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 the second semester job hunt. 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. And you can check out the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast if the bar exam is on your radar. And with that, let's get started.

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 the second semester job hunt. Welcome, Sadie.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me back.

Alison Monahan: Oh, it's my pleasure. Alright, so we are fairly early in the spring semester. How concerned do you think students should be if they don't have a summer job yet? So, let's talk about 2Ls first. And 2Ls probably could be in a lot of different positions. Maybe they did OCI, it didn't pan out. Maybe they're not interested in that. At this point, is this a problem?

Sadie Jones: I would say it is something to be concerned about. It does not mean that you are not getting a job, but it means that you need to be working really hard at it, because the further you get into the spring without a job, obviously the harder it is going to be. I always tell people that I would never give up. I would keep applying until you get to the summer, if it really gets that bad. But I would say if it's early spring semester, you need to be putting a lot of effort into it, because a lot of people already have jobs, and there're just going to be fewer jobs available, and you need to be saying to yourself, "I need to be on to like Plan C" of your A, B, and C plans.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. At this point, Plan A and Plan B probably sailed, so it might be time to just start looking for sort of whatever you can get, which is definitely going to be better than nothing.

Sadie Jones: Legal-related. I feel like we're still at the point where it's going to be legal-related. Because I do think there's a point where I say, "Is there a professor you

can work for? Is there anything you can do?" So, early spring semester, maybe we're not there yet.

Alison Monahan: Right. I think at this point you should be looking for a legal job that's a legit full-time legal job. It may not be paid, that's pretty normal at this point. But yeah, you're not going to fall back on study abroad or something like that.

Sadie Jones: Which is always my last, last choice.

Alison Monahan: Exactly. Alright, well, let's talk a little bit about 1Ls, because for the 1L summer job, that's one thing. And then sometimes we're even hearing from people who are concerned about maybe they want to apply for OCI the next year, for their 2L summer, which seems a little crazy to be thinking about this early. But I mean, maybe it's not so crazy these days. What are your thoughts on 1Ls?

Sadie Jones: Yeah, it's not crazy at all. Things are just moving really quickly. So, I actually think that 1Ls sort of need to plan for their 1L and 2L summer.

Alison Monahan: Crazy!

Sadie Jones: At this point. And I know that's a lot, but I think that's going to help you in the long run. And I've said this before, but your 1L summer job is sort of a freebie in certain ways. The 1L summer job is less pressure, you're not expecting a permanent job offer, it is probably not going to be in BigLaw. We've talked about some of the things you're going to look for in it. But you really do need to be thinking ahead then to the following summer, where it is important because things just keep moving up and you don't want to be left behind.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so sometimes firms now are hiring summer associate positions outside of on-campus interviewing. On-campus interviewing itself keeps moving backwards, backwards, backwards. It's not really like the fall recruiting anymore; it's more summer recruiting. So I do think people need to be up on that. We have some episodes you can go and listen to, but if you are thinking you want to apply for a BigLaw summer associate job for your 2L summer, it is not crazy to start positioning yourself for that already.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. And I was one of those people who wasn't really pushing this before, but it really changed in the last one to two years. And I see 2L job openings, in terms of listings, sometimes are starting in April. And to be totally honest, people are hiring maybe half their classes before OCI starts. None of this is to panic anyone; it's just to be realistic. And so, that is something to just be aware of. And all this depends on what you're looking for. I am really talking mostly about BigLaw. So I'm not saying everyone is hiring that early, but if that's what

you're looking for, you just need to be aware of things moving up. And this could all change. This is where we are right now.

Alison Monahan: Right, yeah. The typical 1L, if it's early in the semester, the spring semester, and you don't have a job yet, that's nothing to panic about. There are going to be public interest career fairs and things like that going on in the spring semester. Frankly, BigLaw doesn't really hire that many 1Ls anyway. Maybe they've hired them, maybe they haven't. Some schools, they could be there. There are a lot of options right now. So I think you're in a different position than a 2L who really probably should be thinking about having a job by now. Whereas for the 1L, at least for that first summer, like you said, you've got some flexibility, and I don't think anybody needs to panic right now.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, I think you're right in the good spot. If you're just still looking for your 1L, you're not behind, you shouldn't forget that you need a job.

Alison Monahan: Right.

Sadie Jones: But you're totally fine. So remember that you can kind of just keep going with it, basically.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Well, on that note, what steps do you think someone should take now to be sure that they are going to have a summer job later? We already touched on this with the 2Ls – the 2L needs to be all in on this. But what about the 1L?

