Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Alison Monahan: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today, we're going to talk about the basics of on campus interviewing or OCI. 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 Catapult Conference, and I also run the Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on iTunes, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can reach us via the contact form on LawSchoolToolbox.com and we'd love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Lee Burgess: Welcome back. Today we're talking about OCI or on campus interviewing. This is the annual rite of passage where thousands of law students try to secure big law summer associate positions for the next summer. We've got two other detailed episodes from the early days of the podcast that you can check out for more details on OCI.

One covers the bidding and the first interview, and the other covers the details of callback interviews. You can find links to these in the show notes. But in today's episode, we're going to talk at a higher level about all of the aspects of OCI, and you can listen to the other ones for a deeper dive into the specifics.

Alison Monahan: Alright, so right now, it's mid summer, and most people who are doing OCI are probably thinking about bidding for firms. But before we get into that process, let's talk a little bit about how this works in general. So, what's the basic overview here? What are people trying to do?

Lee Burgess: So a basic overview is that large firms hire summer associates after their second year of law school for an extended quote unquote interview process, which also includes wining and dining and like going on trips on boats and all sorts of crazy other activities.

But and what the OCI process is, is that's really how you get these positions. But I think what's kind of crazy about the OCI process, for those who aren't familiar with it, is it doesn't happen right before the summer before your second year. It actually typically starts the summer between your first and second year.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so you're basically interviewing for this job essentially almost a year in advance.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Lee Burgess: Exactly.

Alison Monahan: Which is pretty weird. And if people are not aware, not only do you get wined and dined, you also get paid typically the same amount as a first year associate, so.

Lee Burgess: Ah, that is the best part, I'll be honest.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so it's a pretty lucrative summer job. If you can secure one.

Lee Burgess: Exactly, which is I think definitely one of the motivations for doing OCI is not to just get access to one of these jobs after the fact but also to help pay some bills by working over the summer.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, if you do eight to ten weeks, which is pretty normal at a firm, you can, you know, pay a large percentage of your living expenses and or tuition for the next semester or the next year, so, you know, it definitely can be something that's worth looking into.

Lee Burgess: It was, it was pretty exciting when I got my first check, paycheck during my summer associate job. It was like, here you go, credit card company, done.

Alison Monahan: Credit card debt paid off. Thanks. Next week.

Lee Burgess: And when you're in law school, it can be pretty exciting to see actual money.

So you do these initial interviews-

Alison Monahan: But before you get there, oh yeah, I mean, how do we even get these interviews?

Lee Burgess: Oh, it's a good idea. Yeah, you typically have to do some sort of a bidding or resume drop. It depends on what the terminology is around your school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so basically a bunch of firms, depending on your school, there may be fewer or more firms.

You know, if you're at one of these top schools, like I went to Columbia, you've got literally hundreds of firms from around the country who send representatives to do these interviews. But other places, it may be more local, or it may be a fewer, you know, fewer people. So not like a huge, you know, group

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

of firms that are interviewing, but I would say most firms have at least something, or most schools have at least something.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, absolutely. And I think you know, if you go to a more regional law school, the school typically has relationships with certain big firms that really funnel people through. So, you know, there's always going to be some sort of opportunities, but there are some firms that may just not show up to your school and that's just kind of life.

You would have to get into those firms through a different channel, which some people do, but it's not as typical. Most people just go through the OCI process.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, so the OCI process is, all these firms say, yes, we are interested in potentially hiring students from this school. All the rising 2Ls at this school look at these firms, and they say, okay, like, here's who I'd like to work for, I'd like to interview with these people, these people.

And depending on the school, you may just be able to pick, or they may have certain requirements that you have to meet in terms of GPA. One of the things we'll talk about later, is you really need to understand your school's process because you don't want to be wasting bids on things that are never going to happen and that kind of thing.

So, you know, hopefully if all goes well, it's almost like the medical match. You get some sort of interview with some firm that you are potentially interested in working for. And in some cases, you'll do all of these at once in a series of a couple of days. Typically, they call them on campus interviewing, but often on campus is not really accurate.

