

INTERVIEW SCORECARD | PLAINTIFF-SIDE PI & LITIGATION FIRMS

Can This Attorney Really Run Their Own Cases?

A practical guide for hiring partners and managing attorneys at growing firms in NY, NJ, and Philadelphia.

How to use this scorecard

Score each category 1–5 during the interview: **1** = assisted only, **3** = handled with some supervision, **5** = fully independent with strong judgment. A candidate who averages 4 or higher with no category below 3 is likely ready to run a docket. Always ask for specifics: “Walk me through the last one.”

The golden follow-up for every answer: “What did you personally decide, and what did someone else decide?”

1 Docket Ownership

Ask:

- How many active cases are you personally responsible for right now? What stages are they in?
- Who assigns your cases, and who do clients and adjusters call when something goes wrong?
- Describe a case you took from intake to resolution.

Strong answer: Gives a specific number, breaks it down by stage, and describes managing deadlines, client contact, and case strategy themselves.

Red flags: Vague numbers (“a lot”), says “we” for everything, or can’t name cases from start to finish.

2 Case Development and Discovery

Ask:

- How do you evaluate a case at intake? What makes you decline one?
- Walk me through how you build damages: medical records, liens, experts, future care.
- Who drafts your discovery demands, bills of particulars, and responses?

Strong answer: Has a repeatable intake and evaluation process, understands liens and damages documentation, and drafts their own discovery.

Red flags: Relies entirely on paralegals for strategy, can’t explain how they value a case, or has never dealt with lien resolution.

3 Depositions (EBTs in NY)

Ask:

- How many depositions have you taken versus defended? In the last 12 months?
- Describe a deposition that changed the value of a case.
- How do you prepare a client to testify?

Strong answer: Gives real numbers, explains strategy (not just logistics), and has specific stories.

Red flags: Has mostly “second-chaired” or “attended,” or can’t describe prep methods.

4 Motion Practice

Ask:

- What motions have you personally drafted and argued? Summary judgment, motions to compel, opposition to dispositive motions?
- Tell me about one you won and one you lost.

Strong answer: Names motion types, outcomes, and what they learned. In NY, ask about opposing summary judgment on liability or the serious injury threshold. In NJ, ask about verbal threshold issues.

Red flags: Only drafts for a supervising attorney, or has never argued in court.

5 Negotiation and Settlement Authority

Ask:

- Who negotiates your cases with adjusters and defense counsel?
- Describe your largest settlement. How did you get there and what was your role?
- How do you advise a client who wants to reject a reasonable offer?

Strong answer: Talks about strategy, timing, leverage points, and client counseling, and shows comfort with mediation and with saying no.

Red flags: “My boss handles settlements,” or can’t explain how they arrived at a number.

6 Trial Experience

Ask:

- How many jury trials have you tried, and in what role (first chair, second chair, or assisted)?
- Which parts did you personally handle: opening, direct, cross, closing, expert examination?
- What happened, and what would you do differently?

Strong answer: Distinguishes clearly between roles, owns both wins and losses, and can discuss jury selection and strategy.

Red flags: Inflates “trial experience” to include arbitrations or cases settled on the courthouse steps, or can’t separate their contributions from the team’s.

7 Client Management and Judgment

Ask:

- Tell me about a difficult client and how you handled it.
- How do you handle a missed deadline or an error? Describe a time you had to escalate.

Strong answer: Takes ownership, communicates early, and knows when to bring in a partner.

Red flags: Blames others, avoids examples, or never escalates.

8 Fit for a Growing Firm

Ask:

- What do you need from a firm to do your best work?
- How do you feel about developing business, marketing, or referral relationships?
- Where do you want to be in 3–5 years?

Strong answer: Wants ownership and growth, is realistic about firm resources, and shows entrepreneurial thinking.

Red flags: Wants a rigid structure with no ambiguity, or has unrealistic compensation expectations.

Quick Score Summary

Category	Score (1-5)	Notes
Docket Ownership		
Case Development & Discovery		
Depositions		
Motion Practice		
Negotiation & Settlement		
Trial Experience		
Client Management & Judgment		
Fit for a Growing Firm		
Average		

Verification tip: Before an offer, ask for 2-3 references who supervised the candidate directly, and confirm case counts and trial roles with them.

Want help applying this to an open role?

Book a free 20-minute hiring plan review. Bring me your open role and I'll tell you what the market looks like, whether your offer is competitive, and how long it will realistically take to fill.

alqadir@casepointrecruiting.com | 914-547-6524

[linkedin.com/in/alqadir-walker-19608829a](https://www.linkedin.com/in/alqadir-walker-19608829a)