

# JLEGAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

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## FOR EMPLOYERS



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The interview is a crucial part of the recruitment process and yet many hiring managers are not given any training in conducting interviews. After many years' experience, and gaining extensive feedback from clients and candidates, we at JLegal have put together a list of guidelines to help you get the most out of an interview. We hope they help. Feel free to contact your JLegal consultant to discuss further.

An interview is an opportunity for two-way information exchange. One of the most common errors an interviewer can make is to assume they do not need to 'sell' the role or the company. The candidate will need to gather as much information on the position, and his or her potential new employer, as much as the employer needs to gather information about the candidate.

One of the main reasons a candidate will withdraw from the role after an interview is due to the 'aggressive' or 'rude' style of the interviewer. This is how good candidates are lost. While we acknowledge some employers want to see how candidates react under pressure, there are other ways of determining this. Ask yourself - would you want to join a company where your only impression of the staff was that they were rude and unpleasant? The following pages should help you set the tone for effective and successful interviews.

*“You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.”*

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

***First impressions count... and that works both ways.***

Each candidate is a prospective employee and just as their first impression of you is important, they will also be assessing your company as they walk through the door.

Ensure that each candidate is expected by whoever will be greeting them, be this your reception staff or other personnel.

Candidates should not be left waiting in reception areas; they can be understandably nervous about being seen by everyone walking through reception. Show them to the interview room as soon as possible.

Make sure you have a suitable private room, undisturbed by phone calls, staff and other distractions. The room should be clean, presentable, large enough for all participants and ideally light-filled. The candidate will most probably not have the opportunity to see the rest of your office and so will be evaluating their potential work conditions on their impressions of the reception and the interview room.

Read the CV beforehand and write a list of questions you may want addressed.

Prepare open-ended questions and be confident to delve further.

*“You never get a second chance to make a first impression.”*

## DURING THE INTERVIEW

Review the CV just before the interview commences.

When the interview commences, introduce yourself and other members of the interviewing panel (if any) and if appropriate, give a brief run down on the history of the company or the details of your department, team make-up etc.

The aim of a successful interview is for both parties to gain a better understanding of each other, and determine the suitability of the candidate to the role. Which means neither the interviewer nor the candidate should monopolise the conversation. An inexperienced interviewer will spend the majority of the interview time talking, but ideally the candidate will be the one who speaks the most. If you find you are doing the majority of the talking; stop, ask open-ended questions and ask the candidate to elaborate further.

If an open-ended question has not resulted in the information you want, delve further. You can ask for specific examples. E.g. How would you describe your management style? Give me an example of when you used this managerial style successfully....an example when it hasn't worked? How did you modify your behaviour?

Getting your candidate relaxed and comfortable is generally the best method of getting them to open up and be willing to discuss more in detail. You will get more information and insight into the personality of the candidate by creating an environment where they feel comfortable talking to you and divulging information. While it can be appropriate to ask difficult questions to see how the candidate responds under pressure, remember it is an interview and not an interrogation.

For sample interview questions, please refer to the pages on Open Ended and Behavioural-Based questions.

*“About a year ago, I had the most bizarre job interview of my life. After a very nice tour of the company, I was deposited in a room with the four folks who were to conduct the interview. The first person pulled out a list of questions and asked me a dozen or so questions. I answered them all without any trouble while the four of them listened intently. Then the second interviewer pulled out her list and asked the EXACT SAME QUESTIONS, word for word. At first I thought it was a joke, but she kept asking. What was I to do? I answered them all again. Then the third person, and the fourth, asked the identical questions yet again. “Give me an example of a time you experienced conflict in the workplace and tell me how you resolved it” is not a question that I enjoy answering four times over in front of the same four people! Maybe they were trying to judge my consistency, but it was a very uncomfortable interview and a strange way to treat a prospective employee. They did offer me the job, but I turned it down. That’s not the kind of workplace that I was looking for!”*

From: abcnews.go.com  
Workplace Best and Worst: Bad Interviews

A good interviewer will:

- Ask open ended questions.
- Ask in-depth questions and delve further to get more information.
- Not spend the majority of the interview talking themselves.
- Create an environment where the candidate feels comfortable and is inclined to talk.
- Understand an aggressive, overly interrogative interview does not create a good impression.
- Understand the need to create a positive impression on the candidate about the company and the role.
- Understand the interview is a forum for two-way communication.

The main reasons a candidate will gain a negative impression about a company during an interview include:

- Being interviewed by an arrogant or rude interviewer.
- Being asked ridiculous questions.
- The interviewer not having read the candidate's CV.
- The interviewer being late and/or seemingly disinterested or distracted during the interview.

*“I'm not going to progress with this job as the interviewers in the room just kept walking in and out of the interview when I was trying to concentrate on another interviewer who was also conducting the interview by phone in another country. Please let them know I am not interested in them anymore.”* Feedback from a JLegal candidate

## **CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**

Give the candidate an opportunity to ask any questions regarding the role or the company.

