



Boston College Law School

Office of Career Services

HOW TO CHOOSE BETWEEN FIRMS

The following is a guide in helping you determine which firm will be the best fit for you. It is unlikely you will find a firm that meets all your expectations. It is important to take the time to determine which factors are most important to you and assess how the firms match up. Do not expect to have all the factors answered at once. Timing is crucial. Some questions may be answered by simply reading the firm's website. Some questions may be asked and answered during the initial interview or callback round. And some questions should definitely wait until after the summer associate offer has been extended. Please feel free to stop by the Career Services Office and speak with a counselor to go over any questions or concerns.

1. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Is this the location you wish to begin your career? In 5 years, where do you wish to be?

2. FIRM SIZE

Is this a small firm (less than 25 attorneys)? Is this a mid-sized firm (26-100 attorneys)? Is this a large firm (101-250 attorneys)? Is this a mega firm (250+ attorneys)? Why is firm size important to you? Is this a headquarter office? Is this a "satellite" office? Why is this factor important to you?

3. PRACTICE AREAS/CLIENTS OF INTEREST

Which practice areas are of interest to you? Does the firm have these practice areas? How large are these practice areas? Are you interested in the firm's clients and their matters? How diverse is the firm's client base? Is the firm dependent on one major client?

4. ASSIGNMENT ALLOCATION

Is there an assignment coordinator? Are all assignments funneled through the assignment coordinator? Are summer/ permanent associates encouraged to obtain work outside the assignment process? Do you rotate through departments during the summer?

5. CLIENT CONTACT/RESPONSIBILITY

How soon will you have client contact? What are the firm's expectations for a summer associate? A first year associate? A mid-level associate?

6. WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PEOPLE

Describe the atmosphere. How diverse is the firm? Are the office doors open or closed? Is there after-hours socializing among associates and/or partners?

7. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

What types of training programs are in place? Is training offered within the firm or outside the firm? How often are evaluations conducted? How much feedback (formal or informal) can you expect? Describe the formal mentoring system versus the informal mentoring system.

8. BILLABLE HOURS, COMPENSATION, BENEFITS

What is the firm's target for billable hours? What is the compensation and bonus structure – lock step, merit based or a combination? What benefits are available to attorneys? What benefits are available to spouses and partners?

9. PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

How many attorneys (what percentage) participate in pro bono activities? How is the pro bono work distributed? Are hours spent on pro bono matters counted toward billable requirements? What types of pro bono matters does the firm handle?

10. BEYOND THE SUMMER PROGRAM

When will permanent offers be extended - last day of the summer program? Two weeks thereafter? When the firm extends a permanent offer, is the offer for a particular department or for the firm in general? When would you learn to which department you will be assigned? Do most associates obtain their first choice in department placement? If not, what is the firm's policy for switching departments?

11. IN THIS ECONOMY...

In this current economic climate, did the firm layoff its attorneys and staff? If yes, when and how many? What were the terms of the severance package, if any? Have any partners or practice areas recently left the firm? Did the firm delay the start date of its 2009 incoming class? If so, until when? Was there an option offered to the 2009 class to delay the start date by a full year in exchange for working at a public interest organization? What were the terms of the delayed start date?

12. GUT FEELING

Can you see yourself working at this firm?