It might be at a hotel. I know that's how Columbia did them at the time. Or it might be actually at your school in a conference room or something like that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You know, it was at my school, they did them in the library study rooms, which had, were all glass. So when you were doing the interview, typically your back was to the glass.

But everybody walking by knew who was in what room. It was really screwed up.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, that's weird. Well, I mean, you know, high school, they did them at the Doubletree Suites in Midtown Manhattan. So you're in like Midtown, I think it was right at like, Times Square. So it's like, you know, August, late July, early

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

August, scorching hot in New York, like the worst time of year, you're getting off the subway into like the crush of Times Square to do these interviews.

And then, you know, you're doing these interviews in a hotel room, which is super weird. I mean, at least it was a suite, but you know, people would like, the people you're interviewing with would leave the door to the bedroom open. It's just like really awkward.

Lee Burgess: Especially in a profession with a bit of a, sorted history about sexual harassment and things like that.

Alison Monahan: No, I mean, literally the very first interview I did was like latent sexual harassment to the point that I refuse to do the callback. And they asked me why, and I told them why, and the recruiter was mortified.

Lee Burgess: That's awful. I didn't have anything that intense happening at all. But I did have one interview where the woman maybe allowed me to say five words. She just talked about herself the entire time. I walked out and went, definitely not getting a call back there. She knows nothing about me.

Alison Monahan: You know, I mean, some people just like talking about themselves.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. She really thought very highly of herself. So very interesting.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. So basically the point is you'll do these initial interviews. Hopefully you do a number of them. Some of them go well. Some of them don't go so well. If they do go well, then typically you're invited to do a callback interview, which is when you actually visit the firm and you do a series of interviews over the course, typically of a few hours.

Have some sort of meal, often lunch, sometimes dinner with people who work at the firm. And then if the callback goes well, you'll receive an offer to go there for the summer, which then you can accept or reject. And if your summer goes well, then you'll theoretically get an offer to return permanently after graduation.

So there are a couple of things to note. I mean, one of these, I think people don't typically look at this very much, but there are rules about all this stuff, right?

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah, and I had no idea there were rules governing any of this when I was in school.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Alison Monahan: Yeah, but there are actually. There's a whole process, like NALP the National Association of Legal Professionals or something like that, you know, they actually publish guidelines on like, you know, how many offers can you have open at any point, like when do you need to accept or reject an offer, that kind of thing. So these are things you're actually probably going to be familiar with.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, for sure. I think it makes a lot of sense. And you know, you should also try and talk to people, I think, in the school if you have any mentors, you know, through any of your mentorship programs or talk to career services about what the process typically looks like at your school, because it is important to understand that regionally or in different communities what's accepted.

It's slightly different. So, it's really important to kind of learn as much as you can about the firms, about kind of the players involved, about you know, what typically happens before you go through the full interview process.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And you definitely don't want to be that person who sort of accidentally doesn't know the rules and it's holding open like three offers when you're only allowed to have one offer at that point in time and your offers get revoked or something like that, you know, that's your worst case scenario.

So, you know, you don't need to be paranoid, but you need to have a basic understanding of like, all right, this is like, these are the expectations and this is kind of like what I'm allowed to do.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so different schools have different processes for bidding or dropping resumes, and it's important to understand what your school does and what you can do to get ready so you're ready to participate when it's quote unquote kind of open season.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think that comes up faster than people sometimes realize. And I think people have a lot of, understandably, have a lot of questions about bidding. Like, it's kind of this black box. And, you know, ideally, your school will provide you some sort of information about the type of candidate that each firm is looking for.

So, are they looking for, you know, certain grades? Do they want certain extracurriculars? Like, do they require that you be on law review? And, as with most things in life, you could ignore these at your peril.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm. For sure. And I think, I do remember them being very specific list, you know, if you weren't on the law review, there were some firms who would just never even talk to you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you know, some students are like, well, but I'm exceptional in these other ways and I should be considered. It's like, okay, you know, if there's a firm that you're really dying to work for for some reason and you're not meeting their qualifications, but for whatever reason you think that they should pick you anyway, you know, feel free to have one bid that you apply to this knowing it's probably not going to work out, but just like when you're applying to law school, you know, you need your targets, target firms, your safety firms, and your reach firms.

