

Interview Success

a comprehensive guide

*Try not to become a person of success
but rather to become a person of **value.***

~ Albert Einstein



Once you are granted an interview the majority of the hard work is done because the prospective employer has committed to spending time with you. Now is the chance for you to shine, and to show that you are even better in person than you are on paper. It is an opportunity for you to market yourself as well as ascertain the suitability of the role on offer.

~ Elvira Naiman, Managing Director

Take the time to plan

PREPARATION

- ↘ Know the address and time of the interview as well as the names and titles of all attendees. Always allow yourself sufficient time to get to the interview. There is nothing worse than arriving at an interview hot and flustered.
- ↘ Ensure that you are adequately briefed on the job and conduct some background research on the firm and individuals with whom you are meeting. Any prospective employer will want to discern that you are knowledgeable on any recent news that the firm has published, as well as what its core practice groups or areas of business are. While our consultants will endeavor to assist you as much as possible in the acquisition of such information, it is also recommended that you visit the firm's website.
- ↘ Thoroughly acquaint yourself with your own resume, including the work that you have undertaken, specific examples of your work, and clients you have dealt with. Pay particular attention to things that you may have listed as accomplishments or achievements and be prepared to discuss these upon request.
- ↘ Prepare the questions that you might possibly ask during the interview and rehearse them. For example:
 - A detailed description of the position
 - Size of the division/department/practice group
 - Why is the position available?
 - Culture of the firm
 - What level of supervision/mentoring exists
 - Ask the employer to describe their client base
 - What opportunities exist for career progression?
 - What is the induction and training process?
 - What is the firm's potential for growth?
 - What would be the typical budget applied to someone at your level?
 - What exposure to clients will you have?
- ↘ Grooming and first impressions are always important considerations. Plan what you will wear in advance. Dress conservatively, but maintain a look that is contemporary and polished. No one has ever missed out on a job opportunity because they have been overdressed. Shoes must be polished and appropriate to the outfit, and it is recommended that females wear pantyhose.
- ↘ Ask a friend or partner to assist you by conducting a mock interview with you where they ask you questions and you provide answers as though you were in an interview. Ask them to observe your body language. This will be particularly useful if you have not experienced an interview for a while, and is likely to ensure that you are less nervous when the time comes.

*I believe in challenges so great you know
they are going to stretch you.* ~ Sir Edmund Hillary

It all comes down to this...

THE BIG DAY

This is your chance to put all your preparation and experience into practice. During the interview, the employer will consider your total performance including body language, communication skills and of course your answers. Many employers will also look for culture fit and rapport with the people with whom you are likely to be working.

➤ On the way to the interview walk tall and smile. By the time you arrive for the interview you will feel good. Remember, some butterflies in the stomach are okay.

➤ Punctuality is crucial, and arriving late or too early is very unprofessional. If you do arrive early, wait in the lobby and do not proceed to the offices of the interviewer until it is close to the time allocated for your appointment. If you are running late, and you are going to be delayed for more than ten minutes, call the prospective employer in advance. Otherwise, apologise, provide an acceptable explanation and move on to concentrating on the interview.

➤ Upon arriving at reception, remember that you are already making an impression on your prospective employers. Just prior to asking for the interviewer by name, tell yourself that you are meeting with non-adversarial colleagues for a friendly chat. By adopting this attitude your body language is more likely to be relaxed yet confident, and regardless of how senior, serious, or seemingly unapproachable the interviewer might be, you will be less likely to feel flustered.

➤ Greet the interviewer and shake hands firmly. A pleasantry such as 'lovely to meet you', or 'thank you for taking the time to meet with me today', is considered appropriate.

➤ It is important to greet the interviewer by his or her first name, and be sure of the pronunciation. If you are not positive as to the name of the partner or other interviewer, ask your consultant how to pronounce the name before attending the interview.

➤ Do not sit down before you are offered a seat. Then, take a seat carefully, making sure that you are sitting upright (but not so that you appear uptight). Look alert and appear interested at all times.

➤ The interviewer will look for the following factors in assessing your interview positively:

- A balanced and thoughtful approach
- Clear expression of thought
- Confidence and enthusiasm
- Tact, maturity, courtesy and politeness
- A relaxed yet professional approach – try to smile as much as possible
- Positive body language – do not slouch, cross your arms in front of you, or fidget
- Evidence of career planning, or alternatively a sufficient explanation for lack thereof
- Maintenance of eye contact with all the attendees. Do not focus on one to the exclusion of others
- A firm, positive handshake, given with a confident smile
- Intelligent questions
- A flexible and commercial approach
- Knowledge of the job and of the firm

↓ Every interview is different, but be prepared with answers as well as supporting examples to questions such as:

- Why did you become a lawyer?
- Why are you interested in the role and why would you like to work for us?
- What are your career goals?
- Where do you see yourself in five years time?
- What is the largest matter that you are working on at the moment?
- Describe a complex matter you have handled
- How much marketing do you undertake?
- What is the most significant obstacle you have had to overcome?
- How do you manage your time?
- How do you deal with pressure at work?
- What makes you a good lawyer?
- What book are you reading at the moment?
- Do you prefer to work autonomously or in a team environment?
- What do you consider to be your main strengths and weaknesses?
- What was your last salary and bonus?
- What sort of hours do you work?
- What will you hope to achieve by working here?
- What is your current charge out rate and budget?
- What would a previous employer say about you?

- What do you think determines a person's progress at a firm?
- What have you done that displays initiative?
- What have you done to develop professionally?
- In what way have you developed your ability to encourage and motivate those around you?
- How do you spend your spare time, what are your hobbies?
- Why are you seeking to move and why did you leave your current/previous role?

↓ Ensure that you listen to the questions being asked, and answer as fully as possible without getting carried away. Remember that they are looking for clarity of thought and succinct disciplined thinking. It is perfectly acceptable to pause for a moment in order to compose a response. Answering immediately as the question is finished may indicate that you have not listened to the question. Provide as much explanation as possible, and avoid simple yes and no answers. Instead, provide responses that are clear, relevant and provide adequate information.

↓ If the interviewer starts asking behaviour based questions eg. 'give me an example of a stressful situation you have dealt with' use the 'SAO' method. What was the SITUATION-ACTION-OUTCOME. This will focus your answer.

At the finish line

LUCRATIVE CLOSURE

↓ If there was anything about the position or the firm that impressed you, mention it briefly.

↓ Ask what the next step will be and what timing they are looking at for filling the role.

↓ It is acceptable and encouraged that during the closing section of the interview, you mention something along the lines of, 'I am very interested in the role and look forward to hearing from you'.

↓ If the position is offered to you, it is appropriate to accept it at that point. However, if you would like to have some time to think about it, or would rather discuss the matter with your recruitment consultant, be tactful and courteous and ask for some time to consider. Be prepared to set a date by which you will be able to provide an answer.

↓ Thank the interviewer(s) for his/her/their time and consideration of you.

*The way to get started is to quit talking
and **begin doing.** ~Walt Disney*