Sadie Jones: The 1L, I would really focus on networking. I would focus on making sure you're applying to all the jobs that are open to 1Ls. I always say that there is a job for every 1L. I really believe that. I mean, I think there's a job for everyone. But particularly 1Ls, a lot of them are unpaid. You should just make sure that you're moving through the process, you're applying to everything, you're in touch with your career services. Don't get too stuck on, "This is what I want to do long-term". I think that's sometimes what trips up 1Ls – they're like, "Well, I don't want to do litigation, but there's a job with a judge." And it's like, no, that's a very typical 1L job. You will get good experience. It doesn't mean that you want to be in the courtroom long-term. So that's what I would say you should be focusing on. And obviously make sure you know everything you have, like your job documents. You're taking as much advantage of any practice interviewing that you can, because 1Ls haven't had a lot of experience with that. As much networking events. Go to as many things as you can.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's solid advice. And I think flexibility is really the key for the 1L job search. Like you said, if you get an offer with a judge, for example, nobody's ever going to look askew at that on your resume. If it seems interesting to you,

it'll be an interesting life experience. Just take it, have a good summer, maybe get a reference. It doesn't really matter if you want to go into corporate law later.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And I think the 1L, just don't be too picky. I just think take the first one that looks pretty good, and you're good to go. I wouldn't be waiting around for the next one.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's fair. Well, let's talk about a few scenarios that I know we hear pretty frequently from law students, whether 2Ls, 1Ls, 3Ls, whatever: I've applied to so many jobs and I'm not even getting responses or interviews.

Sadie Jones: So, this I think, one, you need to look at your documents. So, if you're applying to so many jobs, you need to look at your resume particularly. Your cover letter too, you need a writing sample. You know I don't think writing samples are the most important part of this. One, I would look at all of that. Is there something wrong on there? And then two, I would look at, what are the jobs you're applying to? Because to me that also says maybe you are applying for jobs that are not in your reach, if you're not hearing back. So to me, those would be the two biggest issues if that's what's happening. And also, when you say "so many", what do you mean?

Alison Monahan: Right. That was going to be my first question, is, what do you mean by that? Because I've had people tell me "so many jobs", and they're like, "I've applied to at least 10 jobs in the last month." And I'm like, "Yeah, that's not a lot, actually."

Sadie Jones: So, it's late in the game – let's say we're talking about the 2L situation – and it's late in the game and you say you've applied to so many, I want to know you applied to 300.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Like 300 legit jobs you're qualified for that might have hired you.

Sadie Jones: Exactly. And everyone has a different definition of it, but I'm telling you, it's got to be a lot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, I think anybody applying has applied to a lot of jobs. And I think there's sometimes a tendency just to scattershot-apply to be like, "Okay, fine, you said 300. So I applied to a hundred jobs yesterday." And it's like, "Okay, well, were those legal jobs? What were they? How did you find a hundred jobs yesterday to apply to that maybe you would have been qualified for?" So, I think it is this calibration of, you need to make sure that you're applying to makes sense and you have a reasonable shot at it, you're somebody they might consider hiring. Otherwise it's a waste of time. But you can't get so fixated on,

"Oh, I'm only applying for things that would be the perfect fit for me. And I'm going to be spending four days on each cover letter." That also is not probably going to get you where you need to go.

Sadie Jones: And then the opposite situation – don't count yourself out for something that maybe you're close to being qualified for, but you don't hit the mark everywhere. I think that's another thing people kind of take themselves out of the game, because they're like, "Oh, it said that it was a 3.4 GPA cutoff and I'm a 3.3." And that's so wild to me. Like, why would you not apply?

Alison Monahan: Or like a 3.39.

Sadie Jones: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Okay, that's basically a four.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. So, don't just automatically say, "Oh, I don't hit every mark." Now, there might be things that are just silly to waste your time on, but I think people just can go all directions with this. And you've got to be smart about it.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I'd say this is some place to go talk to career services or talk to a career coach or something, because if you are applying to jobs you're basically qualified for and you're not getting any responses or any interviews, there's something wrong in the documents – something in the way that you're either shaping your story or there're just glaring typos or whatever it might be. But if you're not getting any hits, then you need to have somebody take an objective look at that and tell you why they think that is, and then fix it.