Lee Burgess: Right, yeah, I think that's a really good way to look at it.

Alison Monahan: You know, you don't want to be spending all of your bids on people that have said only they want law review students and you're not on law review.

Lee Burgess: Right, exactly.

Alison Monahan: I mean, you may be a special butterfly, but somebody's got a checklist and they're like, does this person meet our qualifications?

No. Moving on.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I think it's harsh sometimes to think in that way, but You have to realize these recruiters are going through stacks and stacks and stacks of applicants and you have to, you know, they're, they're giving those requirements as some thresholds so they can thin out the stack and only have to in detail go through the people that they actually think are the truly viable candidates.

Alison Monahan: Right. And the firms too. I mean, I know when I was working, we would literally get memos for people who are going to do on campus interviewing being like, do not bother sending us resumes if people do not meet X, Y, and Z requirement.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: You know, and it is gonna make the person who's doing the interviewing look bad if they send back a stack of people who basically they've been told or not, you know, officially qualified.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: So it's not to say that, you know, you'll never in a thousand years get an interview at a place that technically you don't meet their GPA requirement, but you have to realize that it's kind of a, you know, you're taking a risk.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, absolutely. And then, did you have to do individual cover letters for each of the firms you were bidding for?

Alison Monahan: I don't think so. That would make such a waste of time.

Lee Burgess: Oh, we did. Maybe that is that, and that may have changed since I was doing that, but we had to do individual cover letters for all of the firms. And I heard from a recruiter friend at the firm that I ended up working for talk about all of the mistakes she saw in cover letters and how she'd pretty much throw away your resume if it was say addressed to the wrong person.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah. Name spelled wrong, firm spelled wrong,

Lee Burgess: Firm spelled wrong,

Alison Monahan: The name of the firm wrong if they've merged.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so if that is part of what you're doing as part of this process, make sure you double, triple, and quadruple check things because the easiest way to, like, lose a job is by you know, making it so they don't even really go through your materials.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, you're just gonna destroy your chances at that point. You know, these things happen to everyone. I accidentally, at some point, apparently had interviewed with a firm in DC that I thought was in New York and didn't realize until I was in the middle of the interview. I mean, you know, it happens.

They had offices everywhere. Apparently I checked the wrong box. And so, you know, she turns to me and says, so why do you want to be in DC? And there was this pause for a moment while I'm thinking to myself, DC, DC, why am I in this interview?

Yeah, so suffice it to say, I did not get a callback there.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Lee Burgess: No. But what about putting together your resumes? I mean, I think you know, that is something that you definitely don't want to leave to the last minute and have ready to go when this process gets kicked off.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you want to make sure by the time that you're submitting anything that, you know, it's been double checked by you, you've probably had other people look at it, you've gotten some feedback on it, everything is perfect. I mean, if you're interviewing in multiple locations, ideally you would probably have a separate resume for each location because, you know, even something as simple as having a mailing address in California, if you're in school in New York, can make a difference.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's very, very true because firms typically don't want to invest the large amount of money that they're going to invest in people who wouldn't consider moving there after school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I think people who do not have a strong connection to a certain location where they do want to work, you just have to be cognizant of this.

And this is, you know, this comes down to like, how many places should I bid on? Like, how competitive am I? You know, if you've never set foot in the state of California, and you're claiming that you want to work in San Francisco, or you want to work in LA, they're going to be skeptical. I mean, they were skeptical of me, and I'd lived, I'd gone to, you know, I'd lived there for years.

I'd gone to graduate school there. I'd worked there, and people were still skeptical because I was in law school in New York. So, you know, this is all about sort of figuring out how competitive you are as a candidate in the locations that you're applying in.

Lee Burgess: For sure. And even if you are considering different regions within a state, I mean, I was originally from the Central Valley and I was talking to some of the firms there when I was considering my options, this was for my first summer, but You know, they, one of their big concerns was we don't, you know, want people coming and making money off of us and then taking their next job back in the Bay Area.

That's not really not our game plan. Our game plan is to try and see if you can work here permanently and you're going to have to convince us that you're going to come back here and work. And, and I mean, I, I sympathize with the

firms who are, I mean, these summer programs are expensive and you know, they really do want you to want to be there.

