and a TA that literally worked with you maybe two or three classes, you go for the TA. But the reality is, you could influence a TA for your benefit. And so that's why you want to make sure that professors are a better person to go for. When you do identify that professor and you've got that relationship with the professor, my advice is you go to the professor with your resume. You go to the professor with your resume, with your transcript, and hopefully a draft of your personal statement. Present that to them, so that they have an idea of a background of what exactly is going on. Ideally go to them in person rather than just emailing it, if you have the opportunity. If you don't, then email it. But that way they have a little bit of a background of what's going on. You can also create a brag sheet, where you can outline, "Look, in your class, I did really well. This is what happened, I also did this project." Provide them with some bullet points that you know they're going to take, and boom! Plug it in and work your letter of recommendation. So, those are some key qualities, key things you want to think about. Obviously, after they submit, you want to thank them; after you get admitted, you want to thank them. And if you don't hear from them or you look at your LSAC and you don't see it uploaded, then you want to basically nudge them to make sure that it gets done. I think when I applied, I had five in mind, three I went to, and two that



were standby, just in case one of the other ones, and I had to quickly pull the ripcord, I was able to pull one of those guys in.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that makes sense. You want to have a few more people lined up than you think you're going to need, because not everyone is completely reliable. So you don't want to be in that situation where you can't submit the application because you've only got one or something like that. Alright, well, before we wrap up, tell me a little about interviews, because that was not something that was a thing when I was applying, but I have heard they're becoming more common.

Hamada Zahawi: Sure. So, some schools are making it so that you have to interview if you're selected from a group of candidates. Some schools, like Northwestern, I think they provide you as optional to anyone. Some schools are using a mechanism – I think it's called Kira or something like that – where they ask you a question on camera and you have one minute to answer the question, without necessarily a complete preparation. I mean, you just have to kind of think about what kind of questions they're going to ask you.

Alison Monahan: That sounds horrible.

Hamada Zahawi: Yeah. I think they only give you one minute to prep and one minute to actually respond. But they want to catch you so that you don't have somebody else kind of doing it for you. I think as lawyers, we need to be quick on our feet, so I think it's a good exercise, but it could be quite daunting to people.

Alison Monahan: It sounds stressful. It sounds like a good idea, but it feels like it's going to create a lot of stress for the people doing it, even if it's not really probably that big of a deal for them.

Hamada Zahawi: Yeah. And I don't know, I can't tell you definitively, Alison, if some schools say, "Listen, if you screw it up in your interview, you're out." I think it's just kind of, "We want to make sure that the person's okay." And hopefully I'll give you in the show notes, the [mastery course](#) that we created for law school admissions. And in there you'll see a little bit more in-depth on the interview. I think I have a whole chapter on it. But there're three things you want to think about – know yourself, know the interviewer, know the school. You want to make sure that you nail those three fundamentals down. And you ask that question at the beginning: Why you, why now, why us? Each one of those fits into of those categories. And the one about "know your interviewer" at the end... So, know yourself, know the school, know your interviewer. If I know you're going to be interviewing me, Alison, and I'm applying to your school, I want to know you did Sociology, I want to know you course corrected from Architecture, went into



law school. I want to kind of know what you're doing now, because then I could feel and change and code switch based on the conversation we could have, especially the questions that I will ask you at the end, which will be more poignant to you if I know your background.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. I feel like it's a little bit like preparing for a job interview. I don't know if you did OCI, but I did OCI at Columbia and you'd be going in and talking to 20 different people. And I have a terrible one where I thought I was interviewing at the New York office of some place and it was D.C., and they asked me "Why D.C.?" And I sort of looked at them blankly and they said, "You do realize this is our D.C. office?" And I'm like, "Huh? D.C., right, yeah. Always loved politics." Suffice it to say I did not get a callback for that. So yeah, don't be that person in your law school interview who doesn't know what school you're interviewing with.

Hamada Zahawi: For sure. For sure.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, we're about out of time here. Before we wrap up, I do want to switch gears and kind of shift a little bit to in-law school strategies, because I know you have a bunch of ideas around that. Share some tips maybe for optimizing people's law school experience once they are admitted, hopefully to their dream school?

Hamada Zahawi: Sure, yes. And again, I'm going to make a plug for the master course, because we're running out of time. So I'm going to quickly just give you the mnemonic, what it stands for, and then tease you to go check out the course. So, I use SLASH, and SLASH stands for Social, Leadership, Academics, Summers, and Health. Those are the five key things that in my mind that I really believe are going to help you succeed. And let me give myself a little credibility. When I went to law school, I wasn't top of my class, but I was on Law Review. I started a law journal, and I paid law school... I actually graduated with a profit because I taught classes on campus every semester, every summer. I summered three times, which is like unheard of. I summered my 1L year.

