

**#ConversationswithNitinPotdar**

## **Internship Handbook for Law Students**

A Practical Guide to Preparation, Applications,  
Law Firm Expectations – and the Mistakes You  
Must Avoid (With Email & CV Template)

Dear Law Student,

If you are reading this, you are already doing one thing right – you are taking your career seriously.

Let me tell you something I have learnt after decades in corporate law: an internship is not a certificate, it is a turning point. It is the first time the profession begins to look at you—not as a “student”, but as someone who is entering the world of responsibility.

In law school you learn concepts. In an internship, you learn conduct.

You learn how to speak when you are unsure. You learn when to ask questions and when to quietly observe. You learn how to write one good email. And you slowly realise that in this profession, small things decide big outcomes.

Through #ConversationsWithNitinPotdar, I have met hundreds of students. Different colleges, different cities, different backgrounds. But the worry is the same:

“Sir, where do I apply?”

“Sir, what if they don’t reply?”

“Sir, I don’t have contacts.”

“Sir, I am not from an NLU.”

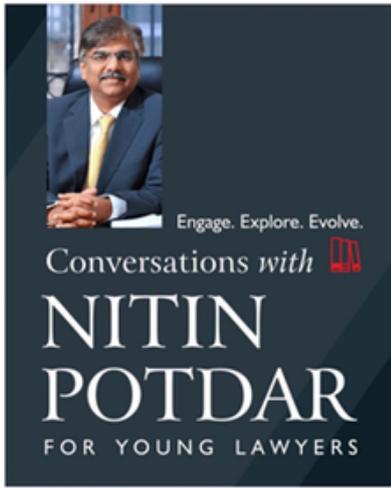
“Sir, my CV is ordinary.”

I have heard this so many times that I decided to write this handbook like I would speak to you in a mentoring call – clearly, honestly, and with warmth. So you feel guided. So you stop guessing. And so you don’t feel alone.

– Nitin Potdar



**Note:** In case you wish to join one-on-one Zoom session of #ConversationswithNitinPotdar, write to me on my LinkedIn Messaging with your short intro and 2 pressing issues. You are also welcome to Join the Mentorship WhatsApp Group for my regular insights/ Guidance notes - Link to join is given in comments section of few LinkedIn Posts. [www.nitinpotdar.com](http://www.nitinpotdar.com)



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## 1. The First Truth: Stop Treating Internship Like a Form

Many students think internship is something you “do” because college requires it. That mindset is the reason many students remain average despite having potential. An internship is not a summer activity. It is not a line on your CV. It is your first professional audition.

When you enter a law firm, a chamber, a corporate office, even an NGO – people are not testing your memory of sections. They are watching something else:

- Do you show up on time?
- Do you respond properly?
- Do you write with respect?
- Do you follow instructions?
- Do you take work seriously?
- Do you behave like someone who can be trusted?

That is why I often tell students something very simple:

**Your internship is a long interview process.**

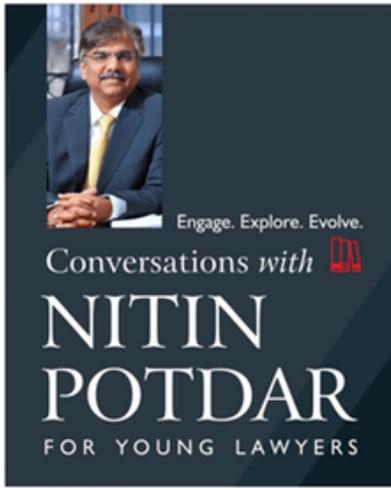
**And the impression you create there lasts longer than you think.**

## 2. The Second Truth: Your Background Is Not the Problem

Before we even talk about strategy, we must clear the noise in your head.

- “I’m first generation.”
- “I don’t have contacts.”
- “I’m not from an NLU.”
- “I’m an introvert.”
- “Only toppers get good internships.”

Listen carefully – these are not facts. These are stories you are telling yourself. I have worked with and mentored some outstanding lawyers over the years. A large number of them were first generation. They didn’t inherit a practice. They didn’t have family connections. They built themselves.



