

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEW

Congratulations! You have secured an interview with a Law Staff client. Your Law Staff recruitment professional will assist you to make your very best impression and to secure the role that best suits your skills, experience and assists you to achieve your goals.

Throughout the interview process the person interviewing you is evaluating your strong and weak points, qualifications, skills and personal qualities to determine your suitability for the role and whether your attitude and motivation fit with the culture of the firm.

Our team of recruitment professionals aim to work in partnership with you in achieving your best performance on the day and thereafter at any subsequent interviews. You should fully utilise our service to ensure your personal success.

Remember – you are being interviewed because the firm you are seeing wants to hire someone! They are interviewing you because they believe that you have the potential to be that person.

SOME MUST DO'S

- Alleviate your nerves by thinking of the interview as a general discussion or conversation about your skills and experience.
- Pay attention to your grooming – first impressions are key! Generally a business suit is the accepted norm.
- Arrive on time, or (ideally) a few minutes early.
- Fill out any application forms neatly and complete all details required.
- Greet the interviewer by name and shake hands firmly. Make good eye contact and smile!
- Wait until you are offered a chair before taking a seat, sit upright, look interested and smile!
- Let the interviewer set the scope of the meeting. DON'T walk in and take the lead. The interviewers will generally have their own format, so just go with it.
- Be a good listener as well as talker. Give & take 50/50 in the discussion.
- Always be truthful, frank and give relevant answers. DON'T try to dress things up. Straightforward confidence in your ability will be more effective and better received.
- Use eye contact with all of the interviewers while you talk. DON'T fidget or cross your arms. Show enthusiasm and interest in what the interviewer says.
- Where possible give explanations and specific examples to support your answers. Relate your background and skills to the position.

HAVE FUN – RELAX AND ENJOY THE DISCUSSION

- You only made it to the interview because there is already interest in your background, experience and/or qualifications.
- Do your homework on yourself before the interview. Really think about all you have to offer, what you are good at, what others have complimented you on, positive comments you have received in performance appraisals.
- Do your research on the organisation and the interviewers before the interview.

MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

- DON'T allow minor objections to colour your excitement.
- Not everything you see and hear will excite you about the job. Maintain your positive attitude and rethink the minor things AFTER the interview. You can reject an offer only if you get one first!

STRESS YOUR POSITIVES

- Avoid negative qualifiers such as no; not really; can't; wouldn't; shouldn't. It is fine to say "no" in answer to one or two questions but not lots!
- Again stress your positives e.g. Q: "Can you use Microsoft Word for Windows?" A: "I am familiar with a Windows environment using WordPerfect".

STRENGTHS

- Talk about your skill base, technical skills and competencies, NOT your personal traits. Focus on:
 - Planning, organisation and coordination skills.
 - Motivation and willingness to do the job.
 - Specific skills you bring the specific job.
- Avoid saying communication skills or people skills – everyone else says that!
- Emphasise your strengths in a factual and sincere manner – you are best positioned to sell yourself, what you can offer and that you can do the job
- Always support your answers up with an example – this will inevitably lead you to mentioning other strengths, without having to list them. For example: "I am highly organised. For instance, I keep an electronic diary of 'things to do' which I update daily. This ensures that I never miss a Court date or critical event and that I keep my clients informed on a regular basis as to the progress of their matter."

GIVE PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

- Wherever possible, give specific and relevant practical examples to back up the things you say about yourself.
- What, why, how, results.
- See our Behavioural Interview Questions Guideline on our website.

PERSONALITY

- If asked about your personality, focus on work-related and job-specific traits.
- Use strong adjectives. For example, confident, determined, proactive, self-motivated, conscientious, diligent, energetic, goal-focused.

- DON'T SAY friendly, outgoing, easy to get along with – the interviewer will determine for themselves whether you have these traits in the interview.

WEAKNESSES

- Turn weaknesses into a positive with transition words. For example:
 - “One of the things I’m working on is... Getting better at it...”
 - “I used to be relatively weak in the area of... So, I really worked on it and now...”
- In other words, state your weakness / area for improvement and then explain what you have done, or are still working on, to overcome it.

CLARIFY BROAD QUESTIONS

- If asked a broad question such as “tell me about yourself” ask interviewer to explain what they are looking for.
- “What specific areas are you interested in?”
- The temptation is to talk too much when asked a very broad question and you may lose the interviewer's interest and still not tell them whatever it is they are seeking.

COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANISATION

- If asked where do you want to be in 5 years, be broad and general rather than specific.
- DON'T say “in your chair!”
- One response could be to say that you wish to continue to develop your skills and progress into more senior roles when and if available.

REASONS FOR LEAVING

- If asked why you left your current or last position, generally interviewers are looking for “ghosts in the closet” or reasons NOT to hire you.
- Always compliment your current or last organisation. If you criticise them, the interviewer will assume that you will put down their organisation when you leave.
- Frame your answer positively. For example: “I’ve gained great experience and what I am looking for now is...(skill growth; specialised experience etc).”
- DON'T say “I’ve learnt all I can and wish to move on” as this can sound arrogant.

ASKING QUESTIONS

- Towards the end of the interview you may be asked whether you have any questions.
- Avoid saying “you’ve answered everything I was going to ask”. No one can cover every aspect of your potential job in one brief discussion.
- Have some questions about the firm formulated before you go in. For example:
 - What type of clients do you have (if not already listed on their website)?
 - How much client contact will I have?
 - What training is available?
 - What long term career prospects are there for me at your firm? i.e. What is the typical career path for this role?
 - Can you explain the culture of the team I would be joining?

- What is the management structure like?
 - I have seen from your website that the Construction group is one of your largest teams, how many people are in the team? What is the break down between support and professional staff?
 - Your Property team has a very strong presence in the marketplace, what makes this team so successful?
 - Training courses (internal and external)
 - IT set up/precedent base
 - Where would I fit into the current structure of the department?
 - How has the vacancy arisen - expansion or replacement?
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- DON'T enquire about salary, holidays, bonuses, etc. at the interview – unless you are absolutely sure they want to hire you!
 - Through your questioning, demonstrate your knowledge of the firm and that you have looked into their website.
 - If you can't think of any, expand on some aspect already covered in the interview. For example: "You mentioned earlier that
 - If really stumped, you could say "I'm sure I will think of many questions as soon as I walk out of here, but can I take this opportunity to say I'm very interested in the job."

SALARY

- NEVER initiate salary discussion.
- If asked, give a general range of expectations and say, for example that you are looking for a reasonable offer based on the responsibilities and seniority of the role.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

- Indicate directly that you are really interested in the position and working for their firm. Express genuine interest and enthusiasm for the role.
- Option questions at this stage are "Is there anything about my background that you would like me to elaborate on in terms of my ability to perform this role" or "What is the process from here?"
- Thank the interviewer for their time and for considering your application.
- Shake hands firmly with the interviewers. Smile!

SECOND INTERVIEWS

- Treat it like a first interview.
- If being interviewed by a different person do not assume that they have been fully briefed on you. Chances are, they have not and you will need to follow the same process with the same positive attitude.

**Preparation is your key to success.
Good luck from all the team at Law Staff!**