And I think it's an important question to ask yourself, you know, because these, this OCI process can really lead to where you end up after graduation or what you're doing. And you should make sure it's in a location that you're comfortable with at a firm you're comfortable with. You know, just don't decide to bid on every possible firm because you desperately need this job.

That's not necessarily the best way to go about this.

Alison Monahan: No, I mean, like with anything, the person who, you know, drops targeted resumes and potentially cover letters at Say 10 or 20, you know, 10 places, there's, you know, gonna be a great fit. Where they're clearly within the guidelines for what they're looking for is gonna have better success than someone who applies to 30 or 40 places just totally randomly because they're like, oh, I don't know, like, maybe I'd like to be in Nevada. Maybe I'd like to be in Illinois. Maybe I'd like to be in Texas. I mean, that's crazy.

Lee Burgess: Mm-Hmm. . So how do you think students should go about learning about these firms and you know, what they should even care about?

Like, does it matter what sort of law that they practice and stuff like that?

Alison Monahan: No, I think ideally, you want your career goals to align with what the firm is good at, you know, and different firms are, I mean, some of them don't even have certain practice areas. I mean, the firm I worked at full time, like, didn't have corporate work, they just didn't.

So, you know, if you dropped your resume and, you know, somebody, you went into your, you got a, got an interview and you go in and you say, oh, what kind of work are you interested in? And you tell them mergers and acquisitions, they're pretty much going to show you the door right then because they literally don't do that and you should know that.

Lee Burgess: Right. I also think it's important if there's, there are areas of law that you are really interested in, or even certain groups of clients that you're really interested in, that you do that research to. I mean, I remember interviewing doing a first round interview with a firm that did tobacco litigation defense.

And sitting in that interview going, I don't want to wake up in the morning and do tobacco litigation defense.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Alison Monahan: Yep.

Lee Burgess: Not what I wanna do, you know? And that's okay. They would rather you not take their money and work there if that's something you don't wanna do.

Alison Monahan: And that's the thing. I mean, people who work there, they've made their peace with that and they've, you know, they understand that a lot of people are not gonna wanna do this, so they're probably gonna ask you about it.

And if you are surprised to learn that this is the type of work you might be doing,

Lee Burgess: Mm-Hmm.

Alison Monahan: It's probably not gonna be very impressive. Like, you know, you need to have a basic familiarity with what are the practice areas? Like, what are these people known for? How do they perceive themselves? What kind of culture do they think they have?

Because otherwise, you know, you're just going in blind.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I mean, I ended up working at an office where a good chunk of the litigation practice was products liability defense. And so if you are not okay with that, that would have been an awful office to show up at. You know, there was bankruptcy and other stuff happening in that office too, but the bread and butter of that office, it had been a merged law firm, was their big products liability group.

And that's what the majority of the casework came from.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, I summered at a place where they were really known for their corporate practice, and I wanted to do litigation, and I did have these conversations when I was interviewing, like, well, you know, do you think, like, it's a good place to be a litigator? And people will tell you whatever they want to tell you, but the reality was, no, it was not a good place to be a litigator, because those were not the people who were in charge of things.

Lee Burgess: Mm-hmm.

Alison Monahan: You know, and so when I worked after, after my clerkship, I worked at a place that was basically known for doing IP litigation, and I was very happy doing IP

litigation. I was good at it, I had a good background for it, like, that was just a much better fit.

Lee Burgess: I also think it can be important to, depending on, again, your school and what firms are coming to your school to keep an open mind to possibly some maybe smaller firms, more regional firms that still have some smaller summer programs that probably still come due on campus interviewing.

I have known, I interviewed with a couple of those firms. I didn't end up taking, I got an offer for one that I didn't end up taking, but it was a different type of a summer program and it would have been a very different experience, and there's a lot to offer sometimes with these smaller offices, you know, in the way that you can get much more exposure.

Maybe you'll work more closely with some of the attorneys. Maybe the pay won't be quite as high, but maybe the job satisfaction will be a little bit higher, or you think that in the end game it might be a better fit for you long term as a career path. So I think it is important to keep your mind kind of open.