Ask the candidate how they feel about the role. Do they feel they will be able to undertake it, what skills or values will they be able to bring to the table, any areas they feel they might need assistance with or are lacking in?

If you are confident you want the candidate to progress to the next stage, you can make them aware of the next step in the interview process and inform them that either yourself or JLegal will be in touch.

If there is any element of doubt, or you still have other candidates to see, politely let the candidate know that you are still in the midst of the interview process and you will get back to them as soon as possible.

Finally, thank the candidate for their time.

## POST INTERVIEW

Immediately after the interview, make any notes to assist you in remembering the candidate.

Fulfil any promises you have made to the candidate, even if you don't think you will proceed with that candidate. If you have said you will get back to them by an allotted day or time, then do so.

Many negotiations collapse at this stage due to interviewers not informing candidates or JLegal regarding their interview status, and the candidates being frustrated at the lack of feedback. Candidates do feel they deserve the common courtesy of at least an answer one way or the other after having made the effort to attend the interview.

If you have an unexpected delay in coming to a decision, then keep your candidate and JLegal informed. Your consultant at JLegal is then able to manage the expectations of the candidate, and "keep them warm" if there is still interest in that candidate.

Involve your recruitment consultant at JLegal. They can also liaise with the candidate in organising follow-up interviews, offers, salary negotiations, start dates, etc.

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS: OPEN ENDED

Sample questions which may be applicable to your interview.

### Open ended questions

- What has caused you to look for a new role?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Tell me about yourself and your career to date.
- Why would you like to join this firm/company?
- What do you know about our firm/current deals/business?
- What do you see as your main strengths?
- What do you see as your weaknesses/ areas to improve?
- What style of management do you respond best to?
- How would you describe your management style?
- How would your colleagues or boss describe you?
- Why did you choose to become a lawyer?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years 'time? 10 years 'time?
- What has been your greatest achievement to date?

*“I had a job interview at an insurance company once and the lady said ‘Where do you see yourself in five years?’ and I said ‘Celebrating the fifth year anniversary of you asking me this question.’”* Mitch Hedberg

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS: BEHAVIOURAL BASED

### Scenario or Behavioural-based questions

Behavioural-based interviewing is based on the assumption that past behaviour is the best predictor of future performance. It is a probing style of interview, designed to discover how a potential employee would act in specific employment-related situations. It also ascertains if you have previously experienced the type of problem that you are likely to come across in the role.

A behavioural-based question will ask how you behaved in a given situation and will be more probing and more specific than traditional based questions, which makes it much harder to give responses that are untrue or exaggerated. Normally, they will begin with the words, "Tell me about a time when...", "Describe a time when you...", or "Give me an example of a time when..." Sometimes behavioural-based questions may be phrased negatively, for example "Give me an example of a time when you made a bad decision..."

Some examples of behavioural-based questions you can ask are:

- Give me an example of how you dealt with a difficult colleague. **[Interpersonal skills]**
- Give me an example of when you had difficulty getting someone to accept your ideas. How did you overcome this and what was your approach? **[Persuasion and buy-in skills]**
- Give me an example of when you went over and beyond the call of duty. **[Motivation & dedication]**
- How do you decide what to prioritise when scheduling your work? **[Time management]**
- Describe a time you faced a highly stressful situation and you coped. **[Stress tolerance]**

*"During job interviews, when they ask: 'What is your worst quality?' I always say: 'Flatulence'. That way I get my own office."* Dan Thompson

You can also use behavioural-based technique to ask more technical questions, for example:

- Tell me about your experience with [refer to a deal on the CV] and what was the most significant issue or issues you had to deal with? **[Knowledge and understanding of a transaction]**
- What were the particular challenges you faced working in [choose relevant jurisdiction] and how did you overcome these? **[How to navigate difficult jurisdictions/knowledge of particular regulatory or legal "quirks" pertinent to that jurisdiction]**

Please feel free to contact your JLegal consultant to discuss interview questions and interviewing techniques further. A useful piece of advice for both candidate and interviewer is to just relax. Contrary to what Katharine Hepburn thought...

*"Death will be a great relief. No more interviews."* Katharine Hepburn

Some people take it more seriously than others. Here are some examples of interview questions which have been asked... but not by us. Perhaps you might want to throw a curve ball and see what answer you get!

“If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?”

“Using a scale of 1 to 10, rate yourself on how weird you are.”

“Given the numbers 1 to 1,000, what is the minimum number of guesses needed to find a specific number, if you are given the hint ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ for each guess you make?”

“Explain quantum electrodynamics in two minutes, starting now.”

“How many balloons would fit in this room?”

“If you were shrunk to the size of a pencil and put in a blender, how would you get out?”

“If you could be any superhero, which one would you be?”

“How do you weigh an elephant without using a scale?”

“Why do you think only a small percentage of the population makes over \$125,000 a year?”

“How many bricks are there in Shanghai? Consider only residential buildings.”