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They were not magical. They were not lucky.

They were simply more prepared – and they did not stop trying.

If you carry this one idea with you, it will change your career:

**Your starting point does not decide your destination. Your discipline does.**

### 3. “Where Should I Apply?” – The Question Everyone Asks

Most students start with one dream: a Tier-1 firm.

There is nothing wrong with dreaming. In fact, it is good. It pushes you to improve your CV, your email, your research and your seriousness. But I also want you to understand something early:

Tier-1 is a goal – not the only gateway to success. Some of the strongest learning happens in:

- **boutique firms** where you actually draft and not just observe,
- **regional firms** where you see real clients and real urgency,
- **chambers** where you learn court craft,
- **corporates & institutions** where you see how business teams think,
- **regulators and tribunals** where you learn the system from inside,
- **NGOs/ Legal Aid Cells** where you see real world.

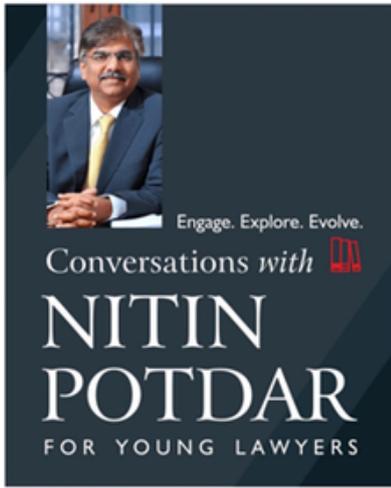
So apply to Tier-1/ 2, yes. But also apply widely and wisely. Because the real purpose is not the brand name. The real purpose is exposure – and continuity.

**A law student who interns regularly, even if the first few places are small, will beat a student who waits forever for the perfect brand.**

### 4. The Moment You Start Applying, One Problem Appears: Confusion

This is where most students lose months.

They open LinkedIn, see a list of firms, and start sending emails randomly. Two hundred emails, three hundred emails... and then they say, “Sir, no one replies.” Let me say this gently but clearly: random application is not strategy.



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Your first task is not to email. Your first task is to shortlist.

Pick 5 Tier I Law Firms you truly admire.

Pick 10–12 Tier-2 or boutique Law Firms that do serious work.

Also add a few corporates, chambers, regulators or tribunals based on your interest.

There is no priority - get all this information in parallel.

Now do something most students avoid because it takes effort:

- Go to their websites and read.
- Read partner profiles.
- Understand practice areas.
- See what kind of work they do.
- Look at their publications.
- Find out if they have internship guidelines.

When you do this, something changes inside you. You stop sounding like a student begging for an opportunity – and you start sounding like a young professional seeking the right exposure. That difference shows in your email. And people can feel it.

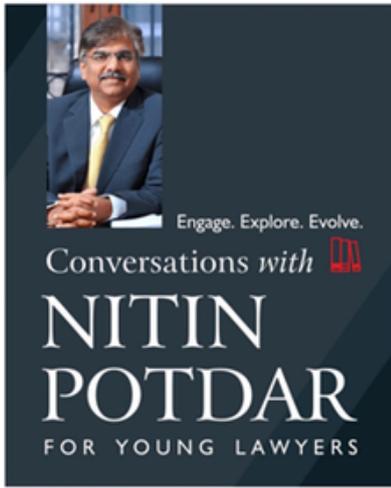
### 5. Then Comes the Biggest Filter: Your Email

I have seen brilliant students lose opportunities because their email was careless.

- Bad subject line. No Greetings
- Casual language. Wrong salutation.
- Long emotional story.
- Generic message copied to 100 firms.
- CV attached without formatting/ spell check.

This profession is built on communication. So the firm assumes: if your first email is careless, your drafting will also be careless. **Remember this: your email and CV are not just a request – they become a record. Firm's HR database keeps it. Next time you write, they may pull up your earlier email and form an opinion instantly.**

So, your email has to be simple, respectful, clean, confident and Professional. That is why I am enclosing a standard email template in this handbook – not so you copy blindly, but so you learn what professional tone sounds like.



