



The sample interview questions and model responses contained in this publication are intended to explore a law student interviewee's understanding of professional expectations and identity development.

These questions may be used by employers as part of the interview process or by the law school's career development office to help prepare students for the interview process.

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**Your Law School
Career Service Office**

MSBA



Q & A

Professionalism
for New Lawyer Interviews

Developed by the
Law School & Law Student Subcommittee
of the Minnesota State Bar Association's
Professionalism Committee
www.mnbar.org

Q1: *What does entering a profession—rather than a job or a career—mean to you?*

A1:

Interviewees understand that a profession (whether it be a doctor, educator, lawyer, or clergy) imposes upon the professional an affirmative duty to society. Interviewees identify with professional ideals, standards and aspirations; understand that they are becoming members of something larger than themselves; and understand that personal actions, whether at work or outside of work, are a reflection on the profession, not just on one's self or an employer.

Q2: *What will you expect of yourself as you work toward becoming a lawyer?*

A2:

Interviewees understand that as law students they are beginning to establish their professional identity; they have a responsibility to both future clients and to society to be competent, diligent, honest, and to provide public service. Interviewees have a desire to seek justice and to emulate those qualities of the profession that will increase public confidence in the law and of lawyers; to meet the same standards in their course work as they will meet when working for a client.

Q3: *What do you consider to be the difference between being formal with your work and being professional with your work?*

A3:

Interviewees view formalism as a matter of appearance, whether it be physical appearance or choice of words in oral and written communications. Interviewees understand professionalism as respecting co-workers, clients and opposing parties. Professionalism is about keeping their word—not just the letter of their words, but the spirit of their words—and keeping the interests of the client above their own interests.

Q4: *What conflicts do you expect to experience (e.g. between your responsibilities to clients, family, community, profession and your personal moral code)?*

A4:

Interviewees understand that they will encounter situations as a professional that they consider unethical and accept that they will have to handle these situations from time to time. Interviewees also understand that although conflicts may arise between their personal and professional priorities, it is how they approach and resolve the conflict that is important. Interviewees identify with their own personal system of standards and values that guide them in resolving conflicts encountered in the profession.

Q5: *What are the most important consequences of a failure to live up to the expectations of the profession? List all that come to mind from the professional to the personal.*

A5:

This answer is broken down into various stages one goes through in developing professional identity. The more one is internally motivated toward following a personal code of conduct, the more likely they will be to adhere to that code. It is possible that interviewees may identify aspects of more than one stage in their answer, including:

Stage 1: External motivators, such as professional censure and discipline; the dissatisfaction of clients; and a concomitant loss of business.

Stage 2: Loss of standing within the legal community; general disgrace; and a feeling of self-betrayal and disappointment.

Stage 3: Internal motivators, such as recognition that failure occurs, accompanied by feelings of personal responsibility. Most importantly, mistakes are immediately and satisfactorily rectified and a plan is put in place to ensure that the failure does not happen again.