And sometimes if you don't have a huge summer program where they're just funneling money into the social aspect of it, you might end up having more of a working summer, but that also could be a big boost to your resume and your experience, too.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, even, you know, if you think of like the big law world in New York City, even with that, within that world, you know, there are firms that are much smaller and much scrappier and more entrepreneurial, and there are other ones that are not. And so, you know, it's important to consider like where you think you might fit in. And again, to play this long game, you know, it's not just that you're getting this job for a few months. Ideally, this is going to be the job that you have after you graduate.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's just so easy to get caught up in the machine, you know?

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah. Everybody's like, yeah, if you get an offer at Cravath, you have to take it. But you're like, maybe I don't want to wear a suit every day. Like maybe I would hate working at Cravath. Maybe this is not the best choice for me. You know, there's a lot of pressure on people to sort of take the, the more traveled pathway on a lot of this stuff.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm. And, and I think use the the OCI process to learn more about what this life is like. You know, I think that's one of the things that people forget about the summer associate process. It's also you interviewing the firm.

Alison Monahan: Oh, absolutely.

Lee Burgess: As to whether or not you think it's a good fit.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and I mean, you know, I'm sure we all have crazy interview stories of, you know, I had interviews where someone would close the door and say, like, do you want me to tell you the truth about what it's like to work here?

And you're like, yes, please. I think, you know, that's one data point, like, you know, maybe you don't take the word of that disaffected associate as gospel, but I don't think you should ignore it either.

Lee Burgess: No, I definitely had some, I didn't have anything that extreme, but I remember, you know, they have you typically when you go on a callback to meet with a few different associates, And sometimes, you know, just being like, so, you know, just fishing, right?

And then when they're really not talking to you about anything, you know, and there's just like no information coming out of their mouths about their experience working there, that's a lot of really great information too.

Alison Monahan: Right. And one thing people sometimes don't understand is after you have the offer from a firm, typically at that point, they're happy to have you come back and say, go to lunch with a few associates or something like that.

And that's when you can really, you know, ask your pointed questions. I don't think in an initial interview or even in a callback, people should be asking, well, you know, what are your billable hour requirements? I think that's probably inappropriate but after you have the offer, I would say you better ask them that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And, and they even had some events for us once when we had open offers so we could meet more lawyers and have more conversations when they were trying to recruit us to accept

Alison Monahan: Exactly. I mean, at that point, that's your, you know, that's like the, the apex of your power with the firm is before you've accepted that offer, you can basically, you know, you can ask for whatever you want. Like, I wanna talk to this person who's in a practice area that I want to work in, or I want to come back and go to

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

lunch with, you know, someone who's like a first year and a third year to get their perspective or whatever it is.

I mean, obviously it can't be too obnoxious, but you can get a lot at that point.

Lee Burgess: Now, and I think a great question to ask when you meet with those people. And Alison, this is your question that I love that we do on our, a lot of our interviews is just, what does the day in the life look like?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, like when are you showing up?

Lee Burgess: What's a typical day? And it's such a brilliant question that I think so often people really forget to ever ask that question.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and it can give you a lot of information. You know, like, what time of day are they showing up? Like, you can do the math on, you know, are you eating all three meals at your desk?

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and again, like you have to take a lot of this with a grain of salt, but I think you can gather a lot of information. Sometimes people just feel like, oh, I'm so lucky to have this offer. Like, I have to take it immediately. But that's not necessarily the case. Like, you need to be strategic about this.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Okay. So let's talk about maybe getting back to that first round kind of process. So how many interviews do you think you should do?

Alison Monahan: Well, I'll give you the lawyerly answer, which is as many as you need to, but no more than that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: I mean. You know, you don't want to, you don't want to under or oversell yourself.

I mean, I think I probably did more interviews than I needed to because I was like, I'm in the law review at Columbia, I probably could have dropped 20 or 30 percent of those and done just, you know, had exactly the same results.

Lee Burgess: How many first rounds did you do? Do you remember?

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Alison Monahan: I don't even remember.

Probably like, I don't know, 10 or 15.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think I did 12.

