



PRACTICE BRIEFING

Seeking Employment as a Lawyer

INTRODUCTION

This Practice Briefing provides advice and information on best practices for seeking employment as a provider of legal services. The information has been compiled by the New Zealand Law Society and is aimed at first-time job seekers, although the information will also be useful to anyone who is attempting to change employment.

LOOKING FOR WORK

If you've graduated with a law qualification but are still looking for work, the best of luck. Sometimes it's not easy. All we can suggest is that you persevere. Do not be frightened of making direct contact with a law firm or organisation. The worst that can happen is they will advise you there are no job openings at present: the best is that they may want to talk with you further, or will keep your details on file in case something comes up.

This Practice Briefing also suggests some places you might consider in your search.

RESOURCES TO HELP WITH FINDING WORK

University career services

Auckland University	http://www.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/for/current-students/cs-career-planning/university-careers-service
Auckland University	http://careerhub.auckland.ac.nz
Auckland University of Technology	https://careerhub.aut.ac.nz/Login.chpx
Canterbury University	http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/careers/uccareerhub_for_students.shtml



Otago University	http://www.otago.ac.nz/careers
Victoria University of Wellington	http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/careers/resources/degree_options/law.aspx
Victoria University	http://careerhub.vuw.ac.nz/Login.chpx?ReturnUrl=/Default.chpx
Waikato University	http://www.waikato.ac.nz/sasd/careers

Job websites

New Zealand Law Society	http://my.lawsociety.org.nz/in_practice/jobs
Government jobs online	http://www.jobs.govt.nz
Hays	https://www.hays.net.nz/jobs/legal-jobs/
LawFuel	http://www.lawfuel.co.nz/
Seek	http://www.seek.co.nz
Student Job Search	http://www.sjs.co.nz
Trademe jobs	http://www.trademe.co.nz/Trade-me-jobs

Legal Recruitment agencies

Clarity Consulting	http://www.claritynz.com/
Epic Legal Recruits	https://epiclegal.co.nz/jobs
JLR Lawyer & Executive Search Specialists	http://www.jlrnz.com/
Legal Personnel	http://www.legalpersonnel.co.nz
Leo Legal Recruitment	http://leorecruitment.co.nz/
McLeod Duminy	http://mcleodduminy.co.nz/
Momentum	http://www.momentum.co.nz
Niche Recruiting Specialists	http://www.nicherecruitment.co.nz
Randstad Legal	http://www.randstad.co.nz/
Robert Walters	https://www.robertwalters.co.nz/
Simply Legal	http://www.simplylegal.co.nz
Williams Legal Recruitment	http://williamslegalrecruitment.co.nz

Summer clerking and graduate recruitment

The following law firms advise they have summer clerking or graduate programmes available:

Anderson Lloyd	http://www.andersonlloyd.co.nz
Anthony Harper	http://www.anthonharper.co.nz
Bell Gully	https://www.bellgully.com/careers/summer-clerk-programme
Brookfields	http://www.brookfields.co.nz
Buddle Findlay	http://www.buddlefindlay.com/careers/
Cavell Leitch Law	http://www.cavell.co.nz/
Chapman Tripp	http://www.chapmantripp.co.nz
DLA Piper	https://www.dlapiper.com/en/newzealand/focus/new-zealand-careers/law-clerk-programme/
Duncan Cotterrill	http://www.duncancotterrill.com/careers
Kensington Swan	http://www.kensingtonswan.com
Mackenzie Elvin	http://www.mackenzie-elvin.com
Mayne Wetherell	http://www.maynewetherell.com
Minter Ellison Rudd Watts	http://www.minterellison.co.nz
Morrison Kent	http://www.morrisonkent.co.nz
Preston Russell Law	http://www.prlaw.co.nz
Russell McVeagh	http://www.russellmcveagh.com
Saunders & Co	http://www.saunders.co.nz
Simpson Grierson	http://www.simpsongrierson.com
Wilson Harle	http://www.wilsonharle.com

New Zealand Law Society branch CV services

Several New Zealand Law Society branches receive and hold the CVs of lawyers and people preparing for admission to the bar.