Sadie Jones: And don't be defensive about it. Listen to the feedback honestly.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. If you're not getting any results, there is a problem. So, you've got to understand what that problem is and correct it. And maybe nobody really totally knows, but you can try a couple of different iterations of things and see, "Was it this framing that's causing the problem? Let me change that and see if I get any options." But you've got to start kind of iterating through and experimenting to find something that works better, because obviously what you're doing is not working.

Sadie Jones: Totally agree. And I think bringing in just fresh eyes can be helpful here.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Even somebody who's not a lawyer, just hand them a job description, hand them your documents and say, "Would you call me back for this position?" And if they're like, "I don't really understand how your resume fits the position.

Wait, do you have that experience?" Any questions that they're asking are basically points that you could probably make better.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely.

Alison Monahan: Alright, well, let's talk about our next scenario: I've had a decent number of interviews, but no offers. What might be going on here?

Sadie Jones: So, generally in that situation – again, first of all, what's a decent number? So, you have to know how many. Yeah, if you had two callbacks and you got no offers, that's not surprising. If you had eight, that's surprising to me. So that means something's not going right with the interview. That's where, again, I would bring somebody in and I would do some practice. I would do a practice interview, I would talk about how you think it's going, I would talk about anything you think's come up on your end that you know isn't going well. Are you just really nervous? Do you need to just practice more? I've talked to people about just having more general conversations with strangers, just to get more comfortable. It's like a people skills thing. Now, there's a chance that you just were unlucky and that you were competing as other people that were a better fit. That can happen, but I think you have to look at the situation and say, "Is there something going on with the way I'm interviewing?"

Alison Monahan: I think that's fair. And I do actually think it's interesting. I think people's social skills to a certain extent may have atrophied in the pandemic, and particularly, if they were at kind of crucial life stages during the pandemic, where you didn't have those experiences of going out in the world and talking to different people and learning how to interact with people. So I do think that's actually a really good idea. I mean, at first glance, you're like, "Talking to the barista, that's not going to get me a job interview." But the reality is, people who can talk to anyone usually do really well in interviews. I was a great interviewee when I did it. I got tons of job offers, but it's because of the fact that I have a podcast now. I can talk to anyone. But some of that is a skill. I was actually reading an interesting book on negotiation recently, and he was talking about specific ways to build trust and things like that. And so, if this is something that you know that you struggle with, that maybe you just come off a little unfriendly or hard to work with or whatever it is, there are ways that you can sort of train yourself to present better, basically, in an interview. And you may have to practice answers to questions and things like that, that you know maybe come off not so great, because people are definitely hiring a lot based on kind of fit. And if you're not getting those offers, there's probably some reason.

Sadie Jones: And again, you have to really not be defensive if you're getting feedback on this.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Sadie Jones: Especially if you're hiring somebody or you're working with the career services or whoever it is, you're asking for help, whether you're paying them or not – listen to what they have to say. And I think you really need to say, "Okay, and what would you suggest?" And I think the other thing is, people get into their head they're an introvert, or they're not a people person, or they're not good at this. And like you said, you can work on almost all of it. So don't get stuck in your head, "This is who I am, I'm not good at this." It's just practice.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think because this does sometimes get termed "people skills", people think, "Oh well, this is how my brain works. There's nothing I can do about it. This is just the person I am." And we're not asking you to change your entire personality and be someone you're not. Basically, we're saying there may be some rough edges that need to be kind of polished a little bit, or just ways that you might say things that are more sort of receptive or not defensive. And certain questions, particularly if you've done a decent number of interviews, you kind of know what people are going to be asking at this point. So, if there are questions you struggled with in the past, you can prep answers and kind of work on those. You don't want to sound like you've memorized it, but there's definitely an art form to having an interview answer that you give in every single interview, because they always ask you the same question. And you've planned it out, but you've planned it out with the correct intonation, so it doesn't sound like you're just reading a script.

Sadie Jones: Which I was going to say, actually, I find sounding like you're reading a script can be some people's biggest problem. And I hear it so much. So I always say, don't practice the exact same question every single time. I always suggest practicing your stories that are general enough that they can be used for different things. But I totally agree. I know it's hard. It's like, practice, but don't practice too much.