Alison Monahan: Something like that.

Lee Burgess: That's a lot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I don't know, you sometimes, occasionally you're just like, God, why was I talking to those people? Like, that was, you know. But, I mean, yeah, I think you've got to evaluate realistically how competitive are you? You know, what is the prestige level of your school?

What are your grades? What are your extracurriculars? Where are you interviewing? Certain places are harder or less hard to get jobs in. You know, what are your connections to those places? Are you good at interviewing? You know, I mean, for me, like I'm a pretty good interviewer. I'm sure you are as well. There's probably a reason we do this podcast, but you know, some people are not good interviewers. And if you know that about yourself, you need to sign up for more interviews, and you need to practice, but, you know, if you know that you're not someone who can do that initial rapport, or you're not very comfortable in an initial interview setting, you're gonna need to do more interviews, because it's gonna be more of a crapshoot.

Lee Burgess: And you know, I think it's also interesting, because sometimes, You don't really know when a firm's going to be a good fit. I mean, it feels a lot like dating.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: Right? I was actually just reading.

Alison Monahan: It's like the tender of law firms.

Lee Burgess: It is kind of, but I'm reading Aziz Ansari's book on modern romance.

Have you read this?

Alison Monahan: No, I read about it.

Lee Burgess: Anyway I was, I think I was traveling and needed something like mindless to read. So I'm like halfway through it. And it's hilarious if anyone wants a good

study break book. But he's talking, I'm in this chapter talking about online dating.

And one of the things he was talking about is that statistically, we are really bad at picking our own partners on online dating because often what we really want is not actually what we think we want.

Alison Monahan: Or what we'll admit that we want.

Lee Burgess: Or what we'll admit, but that's a good point. So I was, I was thinking about that and then I was like thinking about OCI and sometimes, you know, we don't even really know what firms are going to be the best fit because it is very hard to know exactly what the corporate culture is exactly.

Alison Monahan: I mean most law students have literally never set foot in a law firm before they do these interviews. So how could you know?

Lee Burgess: And there are some, like I was talking about that interview where the woman didn't let me speak, I was actually really interested in that firm. But it was pretty clear to me that they weren't interested in me.

Or she was a terrible interviewer, one of the two.

Alison Monahan: Well, which is not uncommon. Which is not uncommon. I mean, people don't typically get really any training or much training in how to do these interviews. So you're going to get bad interviewers.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, but does that mean, like, maybe I would have been an okay fit for that firm, but, you know, I also the firm I ended up taking the offer from, it was my last first round interview.

At that point, I already had a couple of offers. I was so burned out on the process, because my process wasn't like over just a couple of days, it went over a few weeks. And I was just like, I will just go to this one last interview, whatever, like the partner cancelled on me, so it was supposed to be like first thing in the morning and I ended up having to come back at like the end of the day and stay in my suit all day and that made me cranky, like I was definitely not at my most charismatic, but he was a kind of an old school litigator and he thought my somewhat aloofness and snarky responses to some of his comments were quite endearing.

And then he said I was his favorite candidate.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Alison Monahan: Well, Lee, I have to say, I think this sounds a lot like the story of how you met your husband.

Lee Burgess: That's true. That is true.

Alison Monahan: Where you'd given up on dating and it was one last horrible date that you had to bother with.

Lee Burgess: That's true.

Alison Monahan: Turned out great.

Lee Burgess: And I didn't even blow dry my hair.

Yes, exactly. So, you know. So there's a lot to be said for being relaxed and keeping an open mind because you do never know when when it's going to be a good fit. And actually that firm in a lot of ways was a really good fit for me, so I'm glad I went to that interview. So you do have to somewhat keep an open mind and realize that there's a little bit of, I guess, like fate and luck or whatever at play, but it's just, you will learn so much more during the process.

Don't make too many judgment calls in the beginning.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And on that topic, I mean, let's talk really briefly, like what are these interviewers looking for? I mean, Some of it's just numbers, like what are your grades, you know, what are your statistics, blah, blah, blah. But also they're looking for someone who's sort of personable, who can get along, someone they wouldn't mind being stuck on a plane with if you have to fly to a deposition.

