

# MCLEOD DUMINY LEGAL RECRUITMENT

## INTERVIEW TIPS: HOW TO GET THAT JOB OFFER

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**Congratulations on securing an interview. Now you should try and do everything you can to secure an offer. You want to be the one deciding whether to accept and this is the first step in making that good impression. It won't be earth shattering advice when we say that preparation is vital, but hopefully this will assist in helping you frame that preparation.**

### Do Your Homework

**Obviously your first port of call will be the firm's own website and information you can find out about the partners, their practice and the culture of the firm. You may be lucky enough to have a job description but, particularly for private practice roles, that is seldom the case.**

- Delve far beyond the law firm bios and Google the people you are meeting. It will tell you what they have been working on and what they are writing about. This will give you clues about their particular areas of interest and help you put together the all-important questions for the end of the meeting. You can also point them towards any experience you have in that particular subject which will help create rapport and a positive conversation.
- Know your CV inside and out. For each deal/case listed, you should be able to discuss the legal issues, the parties involved, your role in the deal, and the outcome particularly if it was reported. We would also suggest having the key thing you learnt from the experience up your sleeve.
- Be totally on top of the area of work you are interviewing for, even if it is new to you. What would the hot topic be if five employment/property/IP/corporate partners were out to dinner that night? Importantly you also need to know why it is a hot topic.
- Be able to explain why you are interested in the firm/ the role. A firm will want to know that you are motivated to work for them and enthusiastic about what they do.

### Frequently Asked Questions

Whilst it is important not to sound too rehearsed, there are a few questions or at least themes you can pre-empt. To have a broad idea of how you will approach these is important because ideally you should have examples to back up all your answers. It is better to have these at the front of your mind to call on. Nothing is worse than walking out of an interview and immediately thinking of a better example you could've given.

This approach will also help you with what are known as 'Behaviour Based Questions'. There are plenty of examples of these to be found on the internet, but in basic terms they are those questions that start with 'tell us about a time when...' or 'give us an example of when you had to...'

## Frequently Asked Questions Continued

**The following are questions you should definitely be ready for:**

**‘Tell me a bit about yourself’** – This is a deliberately broad question and can actually be quite hard to answer because it is hard to know when to stop. Do not simply regurgitate your CV or cover letter. It should be concise and stick to two or three key points. It has been described as an opportunity to give your ‘elevator pitch’. E.g. “I am originally from Dunedin but moved up to Auckland for University and haven’t looked back. I was admitted in 2013 and was lucky enough to start work in my preferred area of IP. I particularly like working with clients bringing their ideas to life and then making sure their financial position is well protected. I have really enjoyed my time with my current firm and have learnt a lot, but I feel that I am at the stage of my career where I am ready to take a step up and for the time being there is no space for me to do that if I stay put.”

**‘What is your biggest weakness?’** – Such a cliché, but still a favourite. Discuss a trait that used to be a weakness and explain about how you overcame it. For example: “When I got out of law school, I used to be pretty nervous with public speaking. After joining Toastmasters, I was able to get over that initial anxiety and improve my public speaking skills.” You can also mention a current weakness that you are working on. As clichéd as the question is, avoid clichéd answers such as ‘I am a perfectionist’ or ‘I work too hard’.

**Technical questions** – These types of questions are sometimes the scariest because they are hard to predict, but in fact they should be easiest because it is your area of expertise after all. If it is not an area you are familiar with then say so, and go on to explain how you would approach the question. You could also point to something similar you have worked on. Remember they will have your CV so if it isn’t on there then it won’t be a total surprise to them if you don’t know it. Never, ever, ever guess!

**Do you have any questions for us?** – This can be the most important part of the interview so make sure you have plenty up your sleeve. Your research should help you with this. If you feel it is an area they have already covered then ask them to tell you more about it. Do not ask about salary, holidays or anything you could’ve found out via Google. There are always questions you can ask about team structure, support staff levels, client strategy, CSR and firm culture.

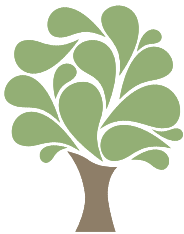
**Other common interview questions include:**

- What is it about your practice area that particularly interests you?
- What do you enjoy most/least about the work you do?
- What do you find most difficult/frustrating about your current position?
- Describe a problem encountered in a case and how you resolved it.
- What are your short/medium/long term goals?

**Another useful exercise can be to think of five things about you that aren’t on your CV that you would like the interviewers to know by the time you leave the room. We would suggest these are more likely to be traits or strengths you possess, for example if you are tenacious or loyal. Again, backing this up with examples is important. You will be surprised how useful it will be to have those sort of examples already in mind, even though you are unlikely to be asked a question on it directly.**

## Other Important Things To Remember

- Never denigrate your current firm or the partners.
- Appearance and body language are important and dress code has become harder to navigate as we move away from the suit as the default. It is best to err on the side of conservative until you have a better read of the norm for the firm. Make eye contact with the interviewers and remember to smile! It is important that they like you and a smile is universally positive.
- An interview is a sales pitch although it can be hard to talk about your best qualities without embarrassment and, if you do, it can easily present as conceited or arrogant. A good way to show off your best is using feedback you have had from others, particularly partners and clients.
- Lots of people struggle with confidence when attending an interview. Remember they have a problem, i.e. a hole in their team, and they hope that you will be the solution. Most partners dislike recruiting and the time it takes, so they want you to be the right person for them. It means you are always on the front foot when you walk through the door.
- It is important to present the real you. The best version of you, but you nonetheless. That is the only way you get the right job for you. It is a two way street.



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