



Interview Preparation for Lawyers

Interviewing over the Telephone

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Although it is increasingly commonplace for firms to use videoconferencing at some stage in their international recruitment, it remains the case that many first interviews are conducted over the telephone.

You certainly won't need us to tell you how to take a phone call, but there is a certain level of pressure that comes with an interview, particularly where you could have two or three people on the other end of the line, and if you are not prepared, that pressure could just prevent you from performing to your best. Take a look at our advice below.

PRE-INTERVIEW

- **Prepare for an interview, not a 'chat'**, in just the same way as you would for a face to face. (See our *Interview Preparation for Lawyers – Interviewing for an International role*).
- **Speak to your recruitment consultant** and find out if they have any insight into how the firm usually approaches interviews and whether there is anything specific you should prepare for, such as technical questions, competency questions.
- **Do your research** on the people who are interviewing you – their profiles, their background before they joined, their LinkedIn page, articles, deal announcements.
- **Practice**. Perhaps not essential if you are an experienced lawyer on the telephone day in, day out, but otherwise, consider speaking with your consultant or a suitable friend to see if they have tips on tone or presentation.

ORGANISATION

- **Know the details**. Who is calling you, at what time and on what number? Also try to get an estimate for how long it is likely to take (albeit our advice is always to allow up to an hour).
- **Know who you should call if there is any problem** at your end or if the call doesn't come at the expected time. In most cases this will be the consultant, but it may be sensible to have a number for the interviewer as well.
- **Arrange a quiet location**, free of any distractions. Home is ideal but if making the call at your office, book a meeting room. If you are taking the call on your lunchbreak, avoid noisy coffee shops.
- If you are using a mobile phone, **ensure that the battery is charged, and the signal is good** wherever you are planning to take the call. Consider using headphones with a microphone. A landline is always better if possible.
- **Print your CV in large font and highlight any key points**. Make some brief notes about the firm and the interviewers and any questions you wish to ask. Have a pen and paper to hand.

DURING THE CALL

- **Be ready at least ten minutes early**, to avoid sounding rushed. This will give you time to read through your notes, or if you're nervous, grab a newspaper or book to take your mind off the upcoming call.
- When the call begins, **let them speak**. The emphasis is on the interviewer at this stage. Allow a second when they finish speaking before beginning your answer – this will ensure that you avoid talking over them.

- Aim to make your voice as **clear and professional** as possible. There is a tendency to speak more quickly and fill any gaps when under pressure. Slowing down (just a touch!) can help to add confidence and authority.
- **Be positive and enthusiastic.** Without the visual indications that you are interested, and engaged, it is important to project this in your tone. Evidence suggests that it helps to smile even if they can't see it!
- **Try to be concise and avoid rambling.** It is easy to waffle when there are no visual signals to play off. When you finish speaking, don't be afraid of a moment of silence, they may simply be thinking about your answer.
- As the call heads towards a close, take the opportunity (if appropriate) to **emphasise why you believe you are suitable for the role** and be sure to let them know that you are interested.

POST-CALL

- In closing the call, you should have the opportunity to ask questions and it may be useful to **establish what the next steps in the interview process would be** and what the likely timeframe is.
- Take the opportunity to **provide feedback to your consultant** – what you thought of them, what your reservations might be, anything you think didn't go as well, and your overall thoughts on taking it forward.
- If you wish to contact the interviewers directly to thank them for their time, that is fine, but we would always recommend you **keep it simple** and sending in the next day or two following the call.

TIPS

- When speaking with multiple people, **make a mental note of who is who**, and where appropriate try to address individuals directly. "I think David, you mentioned earlier that the ability to think on your feet is important, and..."
- **If the connection is poor** or you can't hear them (as can be the case on speakerphone or multi-location calls) make them aware of this. Whilst you want to avoid rearranging, you will struggle if you can't hear them!
- **If you are on a limited timeframe** and you need to wrap up the call at a certain time, explain this at the outset or ideally, make your consultant aware beforehand so they can set it up accordingly.
- **Try to let your personality come through.** Much as preparation is important, firms tend to hire people that they like, particularly when recruiting from overseas, so as far as you can, be yourself.

OTHER RESOURCES

For more interview tips look at the resources page on our website where you will find articles on Interviewing for an International role; Interviewing for Senior Level Roles; and Interviewing by Videoconference.

CONTACT

For more information on interview preparation or to discuss any aspect of your international job search, please get in touch with:

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