You know, somebody you wouldn't mind being awake with for 48 hours if you're at trial or doing a deal. I mean, a lot of this is a lot, I mean, a lot of it is about sort of fit, which is, you know, fair and not fair.

Lee Burgess: I think they're also looking for, for professionalism, which I also think is important to keep in mind, especially if you are kind of new to a professional job,

You know, if this is your first job and you're not comfortable in a suit, you know, you really wanna practice doing these interviews, maybe even do some. Practice interviews with career services, practice interviews with family members informational interviews with possibly people in your network to get more comfortable.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Just kind of dressed up and like playing this role.

Alison Monahan: Talking to grown ups.

Lee Burgess: Talking to grown ups.

Alison Monahan: Or like real grown ups.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and and I think it's also so that professionalism and also confidence. I really, I mean, I was also interviewing mostly for litigation. Litigators can smell fear. That's like what they're trained to do. And if you walk in and you are unsure of yourself, they're going to make it really, really hard on you.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, they're going to ask you about the thing that you're really hoping they don't ask you about. you have one bad grade on your transcript, you need to have a story ready for what happened because I guarantee you they're going to ask you, so what happened in contracts?

Lee Burgess: Yep.

Alison Monahan: And it's not going to be any nicer than that.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: It might, it might be less nice.

Lee Burgess: It might be less nice.

Alison Monahan: That's about, you know, I mean, I've, you know, we've both done these interviews and like, you don't want to be mean to people, but part of it's just like, you're used to sort of cutting to the chase as an attorney.

And it's not like, so, you know, It looks like most of your grades are pretty good, but then I see this one, like, that's not the way that this goes.

Lee Burgess: No, warm and fuzzy is not something I would say comes up much in the interview process.

Alison Monahan: No, I mean, for me, you know, if you have a strange background, like, you need to have a story about that.

You know, I have a really weird resume, and pretty much every single person I interviewed with immediately asked me about it. And if I had been uncertain or

didn't have a story prepared about, you know, how this made sense and why it was helpful to them, I was going to be dead in the water.

Lee Burgess: Yep. Oh, I had a, in a callback, I had the weirdest callback at this one firm.

Where they literally had like 12 people in the room in a U shape in the conference room and I was sitting at like on the table. I mean, I really, they were litigators and it definitely felt like I was on trial and one of the partners just looked at me and said, well, it seems like you change jobs every few years.

Why would I ever think you'd work here for very long?

And of course, at this point in the interview process, I'm thinking, I don't think I'm going to work here at all.

Alison Monahan: You're like, yes, you're exactly right. Can I leave now? I know. Yeah. I mean, God, you just get so many weird, I mean, you're dealing with weird people all the time. You just get so many weird things happen.

People tell you really weird stuff. I mean, I don't know. Maybe it's just because I have like a personality that people think they can, I don't know, like offload themselves. But I definitely, I just, there were times where I was just like, why are you telling me this?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I also think it's important to have some standard answers to those interview questions.

You know, where do you see yourself in five years? Or my personal favorite, which is, what is your greatest weakness? And don't make your answer, I'm too detail oriented, you know?

Alison Monahan: I'm just such a perfectionist.

Lee Burgess: I'm such a perfectionist.

Alison Monahan: I just work too hard.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: I mean, you thinking about like, you're interviewing with people, and they have pretty good bullshit detectives.

You know, and like, I mean, yeah, when you're doing these interviews, you're like, you don't want to be mean to people, but you also just want someone

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

who's like a normal person, you know, who's not like feeding you some line of crap about like this, because you're like, I don't want to deal with this person on an ongoing basis.

Like, I just want someone who like, you know, can just like do what I, what needs to be done, not cause a lot of problems and just like be okay. That's like, the standards really aren't actually that high.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You don't have to like hit it out of the park.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I know on our other podcast we talk about this in more detail, but again, especially if you're someone who's not used to being in this professional environment and getting dressed up and things like that, make sure, you know, you have a comfortable suit.

You know how, especially for women, that you're going to do your hair so you're not doing fidgety things like pushing your bangs out of your eyes or, you know, playing with your hair or playing with your jewelry or things like that. You know, if you're a man, make sure you're not like tugging at your tie constantly.