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### 6. And Then the Next Anxiety: “My CV Is Ordinary”

Most students write CVs like school essays. Everything is included. Nothing is positioned.

Your CV should not try to prove you are extraordinary. It should quietly show you are serious, relevant, and reliable. Even if you have not done big internships yet, you can still present yourself well – through:

- what you have studied,
- what you have written,
- what you have done on campus,
- what skills you have built (research, drafting, communication),
- and how neatly you present it.

A messy CV creates one impression: **carelessness** | A clean CV creates another: **professionalism**. And in many cases, that is the difference between being shortlisted and being ignored. **I am enclosing a CV template too – because students shouldn't have to guess the format.**

### 7. What Firms Actually Look For (And It's Simpler Than You Think)

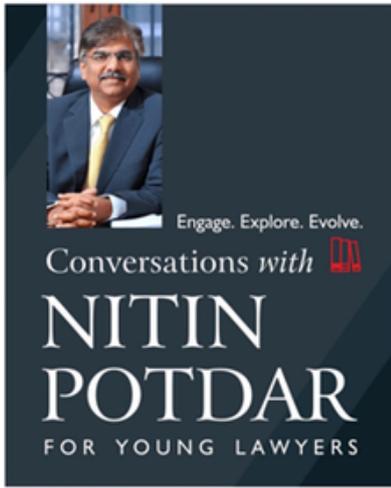
Many students assume firms pick only toppers.  
In reality, firms pick something else: future professionals.

They look for someone who:

- knows why they are applying,
- can follow instructions,
- can write properly,
- can handle work without drama,
- can be trusted with documents and deadlines.

Whether it is a Tier-1 firm or a five-partner boutique, or any corporate or any institution these basics don't change.

**Talent is good. But reliability is gold.**



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### **8. Rejection, Silence, and the Emotional Dip**

Now let us talk about the part no one prepares you for.

You will apply and not hear back.

You will follow up and still not hear back.

You will see others getting internships and you will wonder what is wrong with you.

This is the moment many students quietly give up!

And that is where potential gets wasted.

So let me tell you something as plainly as I can:

Silence is not a verdict on your potential.

It only means your email did not reach the right person, or the firm was full, or they were busy, or they missed it. Your job is not to take rejection personally.

Your job is to keep moving – professionally.

**Apply again. Apply better. Apply smarter.**

And keep building momentum. Because these 3–4 years are not just “law school years.” They are the foundation of your career. And you cannot afford to lose them to hesitation.

**My personal appeal to you is simple: Don't give up on yourself. Please don't. And I promise you – if you stay sincere, serious, and consistent, you will find your way.**

### **9. A Small Story From My Own Student Days**

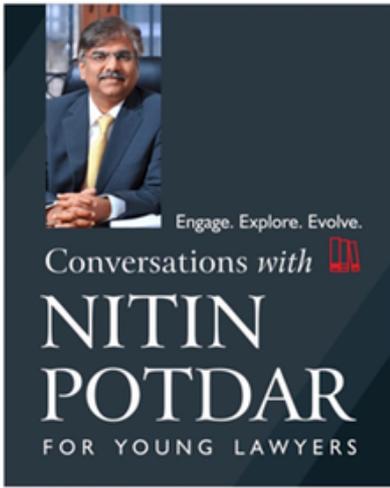
In 1988, after clearing my second year of law, I went to a senior lawyer's boutique property firm in Mumbai.

He asked me to wait outside. I waited. He forgot I was sitting there.

At around 5:30 pm, as he was leaving, he saw me still waiting.

He looked surprised – maybe even slightly embarrassed. But he told me, “Come tomorrow.” I came the next day. And I got the internship. Trust me that internship did not happen because I was special. It happened because I stayed.

Later, I worked in three Tier-1 firms and built my career in Corporate & M&A law.



