

INTERVIEWING WITH MORE THAN ONE ATTORNEY

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If you think interviewing with one lawyer is tough, how about interviewing with a panel of them? At several area firms even first, but, more usually, second interviews are with a group of attorneys, sometimes as many as a half dozen. Here are some suggestions for handling these group interviews. There is no particular rank ordering to this list.

1. If there are associates in the group, they may try to score points with the partner (s) at your expense. Don't play their game and be aware of their agenda.
2. If you're asked some of the same questions you were asked in an earlier interview, acknowledge the fact to the earlier interviewer, if s/he is there. "As I said to Mr./Ms/Mrs. Attorney last week ____" and give the same answer, unless, of course, you've changed your mind about the answer. "I'm so glad you asked that question. When Mr./Ms/Mrs. Attorney asked that question I said (and repeat your answer) but, I have thought about that answer, and, I think, ___ more accurately reflects my thoughts on that issue."
3. Remember – Do not speak ill of or gossip about your current firm/employer. The old line about, "I'm sure you can appreciate I really am not in a position to comment about that" probably will stand you in good stead. Make sure your "why I want to leave my current firm" answer is a constructive one. If you need more details about what to say in your specific situation, please ask a skilled recruiter or that trusted friend about your answer. You should have prepared this answer well in advance, just as you prepared your answers about what interests you in the position and what you can bring to the firm.
4. Look directly at the person asking you a question and begin your response by continuing direct eye contact with the questioner. If your answer is lengthy, look around to the other attorneys at least once, so they feel included in the conversation.
5. Watch out for "good cop ... bad cop." Some attorneys, especially litigators, it seems, can't forget that not everything is an adversarial proceeding. Keep your cool with the "bad cop" approach, while remaining alert to being lulled into inattention by a "good cop" ploy. Be sure to let everyone finish his/her question, comments, etc. before beginning your answer. A thoughtful pause before you begin an answer will never harm you.
6. If you are given an opportunity to ask questions, try to ask them of more than one person. Before your interview, do your best to get the names of the panel beforehand so you can memorize their names and, if possible, find out from the web or from Martindale what their specialties are. Prepare at least one question for each panel member, if you can.
7. Try to seat yourself in the middle of the group, if you possibly can. Try to be part of the "us," rather than the "outsider."
8. Try to sit with your back to a bright light or window. You don't want to squint or to be distracted by something you see out the window.
9. Don't forget those current copies of your resume (and writing sample, transcripts, etc.) in your briefcase. If each interviewer already has one – fine, but, if not, you look prepared.
10. Don't be surprised if the questions are tougher than they had been one-to-one. It's easier to be aggressive in a group than as an individual. Don't be concerned if you don't feel as "connected" as you did in the individual interview(s). This is a different kind of process.
11. Keep up with what the firm has been doing. Ask colleagues; read *The Legal Intelligencer/ Wall Street Journal/National Law Journal*; ask your recruiter.
12. Even if you expect a one-on-one interview, be prepared for a group meeting. A firm may spring one on you. Remember, if they're willing to waste four or five lawyers' billable hours, it's probably because they are seriously interested in you.