

DAILY REPORT

LAW INC.

Come up with no fewer than 20 questions. Be ready with short answers. If someone asks you the time, don't tell them how to build a clock.



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How to get a job after being laid off

KNOWING WHAT TO SAY and how to say it during interviews will help you recover after being laid off

IN A GRIM SIGN of the times, AmericanLawyer.com this week began publishing "The Layoff List," a running tally of which law firms are cutting staff and associates. Indeed, I can't remember a time when it has been more important for attorneys to know how to sell themselves in job interviews.

For those attorneys now finding themselves without work, don't just polish off the résumé and start the grind of interviewing. Use the opportunity to work on honing your communication and selling skills. Nothing will make you more successful at winning jobs and, just as important, succeeding at the job once you're hired.

To succeed, you need to improve both what you say during job interviews and how you say it.

What you say

In terms of what you say, talk to prospective employers about the value you provide and how you provide it.

I worked with an attorney who had been laid off from his job at an investment bank working on real estate funds. He wanted another job doing the same thing.

When I met with him to discuss what he could do for a prospective employer, he launched into a long list of his technical legal skills. It was painful and confusing. He never hit on the business value that he provided to his employers.

He needed to ask himself, "What do the managers of real estate funds want in an attorney?" The answer is simple: someone that can help them make money.

After much discussion, we settled on the following: "I manage the legal details of real estate investment funds so that the fund can launch successfully and close on schedule."

From there, we worked on detailing three simple keys to how this attorney provides this value. First, he knows the law.

Second, he knows how to coordinate the many parties involved in administering the funds. Third, he knows how to meet a deadline. He then had stories illustrating each of his key skills.

When prospective employers hear such simple, listener-focused explanations, they are able to say, "Wow, this person knows how to communicate." It's impressive and unusual.

Preparing for the questions

Another part of preparing what to say in an interview is to prepare for the questions. Come up with no fewer than 20 questions. Be ready with short answers. If someone asks you the time, don't tell them how to build a clock. And make sure that you find a way to use the questions to tell the overall business value that you provide along with your plan for executing that value.

How you say it

Next, work at delivering the messages with energy. Most people speak in a flat monotone. We urge people to interview with energy, smiling, gesturing and displaying excitement about the opportunity. Speak to your interviewer like you're talking to a close friend about something you're passionate about. That style connects you with your friends. It will help you connect with prospective employers.

Layoffs are frightening. But they also give you a chance to focus on how to sell yourself. If you're without a job, take this opportunity to hone how you present your ideas. You'll enjoy the benefits long after this hard time has passed. ☞