

Ten Interview Questions for Second Career Lawyers and Sample Responses

For attorneys pursuing second careers, transitioning to the legal profession can present unique challenges and opportunities. In addition to demonstrating their legal knowledge and expertise, these attorneys may need to show how their previous work experience and life skills are relevant to the legal profession. During the job interview process, attorneys may encounter various questions about their motivation for pursuing a legal career, their experience, and their ability to adapt to new work environments. By preparing thoughtful and honest responses to these questions, attorneys can position themselves as strong candidates for various legal positions.

Why did you return to school after working for a few years?

Sample answer: After working in my previous field for several years, I realized I wanted to pursue a career in law. I had always been interested in the law and considered attending law school after college. Still, I needed more practical work experience before committing to a legal career. After several years in my previous field, I felt that I had gained valuable skills and experience, but I also felt that I had reached a point where I was ready for a new challenge. I decided to return to school to pursue my law degree because I saw it as a way to combine my interest in the law with my desire to impact the world positively.

Do's: Show that you have a clear and compelling reason for returning to school to pursue a career in law. Emphasize how your previous work experience has prepared you for a career in the legal field.

Don'ts: Don't suggest that you only pursue a legal career because you couldn't succeed in your previous field. Refrain from downplaying the importance of practical work experience.

Tell me about your background/work experience. What did you gain from it? What does your experience allow you to bring to our firm/organization?

Sample answer: I have a diverse background that includes experience in the military, the private sector, and non-profit organizations. Through these experiences, I have developed a strong work ethic, leadership skills, and a commitment to serving others. I have also gained valuable experience in project management, team building, and problem-solving. These skills and experiences will allow me to bring a unique perspective and set of skills to your firm/organization. I am confident that my background and experience will enable me to contribute positively to your team.

Do's: Show that you have a diverse background and a range of skills and experiences relevant to the legal field. Emphasize how your background and experience can benefit the firm/organization.

Don'ts: Focus less on irrelevant experience or skills. Refrain from downplaying the importance of legal knowledge and expertise.

Of which experience are you most proud?

Sample answer: I am most proud of my experience in the military, where I had the opportunity to serve my country and develop leadership skills that have been valuable in every aspect of my life. During my time in the military, I learned the importance of teamwork, discipline, and perseverance, and I had the opportunity to work with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures. I am proud of the contributions I made during my time in the military, and I believe that the skills and values I developed during that time have been invaluable in my subsequent career.

Do's: Show that you have the experience you are genuinely proud of and relevant to the legal field. Emphasize how your experience has prepared you for a legal career.

Don'ts: Focus less on irrelevant experiences or accomplishments. Don't suggest that you are only interested in the legal field because it is prestigious or lucrative.

Why are you leaving the military/your business? How will you deal with a new boss?

Sample answer: I am leaving the military/business because I am interested in pursuing a career in the legal field, which is a field that I have been passionate about for many years. While I have enjoyed my time in the military/business and have learned a lot from my experiences, I believe that the legal field is where I can make the most significant impact and find the most incredible sense of fulfillment. As for dealing with a new boss, I believe communication and respect are key. I am accustomed to working in a hierarchical environment and understand the importance of following orders and respecting authority. Still, I also believe sharing my thoughts, ideas, and concerns with my boss respectfully and constructively is essential. I am confident I can adapt to new leadership styles and work effectively with various bosses.

Do's: Show that you have a clear and compelling reason for leaving the military/business to pursue a legal career. Emphasize your willingness to adapt to new leadership styles and work collaboratively with others.

Don'ts: Don't speak negatively about your previous employer or suggest that you only leave because of problems or conflicts. Don't downplay the importance of following orders and respecting authority.

What inspired you to pursue a legal career later in life?

Sample answer: After working for many years in my previous career, I realized I was ready for a new challenge and wanted to make a more significant impact. I had always been interested in the law and considered pursuing a legal career earlier in my life but could not do so due to financial or family obligations. However, with the support of my family, I decided to pursue a legal career later in life and am excited to bring my life experience and skills to the legal profession.

