

CANDIDATE SELLING POINTS

MUST KNOWS:

What are your top five “must knows”? These are the key things you want your potential employer to know that make you stand out from other candidates. At least three of your five should be legal skills/competencies or experience based.

***Note:** Many people are tempted to list things like leadership skills, interpersonal skills, team-building, etc. While these are admirable and important, avoid listing them first. Keep in mind that an employer is buying your legal skills and experience – that is what you want to highlight first and foremost.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

STORIES:

What you are selling on an interview is your skill set (legal, professional, and personal) and your level of experience. To highlight the value you bring, formulate a story that speaks concisely about each of the below. These stories should involve both the examples on your resume and those that may not be. When thinking about your stories, consider the most challenging situations that involved those skills; career accomplishments and highlights; the most enjoyable projects you worked on; the biggest lessons you have learned; etc. They should highlight your strengths and the level of responsibility you were given.

It is important to keep stories (and all of your interview answers) short and concise. An interview is an opportunity to showcase the skills you will use on the job. As lawyers, it is critical to be able to articulate your point clearly and efficiently. Keep in mind that interviewers can always ask follow-up questions. You want to give enough detail with enthusiasm to keep the interviewer engaged. Avoid using a lot of unnecessary details like numbers (unless it is how much money you saved a client or when conveying the number of times you have done something for purposes of scope), unfamiliar names, etc. which will only confuse the listener and distract them from the important part of your answer – your skills, accomplishments and experience.

Formula:

Every story has a hero or protagonist – which would be you in this case. In order to convey your story in a concise and effective manner, use the following formula:

- Conflict: What was the struggle, issue or problem you were solving? (Ex: You were asked to research an obscure issue of law that you were not familiar with in a short time table.)
- Action: What steps did you take to address this issue/solve your problem? (Ex: You reached out to your mentor to get some guidance; you checked references that would not seem completely obvious; you took the time to educate yourself on this new issue in record time.)

***Note:** You may want to vary this format from answer to answer so as not to seem so formulaic. To do so, after explaining the conflict you can highlight the outcome and then go through the steps leading up to it.

Job Specific:

Just like conforming a resume to a specific position, you will want to have the same focus on relevancy in an interview. Hopefully you have access to a job description for the position you are interviewing for. If not, you can try and ask either your recruiter or the human resources representative you may be dealing with. If possible, leverage your network to see if there is anyone you know at the firm or company you are interviewing with who has a similar position or who can at least speak to what the position entails.

Armed with both the job description and any additional knowledge you may now have, take the key word descriptors (ex: “lead investigations” or “extensive knowledge of the 33 and 34 Acts”) and formulate direct and relevant experience based stories. Some of these stories may overlap or include the skills above.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Favorable Outcome for Clients:

Wherever you are interviewing (whether the government, a law firm, in house, etc.) there will be some element of client service – even if your client is a supervisor or boss. Think about the top 3 to 5 most favorable outcomes you have had or been involved with for your clients. What did it entail? What was your role? How did the outcome impact the client’s business? Highlighting this in an interview can be a powerful way to sell yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

General:

1. Drafting:
2. Research:
3. Analysis:
4. Negotiation:
5. Advocacy:
6. Project Management:
7. Supervision/Delegation:
8. Giving/Receiving Feedback:
9. Effective Communication:
10. Teamwork:
11. Getting along with difficult people:
12. Organizational Skills:

13. Stress Management:
14. Time Management:
15. Client Service:
16. Leadership:
17. Initiative/Ownership:
18. Effective Decision Making:
19. Judgment:
20. Coming Up the Learning Curve Quickly:

Connectors:

What are some possible connectors that you might have with interviewers (ex: law school; hobbies; exercise; interests). To the extent you can find this out in advance of your interview that will allow you to leverage this information. If not, have your own interests, hobbies, etc. ready to talk about if it seems like your interviewer does not just want to talk about work. Connectors can be a great way to establish rapport with your interviewer and it will give you something to mention in your follow up.

Strengths:

These should be short, concise and linked to a story. Show not only that you have these strengths but how you leverage them as well (ex: I have always been a fast learner and I use that to my department's advantage by picking up new areas of expertise). Consider recent performance reviews or feedback from colleagues.

1. Strength:

- a. How strength is leveraged:

2. Strength:

- b. How strength is leveraged:

Development Areas:

Use this as an opportunity to show growth, learning and that you respond well to constructive feedback. We all have development areas – the important thing is to show that you are aware of them; committed to working on them; and that you have a plan for working around them. (Hint: Often the best way to work on a development area is by leveraging a strength.) Think back on past performance reviews or the most helpful feedback you have received from a trusted colleague.

You will want to avoid talking negatively about something that is directly relevant to the job (ex: that your writing is substandard), but you also do not want to give a fluff answer (ex: I'm a perfectionist). There is a delicate balance here. Either way, the key is to move away from a perceived negative to a strong positive. Sometimes it helps to talk about something from several years ago. (Ex: Early on in my career I struggled with saying no to work when I was over extended. I quickly learned to get the partners involved to help me prioritize. Now, junior associates come to me because of my reputation in the department for being able to juggle and prioritize assignments effectively.)

1. Development Area:

a. Workaround:

2. Development Area:

b. Workaround:

Candidate Questions for Employer:

It is important to go in with 3-5 questions that you can ask your interviewers. When possible, they should be specific to each interviewer. The more research and knowledge you can show about the employer, the more favorable impression you will leave. A key to acing an interview is to show enthusiasm for the job/firm/company – this is your chance to do so. This is also your opportunity to get information that you would not otherwise have access to (i.e., a human perspective).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.