Alison Monahan: I did the same. I was like, "I have a hobby of being a summer associate."

Hamada Zahawi: It was great. And it pays so well, and it's like a wine and dine enjoyable experience. So I basically used all my summer funding to pay off all my debt. So you want to be thoughtful of Social, because even today, a lot of the jobs I've had have come from the experiences I've had on campus. As I said, I started a law journal and so forth. All these things really helped me. Leadership – again, being social, taking on leadership activities. Academics – obviously paramount. Summers – we just talked about it. And your mental health is so important,



Alison, and I know because you do a lot of stuff on the bar, but you know how it is. If you're not sleeping enough, if you're not exercising enough, if you're not in the right headspace, you will choke in that exam. Well, in California at the time, it was three days. It's non-stop, and if you choke, you don't have time to course correct. You're going to be in trouble. So, you want to make sure that everything is soaking in, seeping in, over the course of your law school experience, and enjoying it. And that really comes down to your mental health and your physical health.

Alison Monahan: I couldn't agree more. I ended up clinically depressed after my first semester of law school, because I had chronic insomnia the entire exam period. And basically it made me go crazy. Started therapy – great decision, totally plug it. But yeah, definitely, if you're not taking care of yourself, you are not going to get through those three years, or you will be a shell of a person at the end. Alright, well, before we wrap up, you've mentioned your course. Tell me a little more about it.

Hamada Zahawi: So, I felt there were a lot of people that were applying to law school that weren't getting the help they need. And services like Write Track Admissions sometimes can be quite prohibitive financially for some people. And I felt that, look, I was in a situation, I got the support and mentorship I got for free, because it was before we started the company. And so, I felt it was important to kind of put everything that we talked about today times 10, with all the other things you need to think about, and put into a course. So, I created a guide, a 170-page guide, about everything you need to think about, especially we didn't talk about this, Alison, but what makes a good law school candidate? Is this the right path for you? I don't even want to sit there and work with a client who doesn't even know why they want to go to law school and if this is even the right path. Maybe they should have gone Architecture, or Sociology, or Policy or what have you. So figuring out from there all the way through to SLASH and how you can excel as a student. And then I created a video series as well for those people who don't want to just necessarily read everything, so they could just watch the videos. Like you said, you're a visual person. So watching the videos in tandem with me talking about it, is what we did. I'll share that with the show notes as well – it's called LawSchoolAdmissionsMasteryCourse.com.

Alison Monahan: Okay, awesome. We will definitely link to that. Well, any final thoughts you'd like to share before we wrap up here?

Hamada Zahawi: Look, guys, and I'll say this and it's crazy – I went to law school, I worked at a law firm for less than a year, I started my admissions company, I ended up working with the U.S. government doing international development law. I resigned, I went back to grad school at Harvard to do a master's. I came back to California,



now I'm an entrepreneur doing some legal consulting, some tech startup stuff, starting a newsletter on lawyers, starting side hustles. Law and the legal skills can teach you so many incredible things that you can really be able to use to have an incredibly fulfilling life. So, don't be dissuaded from it and don't think that the be-all-end-all is law firms or a judicial clerkship or teaching. There're so many different variants that can come from being a lawyer.

Alison Monahan: I agree. If you told me I would be running a business in law school, I'd have said you were completely out of your mind, but here we are. And it turns out it's great.

Hamada Zahawi: Exactly, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Well, before we wrap up, just remind us quickly how people can find out more about you and reach out.

Hamada Zahawi: Sure. So, you can find us on www.WriteTrackAdmissions.com. We also have a YouTube channel – again, [Write Track Admissions](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). You can type it in YouTube there. And the course that we talked about is, again, [Law School Admissions Mastery Course](#). And I'll provide you with all those links in your show notes.

Alison Monahan: And is the "write" W or R "write"?

Hamada Zahawi: It's a play on words, so it's "write". W-R-I-T-E-T-R-A-C-K Admissions.

Alison Monahan: Perfect. Alright, well, thank you so much for joining us.

Hamada Zahawi: Thank you for having me, Alison. I appreciate it.

Alison Monahan: Oh, it's my pleasure.

Hamada Zahawi: Thank you so much.

Alison Monahan: If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and 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!



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