

Interview preparation

Preparing for an interview is essential. You will be asked a variety of questions to explore not only your skills and legal knowledge, but also how you would fit in with the current structure and people in the team. It can often be a thin line between success and failure so taking the time to master your interview technique means that you will be able to answer any question accurately, concisely and with confidence.

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General

- **Questions:** Anything on your CV can (and you should assume will) be asked during the interview. It is important to know your CV inside out.
- **Answering:** Answer questions succinctly, without rambling. Speak clearly and give yourself time to think about the question before you respond. Never answer with only yes or no. Make sure that you answer the question that is asked - back up your answers with examples where possible – and try to draw on all aspects of your life, not just work related.
- **Body language:** For some people, eye contact, smiling and manners come naturally, but try to remember to do these things during the interview. It can be easy to forget when anticipating the next question or focusing on what your next answer will be.
- **Positive:** Be positive regarding all of your prior experience and show enthusiasm for the future.
- **Timing:** We assume that this is rudimentary advice but for the avoidance of doubt, arrive no earlier than 15 minutes and no later than 5 minutes before the start of your interview.
- **Length:** You should allow for approximately 1 hour for a typical interview.
- **Be yourself:** Remember, you're there because your CV has impressed them.

Introduction

- **Entrance:** The interview starts as soon as you walk through the door of the building (we have heard on more than one occasion that the front desk has been asked how a candidate came across when they arrived).
- **Handshake:** It seems silly that this is a factor but you will be assessed in every aspect and it is important that a limp or iron clad handshake does not sit in the interviewer's mind. Work on this with a friend if you need to.

Common questions

These will cover the typical common questions, for example:

- What do you know about our firm/team?
- Why did you apply for this role?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years' time?

Technical questions

- Obviously your legal experience will form at least some part of the interview. It could be asking you to describe a particular matter that you have worked on, or a thorough technical grilling to see where your understanding is on current statute or case law.
- Your CV will likely guide the partners into questions surrounding what you have done. But if not, make sure you are well-versed in relevant law. Do not be afraid to pick up a text book and revise as if it were an exam.
- Make sure you are also up to date with the latest developments in your practice area.

S.T.A.R.R. – Behavioural interview questions

The STARR (Situation, Task, Action, Result, Reflection) format is an interview technique used to gather all the relevant information about a specific capability that the job requires. This interview format is said to have a higher degree of predictability of future on-the-job performance than the traditional interview.

When preparing examples for your interview keep the following in mind:

S - Situation – Describe the situation you found yourself in

T - Tasks – What tasks did you identify that needed to be done?

A - Actions – What actions did you actually take?

R - Results – What was the outcome?

R - Reflection – What did you learn?

Examples of these questions include:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Provide an example of when you dealt with a conflict.
- Describe a situation in which you had to deal with an upset client or colleague.
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.

Other points to remember:

- Listen to the questions being asked – again, don't feel that you need to jump straight in with an answer, you can pause for a moment to gather your thoughts.
- Make sure the answer you provide answers the actual question being asked.
- Think about your contribution in the example you are providing.

Verbal/numerical reasoning and other written tests

- Some firms will have an additional stage in their recruitment process that involves a verbal/numerical reasoning or written test.
- The verbal/numerical tests will consist of multiple choice questions that are required to be answered within a set time limit. Typically, whether you are successful will depend on how many correct answers you provide rather than the percentage.
- The written test will normally be a case study to assess how you analyse a given scenario.
- You may be required to visit their office to complete, or it can be sent for you to complete online before the end of the process.
- These tests are not usually something that you can prepare for, other than getting yourself into the right frame of mind.

Ending

- Your questions: At the end of the interview you will have the opportunity to ask the partners a question or two. These should be relevant to the firm and/or position and it is a fantastic opportunity to show enthusiasm and interest in the role, whilst also expanding your understanding for the opportunity. Obviously do not ask anything that has already been covered in the interview.
- It is worth noting that failing to ask even a single question when given the opportunity can result in a candidate not being taken forwards purely for this reason...
- Try to pre-qualify your question before asking it. For example: "I understand that some clients like to work with lawyers who have this qualification, is this something that the firm supports or sees value in?"
- If you are feeling particularly bold you can ask the interviewers if they have any concerns from what they have seen, allowing you to address any issues before the end of the meeting. Tread with caution when asking this as it is not a traditional approach.
- Topics that could be safely covered include training and development, team culture or working environment, what you will be involved with in the first 3 months, who you will be working with and reasons for hiring.

Your consultant at Lamprell Legal Recruitment will be able to provide further advice and ensure that you feel as prepared as possible before your next interview.