Do's: Show that you have a clear and compelling reason for pursuing a legal career later in life. Emphasize your life experience and skills that will enable you to make a positive impact in the legal profession.

Don'ts: Don't suggest that you are pursuing a legal career simply because you are bored or dissatisfied with your previous career. Don't downplay the importance of legal knowledge and expertise.

How has your previous career prepared you for a legal career?

Sample answer: My previous career has taught me valuable skills in leadership, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, which are all essential skills for a legal career. In my previous role, I had to negotiate contracts, manage budgets, and navigate complex regulations, all of which have prepared me for the legal profession. I have also worked with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, which has taught me the importance of cultural competence and sensitivity.

Do's: Show that you have skills and experiences from your previous career relevant to the legal profession. Emphasize how your previous career has prepared you for a legal career.

Don'ts: Don't focus too much on irrelevant experience or skills. Don't suggest that you can succeed in the legal profession without legal knowledge and expertise.

How do you plan to balance the demands of a legal career with other obligations or interests?

Sample answer: I believe that balance is essential in all aspects of life, and I plan to prioritize my legal career while also ensuring that I have time for my family, friends, and personal interests. I am committed to developing strong time-management and organizational skills that will enable me to meet legal career demands while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Do's: Show that you have a plan for balancing the demands of a legal career with other obligations or interests. Emphasize your commitment to maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Don'ts: Don't suggest that you are willing to sacrifice your personal life or interests for a legal career. Don't downplay the importance of work-life balance.

How do you plan to continue learning and growing as a lawyer?

Sample answer: I am committed to lifelong learning and believe that it is essential for lawyers to continue to develop their skills and knowledge throughout their careers. I plan to stay up-to-date with changes in the law and legal practice through continuing education, professional development, and networking with other legal professionals. I am also interested in seeking out mentorship and coaching to help me develop my skills and expertise in specific areas of the law.

Do's: Show that you commit to lifelong learning and professional development. Emphasize your willingness to seek mentorship and coaching to develop your skills and expertise.

Don'ts: Don't suggest that you know everything there is to know about the law or legal practice. Don't downplay the importance of continuing education and professional development.

How will your life experience and skills enable you to bring a unique perspective to the legal profession?

Sample answer: As someone who has had a successful career outside the legal profession, I bring a unique perspective and set of skills. For example, my experience in business has taught me valuable skills in negotiation, contract drafting, and risk management that are essential to the legal profession. My experience working with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures has taught me the importance of cultural competence and sensitivity, which are essential skills for working with clients and colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

Do's: Show that you have a unique perspective and skills that will enable you to contribute to the legal profession. Emphasize how your life experience and skills will enable you to work effectively with clients and colleagues from diverse backgrounds.

Don'ts: Don't suggest that your previous career is more important than your legal career. Don't downplay the importance of legal knowledge and expertise.

How will you approach the challenge of learning a new field of law and adapting to a new work environment?

Sample answer: As someone new to the legal profession, I recognize that I have a lot to learn, and I am excited about the challenge of learning a new field of law and adapting to a new work environment. I plan to approach this challenge with a growth mindset, embracing the opportunity to learn and develop new skills. I

am also committed to seeking mentorship and coaching from more experienced legal professionals who can help me learn.

Do's: Show your positive attitude toward learning and adapting to a new work environment. Emphasize your willingness to seek mentorship and coaching from more experienced legal professionals.

Don'ts: Don't suggest that you already know everything there is to know about the law or legal practice. Don't downplay the importance of seeking out mentorship and coaching.

Conclusion

For attorneys pursuing second careers, the job interview process can be an opportunity to showcase their unique skills and experiences and their commitment to lifelong learning and professional development. By approaching the interview with a positive attitude and a growth mindset, attorneys can demonstrate their willingness to adapt to new work environments and learn new skills. As with any job interview, it is essential for attorneys to be well-prepared, professional, and respectful and to show a genuine interest in the position and the organization. With these qualities and strategies in mind, attorneys can successfully navigate the job interview process and take the next step in their legal careers.