

# Oregon Law Practice Management

Practice Management Tips for Oregon Lawyers



## How to Hire a Receptionist for Your Law Firm

Before I became a Practice Management Advisor, I was the director of the Multnomah Bar Association Placement Service. As a recruiter, I interviewed thousands of job applicants over the years. The toughest positions to fill? Receptionist, Office Clerk, or File Clerk. Any time we had an entry-level opening, we were inundated with resumes. Screening was brutal.

On one occasion, I was working hard to fill multiple positions at different firms. After successfully placing a File Clerk with one of my legal administrators, he offered to send over the resumes he received in response to his newspaper ad. He thought I should take a look at his “top picks.”

Among other things, I was screening for availability to work different weekday schedules, as each firm had slightly different hours. I will never forget my legal administrator’s number one candidate (on paper). When I asked what hours the candidate could work, the candidate said, “Oh, a position that starts at 3:00 a.m. would work best for me.” Ultimately, this was one of the *least* strange things this particular person said. So much for my administrator’s “top pick.”

The story of the oddball candidate came to mind today when I received the following e-mail from a lawyer in a small firm/office share: “Our firm is interviewing for a receptionist. Ours just gave notice. Do you have any suggested interview questions? I usually wing it, but would like to be better prepared this time.”

After a bit of digging and consideration, here is what I suggested. Reframe the questions as needed when checking candidate references:

## Interview Questions for a Law Firm Receptionist

### Introduction

Hi, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I want to thank you for coming in today to interview for our Receptionist position.

Let me tell you a little about the job. You would be our main receptionist. You will be the first point of contact for our clients and therefore the person who creates the first impression people will have about our firm.

In addition to greeting clients and answering the phones, this position requires (describe additional duties). This is a busy job. We need someone who is calm, organized, and able to multi-task despite interruptions.

### Questions

- Why are you interested in our position?
- What do you know about our firm?
- Can you please elaborate on why you like working with people and tell me more about any skills you have that make you a good candidate for this particular job?
- Please tell me about positions you have held where you had to multi-task.
- Can you give me an example of how you used your organizational skills in your last job?
- Priorities often change suddenly throughout the day. If you are interrupted and asked to do another task, how does that affect your mood?
- If you are asked a question you don't know the answer to, how would you find the answer?
- How did you fill down time at your last job?
- The hours for this position are \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, Monday through Friday. Is there anything that would prohibit you from keeping these hours consistently each week?
- We require that our reception area be staffed at all times when the office is open. Besides breaks and the lunch hour, under what circumstances would you consider it appropriate to leave the reception area?
- In addition to greeting clients and answering phones, this position requires (describe other duties). What experience do you have (describe other duties)?
- What software programs are you proficient in? (Ask follow-up questions and/or test to determine candidate's precise skill level).
- How would you make a client feel welcome?
- How would you handle answering a phone caller's question with three phone lines ringing simultaneously?
- How would you handle a person who has to wait a long time for a scheduled appointment?
- Can you give me an example of how you dealt with a difficult client or situation?
- Have you ever worked in a setting that required confidentiality? What kind of steps did you take to protect confidentiality?
- Can you give me an example of a stressful situation that you encountered at work? How did you handle it? Looking back, is there anything you would have done differently?

- What did you enjoy most about your last job? Enjoy least?
- What are your career expectations one year from now? Three to five years from now?
- Do you have any questions for me?

## Resources

For a quick list of reception dos and don'ts, See the PLF practice aid, "Receptionist's Duties," available at [www.osbplf.org](http://www.osbplf.org). Click on Practice Aids and Forms and follow the link to Staff.

For an in-depth Interview Guide, check out [Interview Guide Receptionist](#) from [Interview Creator Online](#).

*Some of these great ideas for questions were taken from the [University of Iowa Career Development Department](#), and [Job-Interview.Net](#).*

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