Alison Monahan: It's a line. For example, if somebody has one really terrible 1L grade, it's likely somebody might ask about that. You might be asked more than once. Or if there's something weird on your resume. My resume was strange, so every interview I had, I got a variation of the question of, "Huh, Sociology, to Architecture, to Programming, to law school. Huh, tell me about that." So I had an answer ready to go, and basically I gave the same answer every time, but it sounded like I wasn't just reading off a script. And I kind of developed it over time. I saw what the reactions were, I saw what seemed to resonate, and it got better and better the more times I gave that answer.

Sadie Jones: You know what's the number one question that I hear students struggle with? "Tell me something about yourself."

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I know, which seems so easy.

Sadie Jones: No one knows how to answer that. "Tell me how you got to law school."

Alison Monahan: Right, like "Why law school?" There needs to be a solid answer to that.

Sadie Jones: You need to prepare that. I don't know why everyone just doesn't know what to do. You can go in chronological order, forwards or backwards. What do you want to focus on? You have to work on it.

Alison Monahan: Right. You basically need to workshop these obvious questions if you're flailing through interviews. Obviously sometimes you're going to get like a wild card where you don't know what to say, and then you need to practice techniques for buying time, like "Oh, that's a really interesting question. Let me think about that for a second." And I think the other thing is, this is a conversation, so sometimes people either don't have any questions or they're just kind of not really engaging in a conversation, because they have so many things they want to put on the table and get out there and they feel like, "I've prepped these answers and I must say them." So, I do like that idea of just kind of talking to strangers and learning to ask good questions and kind of be engaged in a conversation, because that's part of what this is about.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, you need to listen to the answer and go in that direction. You cannot have things that you absolutely feel like you have to say. It's just, that always goes wrong.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think a great question if you're in an interview is like, "Oh, I'd love to learn more about the type of work that you do in a day." That kind of thing. But then, like you said, when somebody answers you, you can't just immediately move on to the next question. You want to follow up like, "Oh, that sounds really interesting. Was that a difficult brief to write? What was challenging about that?" The more the other person talks, oftentimes the better.

Sadie Jones: Be engaged, be in it. And I totally get it, it's like that thing where you ask someone their name and then you weren't listening to what they said, so you don't know their name. We've all done that, so I get it. But in an interview, be in the moment, because I bet even if you think you don't have an answer, if you're really listening, you'll be able to come up with one.

Alison Monahan: Right. So I think, identify the possible problem points in your background, whatever they might be, and everyone has them. And it could be like, "Oh, law school is a second career for you. Why did you decide to switch?" Or, "You came straight out of undergrad. What work experience do you have?" Everybody has something. And it can be completely on any side of the spectrum, but you want to be prepared in a natural sounding way to talk about those things.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. One other thing about this is, this actually could go back to what we talked about before, about where you're applying. Even if you're getting the interviews, are you applying to places where you don't really fit in? So, I think that is something to think about here too. Are you applying to places that you feel like are just "the best"? But when you actually go in and they meet you, maybe both of you realize it's not a fit. So, that's one other thing I would think about, about getting interviews and not getting offers.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And I think particularly if it's like a safety place, you want to make sure that you're really conveying actual enthusiasm for this particular job. Because if they think, "Oh, this person's at some fancy school, they're not really going to take this offer", but you really actually would for whatever reason, you need to convey that.

Sadie Jones: Absolutely. All that stuff comes across, even if you're actively trying to hide it.

Alison Monahan: Right. Anytime you go into an interview, you should go in with the idea that, "I want to get this job offer, I'm going to do what I can to get it. I'm going to be enthusiastic, I'm going to do my research, I'm going to be prepared, and I'm going to convey why I think this would be a good option and I would be a good fit for them." And then if you turn it down – fine, you turn it down. But at least you had the job.

Sadie Jones: If you can't do that, you shouldn't be going to the interview.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, it's like a waste of everyone's time. Alright, well, our final question here: I've had some offers, but I turned them down because I'm waiting for my dream job. What do you think about this?

Sadie Jones: Okay, this depends on where we are, right? But we're at a point, probably with both of these situations, where you shouldn't be there. I think it's just a big risk. It's like a risk you can take if that's what you really believe. And I've definitely talked to students who feel strongly about this. I don't think it's a good idea. I also don't think that there's a dream job, I don't believe that. I think you got it in your head that this was your dream job. And sometimes just taking a job and going with it, it works out and you get your dream job later. So, it does depend

on where you are in the process, but generally, for where we're talking about, I would just be taking the offer if you feel like it's a solid job. If you have your dream job that is in the works and you can say, "Oh, can I have an extra week to think about it?" – that's different. But if you haven't even gotten an interview at your dream job and you're like, "I just need to keep turning these down until I get that" – I just don't think it's going to work out. And that's a huge risk, and I wouldn't really feel that bad for that person if it's really late in the game and they don't have a job. It's like, "Well, you had a bunch of job offers."