Alison Monahan: Rubbing your crotch.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: It happens, I've seen it. You're just like, what are you doing? Stop.

Lee Burgess: But you know, it's, it is really important that you kind of get comfortable in this persona. And it is like. I mean, I used to do theater and stuff like that when I was young. Like, it is acting. I mean, you're playing a role.

Alison Monahan: It's a performance. You're performing as a potential lawyer.

Lee Burgess: Right. And so, you know, you have to be comfortable in that role. And just like if you were getting up on stage, you need to practice so you have your act together and you don't make mistakes that could be easily avoided.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think we've already touched briefly on this, but you know, the basic process of callbacks and things like that is pretty much just the same interview over and over.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

More of the same, more of the same, more explaining that bad grading contracts. You know, hopefully you're getting pretty good at it. By the time you've done like your 10th interview and you will get better at these, I mean, in terms of scheduling, if there's any way you can schedule your least favored firms first, that's actually better because you'll just be more comfortable.

One thing actually want to touch on briefly. So we've been getting some questions recently from people who are transferring. So it's this kind of weird process where like. You are maybe going to do OCI at one school, and now you're going to do it at another, and maybe you're not even sure which school that's going to be because you've still got outstanding applications that you haven't gotten an answer on.

I mean, how do people start to navigate that?

Lee Burgess: I mean, I think once you definitely have, The school that you think you're gonna go to, I think your best bet is to start doing OCI at that school and remove any applications you may have had at your old school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, sometimes people end up in this position where like they did it at one school, but now they're transferring 'cause they didn't know that.

I mean. Basically, you just have to use your best judgment here and try to be considerate of other people. I mean, if you, as Lee said, if you know that you're leaving a school and you have an offer somewhere else, just go ahead and cancel those interviews. Like, let someone else do them. And, but you know, I mean, it's, you know, you basically, I mean, I have a friend who's a recruiter and she's like, yeah, sometimes we would see people twice and we would kind of be like, what's going on?

Oh yeah, right. You transferred. Okay. It's not the, I mean, it's not like the biggest deal in the world, but you just have to kind of play it, you know, in a reasonable manner.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. So just remember that you want to be, you know, professional and it is, it is a bit of a negotiation as you're trying to, navigate kind of this limbo you're in.

But I thought you also, we were actually recently talking to somebody in a transfer situation mentioned that you can sometimes try and hurry some of the schools along to get you back information quickly so you can decide what you're going to do your bidding.

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. If you've already, you know, if you have a couple of outstanding applications, but you already have an offer at a very good school, it's perfectly fine to email or call those schools and be like, Hey, this is what I need to know. I need to know an answer, essentially.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: It can be a good, a good leveraging topic. All right. Well, I think unfortunately we're just about out of time since we've already done two podcasts on this topic. You can also listen to those. Lee, is there anything else you want to add at this point?

Lee Burgess: No, I think just it might also be good to listen to our Authenticity Podcast.

Alison Monahan: Yes.

Lee Burgess: Try and navigate this and and realize, you know, what sort of path you're looking for out of OCI. Because I think, you know, in the end, what we hope for you is that you end up finding a firm that's a good fit for as long as you decide you want to be there but, you know, you do have to think critically about what you want, what your definition of success is, typically it doesn't just include dollar signs and make sure that as you go through this process

Alison Monahan: And they pretty much, they all pretty much pay the same thing anyway, so.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, that's right.

So go through this process with that in mind. So maybe in the show notes we're going to go ahead and add our authenticity episode.

Alison Monahan: I think that's a good idea because I think the thing to keep in mind, I mean, as we talked about with this performance, is yes, you're sort of performing aspects of this professionalism, but you also shouldn't be doing something that seems like really not what you want to be doing.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: Well, unfortunately, we are out of time. If you enjoyed this episode of the podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on iTunes because we would really appreciate it. And you can subscribe so you don't miss anything. We usually release new episodes on Monday. If you have any questions or comments, don't hesitate to reach out to us at Lee@LawSchoolToolbox.com or

Episode 55: An Overview of BigLaw On-Campus Interviewing (OCI)

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