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### **Forwarding Email**

[Recipient Name]

[Law Firm Name]

[Address]

Dear [Recipient Name],

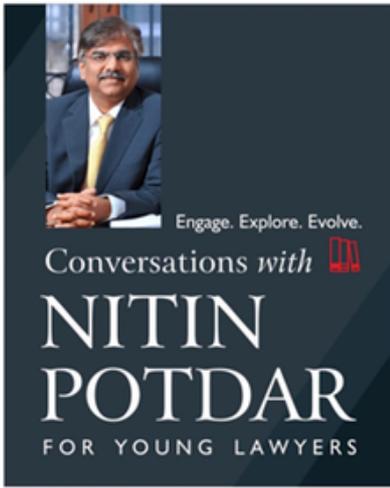
I am a law student [3rd /4th /5th Year] at XYZ University and am writing to express my keen interest in securing an internship opportunity with [Law Firm Name].

As a law student with a strong academic background and a passion for understanding the practical aspects of lawyering, I am eager to learn and contribute to the best of my abilities to your esteemed team. I sincerely believe that an internship with your firm would provide a unique opportunity to apply my academic knowledge in a real-world setting and gain invaluable insights from experienced professionals.

Sir, I request you to review my enclosed CV for further details on my academic achievements and extracurricular participation. I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss how my background and enthusiasm can be an asset to your firm. Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]



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## CV Template

**[Your Name]:**

**Address:** [Your Address];

**Phone:** [Your Phone Number]; Email: [Your Professional Email Address]

**LinkedIn:** [Your LinkedIn Profile Link - Draft this carefully]

**Photo:** [Optional, but professional headshot recommended]

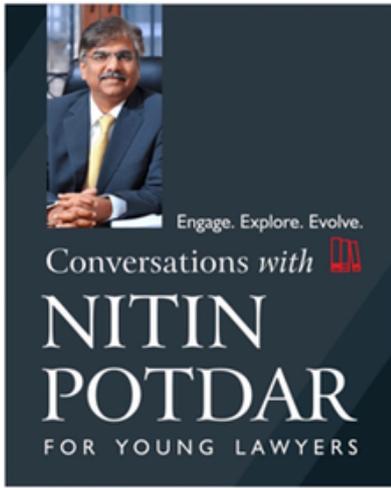
### Objective

Dedicated and highly motivated [3rd/ 4th/ 5th] year law student with a [strong / good] academic background and substantial internship experience in [practice area]. Seeking to leverage legal research, drafting, and client service skills in a challenging legal role at your esteemed law firm.

### Education

B.A. LL.B (Hons) : [Your Law School], [City] | [Month, Year – Expected Month, Year]

- **GPA:** [Your GPA] (Optional: Mention rank if applicable, e.g., Top 10% of class)
- **Relevant Courses:** Corporate Law, Mergers & Acquisitions, Intellectual Property, International Arbitration, Commercial Dispute Resolution
- **Moot Courts & Competitions:**
  - Semi-Finalist, National Moot Court Competition, [Year]
  - Participant, International Arbitration Moot, [Year]
- **Scholarships/Awards:**
  - Dean's List [Year]
  - Merit Scholarship for Academic Excellence [Year]



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### **Work Experience**

#### **Legal Intern – Corporate Department**

[Law Firm Name], [City] | [Month, Year – Month, Year]

Assisted senior associates with drafting and reviewing contracts, NDAs, and shareholder agreements; Conducted legal research on M&A regulations and corporate governance issues for clients.

Prepared case briefs and summaries for client meetings and presentations; Participated in client calls to understand transaction-related queries and provide research support.

#### **Legal Intern – Dispute Resolution**

[Law Firm Name], [City] | [Month, Year – Month, Year]

Conducted research on commercial litigation and arbitration proceedings. Drafted legal notices, pleadings, and affidavits under supervision. Assisted in client consultations and case preparations for hearings. Attended court sessions and prepared case updates for internal use.

### **Skills**

- **Legal Research:** Proficient in Westlaw, Manupatra, SCC Online
- **Drafting & Documentation:** Contracts, Pleadings, Legal Opinions
- **Languages:** Fluent in English and [Other Language], Basic / Proficiency [Foreign Language Very Imp]
- **IT Skills:** MS Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint), AI Tools.

### **Extracurricular Activities:**

- Member, Corporate Law Society, [Law School Name]
- Editor, [Law School Journal Name]
- Volunteer, Legal Aid Clinic, [Law School Name]

**References:** Available upon request.