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think at some point you've got to be more strategic and just say, "You know what? This is a good enough job and I can learn something. I can put it on my resume and it's a lot better than having nothing. So, I'm going to take it and I'm going to be happy about it."

Sadie Jones: Also, this is the beginning of your career, in either of these situations, right? There is always a way to get to where you want to go. You may just not start there.

Alison Monahan: I think that's so true. I look at people I know and their career paths, and often the ones who've ended up happiest and frankly oftentimes most successful in the legal profession are ones who had a really meandering path. Maybe they didn't get what they thought they wanted in the beginning and they just kept working on it over time and worked their way into things that actually were a really good fit and they were really successful at.

Sadie Jones: I totally agree. And I don't know, when people say "dream job", I always think, "Do you really know what that is?"

Alison Monahan: I know. I had what people think were various dream jobs. They were horrible.

Sadie Jones: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: That dream was a nightmare, actually.

Sadie Jones: Yeah. And I'm a big believer in just making a decision. I don't think there's a right and a wrong decision. It's just, you made a decision and you can make another one later.

Alison Monahan: I think that's so true, particularly at this point. I mean, if it's like the beginning of OCI, I might give you different advice, but if you're in the middle, early to middle of the spring semester, it's time to just be like, "You know what? I have a job offer and I'm happy that I have it. Thank you very much."

Sadie Jones: I am so with you.

Alison Monahan: Alright. Before we wrap up, one more question: How important is it that my LinkedIn either, a) exists, or b) matches my other documents?

Sadie Jones: Very important on both fronts. So, you need a LinkedIn. And I know that law students don't all have LinkedIn and aren't using it as much as people in other professions or people who are further down the road, because I think they're very stuck in law school and they think everything's kind of going to be done for them in law school. But there's an outside world that uses LinkedIn for all their job stuff. So, you need one. It should have a professional picture. You don't need to get a professional photographer, but you should look fairly professional in it. So if someone can just take a picture, a closeup of you, that's fine. So you should have that. It should have your law school, your undergrad, whatever jobs you've done. I would have it match your resume in terms of – I've talked about this – you don't need every summer job you had in high school or college or anything like that. So it should look professional, and it should be up to date. So you should update it the same way you update your resume. People shouldn't look at it and it's years old.

Alison Monahan: Right. Basically, a) they should be able to find it, and b) they shouldn't look at it and be like, "Wait, is this the same person?" It should be clear if you have a resume in front of you that, okay, this is the same person. Because people do look. I think HR people particularly love LinkedIn, they just want to cross check that you exist, that kind of thing. It doesn't have to be super elaborate; it just has to basically match everything else you're putting out there.

Sadie Jones: You can also link to it, you can have it on your resume. I think that's a good idea, because a lot of people have the same name. You don't want them to have to make a big deal to find you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think it's good just to put it out there and be like, "This is me. Here I am."

Sadie Jones: Obviously, don't put your other social media. We're just talking about LinkedIn.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Unless you're applying for like an influencer job, which you're probably not if you're in law school. Alright, well, any final thoughts before we wrap up here?

Sadie Jones: My final thought is that I think people kind of get discouraged, especially the people where it's late in the game, and sometimes that can kind of cause them to just be frozen and not know what to do. And it's kind of this self-fulfilling prophecy. So, just know that there is a job out there. You just keep going. Don't

get so focused on, "Other people have jobs and I don't yet, and so there's nothing for me." You just need to keep moving forward, and you'll figure it out.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think that's great advice. And get help if you need it. Your school's career office is there for you. For more career help, you can also work one-on-one with us. You can check out CareerDicta.com. There are people who can help you. But I do think you've got to listen to what the advice they're giving you is. Maybe try to implement it and keep pushing forward, because like you said, everybody basically finds something in the end. Alright, well, thank you so much for joining us.

Sadie Jones: Thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: My pleasure. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on your favorite listening app. We'd really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to 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:

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Law School Toolbox Podcast: Careers
Podcast Episode 232: Finding a 1L Summer Job in the Spring (w/Sadie Jones)
Spring Semester Sprint: SOS Suggestions for Snagging a 2L Summer Job