How to Approach Your Application or Interview

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When you were in law school, one of the first things you were likely taught was that it you should analyze a case not only from your client's perspective, but also from the perspective of the opposing party. In theory, this would help you determine both the strengths and weaknesses of your position, and also give you a better understanding of the issues as a whole. Whether you are looking at dry technical arguments, or engaged in an extremely personal family law mediation, being able to understand the perspective of the party opposite is one of the key skills that every successful lawyer should have.

I have noticed, however, that the majority of attorneys engaged in a job search entirely fail to apply this technique to their job search, which is unfortunate because it can ultimately help you to become a much more successful candidate when done correctly.

Your job search is ultimately about you and your career goals, and that is as it should be - you should target firms and practice groups that match what you would like your current and future legal practice to be. However, in order to get that perfect job, what you need to do is to put yourself in the mindset of the attorneys who will be hiring you and tailor your application materials and interview responses to their needs. After all, they are the ones who will ultimately decide whether you get the job, and what they are looking for is the candidate who is best going to help meet the needs of the clients, the partners, the practice group, and the firm.

If a particular job posting seeks specific experience, make sure to highlight any related experience you have in the resume you submit for that position. Ask questions of any interviewer, especially partners, such as "where could you use the most support in your practice right now?" or "what precipitated your hiring need right now?" and use that information to express how you would be able to contribute to what the firm needs. There are many ways you can tailor your approach, but the overall point is that you should be thinking of everything in the application process through the lens of the people making the hiring decisions.

This is not to say that questions regarding the potential for career advancement, the type of work you will be given, or a firm's work culture are not appropriate or important, but first and foremost you need to establish as an applicant that you can provide what the firm is looking for. A particular position at a particular firm might be your dream job, but it's no use if they offer the job to someone else!