



Interview Preparation

Candidate Guide

About Chadwick Nott

Founded in 1991 Chadwick Nott is now firmly established as a leading recruitment specialist. The company offers lawyers national and international solutions in both the private practice and in-house legal markets.

Operating from a network of offices across the UK, location focused teams provide lawyers at all levels with the ideal blend of dedicated local knowledge and national overview. Our clients include national, regional, niche and local private practises, as well as many leading firms, industries & commerce.

Clients and candidates alike appreciate our ability to consistently deliver at every level by implementing tailored recruitment services. Based around a straightforward, quality driven, commercial approach we look to add value at every turn.

As part of this process we have produced a number of candidate guides including this one on interview preparation.

How to Approach an Interview

Research shows that over 80% of candidates do little or no preparation before an interview. That's good news for you.

Applying the basic set of principles (often referred to as the five Ps) set out below already puts you in the top 20%, and significantly increases your chances of success.

Remember, you should come out of an interview having answered three basic questions:

- Do you have the technical skills and experience to do the job?
- Will you have the right attitude and commitment to do the job?
- Will you fit in?

So let's look at the steps you can take to ensure you are best placed to do so.

Preparation

Always get hold of the following information before the interview:

- Research the firm - websites are often a great starting point, but try to get a behind-the-scenes perspective using your own network.
- Find out about the people interviewing you - many websites carry partner profiles, so make sure you know their names, their positions at the firm and, where relevant, the type of work they are involved in.

- Familiarise yourself with the job spec - what are they looking for? Knowing this will give you the best chance to persuade the firm that you meet their needs.
- Confirm the format of the interview - will there be a psychometric test or a technical exercise?

Practice

Gathering your thoughts on likely questions beforehand is only going to enhance your overall presentation.

Consider the points you want to make, and how to structure your responses to best sell your strengths against their requirements.

Areas to consider include:

- Know your CV inside out - be ready to expand on any decisions you've made regarding study or previous career moves and be confident talking about your key achievements.
- Strengths and weaknesses - analyse and assess them honestly. Be prepared to answer questions on them in a way that illustrates your skills and how you could contribute to the firm.
- Reasons for leaving - guard against being too negative or critical about your current firm. Focus more on what you hope the move will achieve rather than what you are keen to leave behind.
- Career aims - both short and longer term, and how they relate to the position on offer.
- Two-way street - think through what you want from the meeting and what questions you need to ask. Interviewers often feedback that they are as impressed with the questions a candidate asks as the answers they have given.

Top tip - we'd never advocate preparing answers to questions to roll out word for word, but it may be wise to prepare a brief career overview in response to that popular kick-off question 'tell me something about yourself'. If it does come up, you are off to a flying start, and will be set up for the remainder of the interview.

Punctuality

- Confirm the exact address where the interview is taking place - many firms have two offices in the same city so it's important to know which one you need to be at.
- Avoid the rush - allow yourself plenty of travel time but always take a contact number in case of any unforeseen delays.
- Arrive there early - ten minutes in reception will not only give you time to collect your thoughts but also a chance to observe the firm first-hand and to gain greater insight into your prospective employer.
- Make sure you know roughly how long the interview will last - you don't want to be fretting about your next meeting.

Presentation - First Impressions Count

70% of a first impression is based on appearance and body language. At an interview you are marketing a product - yourself. It's worth bearing these points in mind:

- Dress to impress - ask yourself 'do I look the part?' You never get a second chance to make a first impression.
- Firm but fair - a strong but not overbearing handshake and a natural smile complete the positive picture.
- Be confident but courteous.

You've hardly said a word and your interviewer is already thinking. "Great, looks good... confident.. I could see this candidate fitting in round here".

Performance

- Are you sitting comfortably? - practice a comfortable sitting position beforehand that feels natural. Relaxed shoulders present an open and confident manner. If you tend to fidget, keep your hands apart and don't hold a pen or copy of your CV.
- Be aware of your voice - pace, tone and intonation all contribute to your success in an interview. If the role demands energy and enthusiasm, show some.
- Be yourself - personality and culture fit is important, act naturally and ask yourself whether the environment suits you.
- Listen carefully and think before you speak - pauses seem longer than they are, and the interviewers would rather hear the best answer you can provide, not the quickest.
- Make your answers clear and concise - always use positive language. You're in control of what you want your interviewer to know, so take responsibility for answering the three key questions from the start. Focus on selling yourself throughout but don't be tempted to fill silences when you finish.
- Stay positive throughout - very few people walk out of an interview not wishing they could go back and do something better. Do not get discouraged if a particular point doesn't go as well as hoped. Your interviewers will form opinions over the whole interview rather than one question.
- Do I mention money? Although you've thought about the salary side of things, always allow your interviewer to initiate discussions. This often won't occur during the first interview. Negotiate as late as possible: you will have most influence when the interviewer has decided they want to offer you the job.
- Ask questions - as well as completing the picture from your perspective, this shows you have done your research, and demonstrates a genuine interest in the firm.

Common Interview Questions

That you might be asked:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why would you like to work for this firm in particular?
- Why are you looking to qualify into this practice area?
- What are your key strengths and weaknesses?
- Describe two major achievements in your career.
- Tell me about a complex deal you have been involved in.
- Talk me through a difficult deadline.
- Tell me about your most challenging deal and how did you tackle it?
- Give me an example of when you have worked under pressure.
- How have you been involved in marketing and networking during your training contract?
- Give me an example of when your work was criticized and how did you handle it?
- How do you measure your own performance?
- What do you want from your next role?
- What does success mean to you?
- What are the key things that drive or motivate you?
- Where do you see yourself in two to five years' time?
- What are your career aspirations?
- Describe your preferred firm culture.

That you could ask:

- How would you describe the firm's culture? (Do some research to back this question up)
- What do you see as the key challenges of this role?
- What are the firm's major business objectives in the coming year?
- How are employees measured in terms of performance?
- What processes exist to support employees in their career development?
- Tell me more about the firm's training programme.
- How would you describe the firm's values?
- What can I expect to be involved in during my first six months of joining?
- What are the department's priorities during the next six months?

Remember - It is a Business Meeting, Not an Exam

Top tip - What Next? A few useful post interview pointers

- Make notes immediately afterwards on what you thought went well, what didn't and what you'd do differently next time.
- Pass your interview feedback on to your consultant.
- If you are not using a recruitment agency follow up with a brief thank you e-mail, reiterating your interest in the position. If you have any additional information, which might help the company make a decision in your favour, offer it here.

Birmingham

3rd Floor, 172 Edmund St, Birmingham, B3 2HB
(t): 0121 200 2444

Bristol

2nd Floor, 25 King Street, Bristol, BS1 4PB
(t): 0117 925 9962

London

4th Floor, 9 Devonshire Square, London, EC2M 4HP
(t): 0203 096 4549

Manchester

3rd Floor, Suite 5, One King Street, Manchester, M2 6AW
(t): 0161 828 5410

Reading

87 Broad Street, Reading, RG1 2AP
(t): 0118 322 4631

