

Finding a Job in Tough Economic Times



A Free Seminar for OCC Paralegal Students

Saturday June 24, 2006
Oakland Community College

Job Search Strategies for Paralegals Interview Techniques

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Job Search Strategies for Paralegals

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Twenty step program

1. Investigate the possibilities
2. Define your goals
3. Prepare your tools
4. Prepare your portfolio
5. Identify job resources
6. Network with personal and professional contacts
7. Track progress
8. Respond to published openings
9. Locate unpublished openings
10. Submit resumes
11. Follow up on resumes
12. Schedule interviews
13. Prepare for the interview
14. Sell your skills
15. Thank the interviewer
16. Call the interviewer
17. Negotiate and accept offer
18. Start position
19. Maintain position
20. Leave the position



Interview Techniques

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The Interviewing Process

1. Schedule the interview
2. Prepare for the interview
3. What to wear
4. Follow up
5. Mealttime interviews
6. Red flags
7. Body language
8. What you should never do



Interview Techniques

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Questions you may be asked

- General
 - Tell me about yourself
 - Name three personal characteristics that best describe you
 - What about your personality has made you successful?
 - What do you do in your spare time?
 - Tell me something that is not on your resume
 - Tell me about your work ethic

- Career goals, training, professional growth
 - Why did you become a paralegal?
 - What was your goal when you selected your degree?
 - What are your career goals/objectives now?
 - Are you interested in continuing your education? Law school?
 - Do you belong to any associations? Have you been active?
 - What professional journals do you read?
 - What do you do to continue your career growth?
 - Special recognition

- Job status
 - Why are you looking for a job?
 - What would motivate you to change jobs?
 - How long have you been looking?
 - Why has it taken you so long to find a new job?
 - Why have you had so many jobs?
 - Why did you stay with one company so long?
 - What is the status of your search?
 - Where have you interviewed?

- Previous jobs
 - What were the people like?
 - What did you like least/most?
 - Was your company/boss satisfied with you?
 - What/how did you learn your job?
 - Did you like the job? Why?
 - Why did you leave?

- Compensation
 - Last raise and bonus
 - Benefits
 - What kind of money are you looking for?

- Hours/billing
 - What are your hours?
 - How many hours do you/are you required to bill?
 - What is your billing rate?
 - Will you travel?
 - Will you/do you work overtime?

- Skills
 - Give me an example of your creative, analytic, administrative, innovative abilities
 - Give me an example of (each job skill)
 - Computer, languages, research, writing
 - Public speaking, publishing, teaching

- Relationships and people skills
 - Describe your relationship with your office peers. How would they describe you?
 - Describe your relationship with your boss. How would he describe you?
 - What kind of people do you work well/don't work well with?
 - How would you describe your boss's style?
 - Describe a time when you resolved a conflict at work
 - Describe the most difficult person you have had to work for?

- Performance
 - Have you ever been criticized? If so, what for?
 - What is the hardest thing you ever had to do in your job? Were you satisfied with the results?
 - Have you been satisfied with your performance at each of your jobs?
 - Tell me about your strengths, weaknesses
 - How have you transitioned from one job to the next?
 - Attention to detail - how do you make a peanut butter sandwich?

- Work style
 - Do you prefer to work alone or with others?
 - Do you consider yourself a team player?
 - Tell me how you prioritize your work load

- Motivation and initiative
 - What motivates you?
 - Describe a time when you took the initiative to accomplish something

- Crisis and pressure
 - How do you handle pressure?
 - Tell me about a crisis you have had to handle.
- Decision making/judgment
 - What decisions do you have to make independent of your boss?
 - What decisions are most difficult for you? Why?
- Current job opening
 - Why does this job interest you?
 - Why would you be good at this job?
 - How does this job fit in with your career path?
- Tell me about a time when you
 - Were unable to complete a project on time
 - Persuaded team members to do things your way
 - Anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures
 - Had to make an important decision with limited facts
 - Had to adapt to a difficult situation
 - Were disappointed in your behavior
 - Had to deal with an irate customer/client/attorney/secretary
 - Had to follow a procedure but find it to be inconvenient
 - Made a bad decision
 - Turned down a good job



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Questions you should ask

Responsibilities

- What are the major responsibilities of this position?
- Is there a job description? May I see it?
- What are your immediate and long-term objectives for this position?
- What are some of the more difficult problems one would have to face in this position? How do you think these could best be handled?
- How much freedom would I have to determine my work objectives and deadlines?

Qualifications

- What qualifications are required to do this job?
- What do you see as my strengths/weaknesses for this position?
- What are the greatest challenges facing the person in this position?

Turnover

- Why is this position open?
- How often has it been filled in the past 5 - 10 years?
- Why are you looking at external candidates for this position, instead of promoting from within?
- What is the average length of employment for paralegals in this firm?
- Do you have a lot of turnover? (Why or why not?)

Past paralegal

- What did you like most about the person who previously held this position?
- What would you like to see the person who fills this position do differently?
- What is the history of use of legal assistants in the firm/company?

Administrative

- What are the hours?
- Where will I sit/work?
- What are the billable requirements?
- What is the ratio of attorneys to paralegals?
- Will I have secretarial support? How will my work get processed?
- What type of computer system and software do you use?

Management

- How would you describe your management style?
- Who will I report to/be responsible to?

Performance

- When will I be reviewed?
- Describe the evaluation/review policy.
- How will my performance be measured?
- How is successful performance rewarded?
- What is your compensation and benefits program?

Promotion

- Have you ever promoted a legal assistant to another position in your organization? Describe.
- Do you promote from within? Describe.
- What advancement opportunities are available for the person who is successful in this position, and within what time frame?

Company

- Describe the culture at your company
- What do people seem to like most/least about working here?
- Would it be possible to meet the people who work in the department?
- Tell me about the other paralegals at your firm.
- What are the company's plans for growth in the next five years?
- How does the company intend to remain competitive?
- In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
- What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?

Professional development

- Do you encourage participation in the community or professional activities?
- What is the policy regarding continuing education reimbursements and attendance?
- Do you have a management development or internal training program?
- How will I be trained and by whom?

