

Adapted from Nancy Levit and Douglas O. Linder

The Happy Lawyer: Making a Good Life in Law

GENERAL QUESTIONS

- Do you have a general idea of what kind of career you want?
- Do you plan to practice law?
- What do you envision yourself doing in twenty years—at the height of your career?

VALUES

- What are your values?
- What impact are you hoping to have on your community, your country, the world?
- Do you value time with family and friends?
- Do you value financial security?
- What would it mean for your career plans to be consistent with your values?

GEOGRAPHY

- Are you interested in entering a type of law that might dictate you live in a particular region (such as international law or water law)?
- Do you prefer cities? Large or small? Suburbs or rural areas? Domestic or international travel?

SUBSTANTIVE LAW

- What are your intellectual interests?
- What issues are you passionate about?
- Do you know what areas of law interest you or don't interest you?
- Do you have a particular area of law that you want to engage with/shape?

STRATEGIES AND SECTORS

- Do you have a theory about what strategies will have the most impact you are seeking to achieve for your community, your country, the world?
- Do you value autonomy, stability, creativity?
- Do you like to take risks?
- Do you like variety?
- Do you prefer adversarial or collaborative work?

SKILLS AND TASKS

- What types of work do you enjoy doing?
- Do you like dealing with people?
- Do numerous meetings make you crazy, or do you welcome the time to noodle issues with colleagues?
- Do you like spending large blocks of time researching and writing or do you prefer spending the days with clients and community members?
- Do you like detail work?
- How do you feel about the prospects of litigation?
- Do you prefer new challenges or handling matters over which you have some mastery?
- What are your strengths in terms of professional skills and what skills are you hoping to develop?

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

- In what size groups do you work best: all alone, with one or two other people, or with larger groups?
- Do you like to travel?
- What kind of hours do you envision yourself working as a lawyer: a mammoth number of hours, a 9 to 5 day, part-time? Are you someone who is able to create work life balance for yourself, or do you take on too much work?
- Do you prefer a faster-paced or slower-paced environment?
- Do you work better in a structured environment? Do you feel more comfortable with an organization that is more flat or more hierarchical?
- Do you like excitement or prefer life without stress?

EXTERNAL EXPECTATIONS

- Do you feel other people (perhaps family members such as parents or partners) have specific expectations for what you will do with your law degree? Do they match yours?
- What are your skills and tools to manage peer pressure and its impacts?