Auckland branch: The scheme has the objective of matching people preparing for admission with employers looking for new employees. To participate, provide a copy of your CV to glenda.macdonald@lawsociety.org.nz. Include a cover sheet, including areas of work interest. The branch holds CVs for three months, after which you will be contacted to see whether you would like to make any changes, and to ensure you still want your CV held.

When the branch receives an inquiry from a prospective employer with matching areas of work, appropriate CVs are forwarded (unless you have requested to be contacted before the CV is sent). It is up to the prospective employer to contact you.

Canterbury-Westland branch: The branch is willing to receive CVs for people preparing for admission who are seeking employment. Email a copy of your CV to malcolm.ellis@lawsociety.org.nz. When the branch receives inquiries from prospective employers it will forward CVs as appropriate.

Hawke's Bay branch: The Hawke's Bay branch is willing to receive and hold CVs of lawyers and people preparing for admission who are seeking employment. To participate, email a copy of your CV, along with a covering letter to hawkesbay@lawsociety.org.nz. The branch will hold the CV for three months, after which you will be contacted to see whether you still want it held.

Otago branch: The Otago branch is willing to receive and hold CVs of lawyers and people preparing for admission who are seeking employment. To participate, email a copy of your CV to debbie.ericsson@lawsociety.org.nz. When the branch receives inquiries from prospective employers it will forward CVs as appropriate.

Wellington branch: The branch receives and holds the CVs of lawyers and people preparing for admission who are looking for employment. The CVs are held by the branch for around six months before the sender is contacted to see if work is still being sought. Email a copy of your CV to wellington@lawsociety.org.nz along with a cover sheet which includes areas of work interest. When the branch receives inquiries from prospective employers it will forward CVs as appropriate.

OTHER POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Accounting

Deloitte	http://www.deloitte.co.nz
Ernst & Young	http://www.ey.com/nz
KPMG	http://www.kpmg.co.nz
Price Waterhouse Coopers	http://www.pwc.com/nz/en/index.jhtml

Business

Fonterra	http://www.fonterra.com/wps/wcm/connect/fonterra.com/fonterra.com/Our+Business/Working+at+Fonterra/Students+and+Graduates/
Public Trust Office	http://www.publictrust.co.nz
Spark	https://www.spark.co.nz/graduates
Westpac	http://www.westpac.co.nz/olcontent/olcontent.nsf/Content/Graduate+programme

Government

Accident Compensation Corporation	http://www.acc.co.nz
Crown Law Office	http://www.crownlaw.govt.nz
Housing New Zealand	http://www.hnzc.co.nz/hnzc/web/home.htm
Inland Revenue Department	http://www.ird.govt.nz
Law Commission	http://www.lawcom.govt.nz
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment	http://www.mbie.govt.nz/
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	http://www.mfat.govt.nz
Ministry of Justice	http://www.justice.govt.nz
Office of the Ombudsman	http://www.ombudsmen.parliament.nz
Parliamentary Counsel's Office	http://www.pco.parliament.govt.nz
Treasury	http://www.treasury.govt.nz/careers/graduate/recruitment/summerinternships

Law firms

Most New Zealand law firms have their own website. The best ways to locate law firms in regions of interest to you are by consulting a law directory or by using the Law Society's Find a Lawyer service.

New Zealand has two law directories.

The Brookers Law Directory is published annually in October and contains contact information for almost all New Zealand law practices. The directory costs \$135 + GST and can be ordered from <http://www.thomsonreuters.co.nz/brookers-law-directory-2018-book/productdetail/125662> or your law school library or local public library may hold a copy.

The ADLS Inc NZ Lawyers Directory is published every six months, in May and November, and costs \$65 + GST for members or \$80 + GST for lawyers who are non-ADLS members. It can be ordered from <https://www.adls.org.nz/adls-store/publications-and-merchandise/nz-lawyers-directory/>

The New Zealand Law Society's Find a Lawyer service is located at <http://www.nzls.org.nz/RegistrationDB/faces/presentation/general/FindLawyerOrOrganisation.jsp>. If you want to find a list of law practices in a particular location, select the "organisation" box and enter a location. Click on the names in the resulting list to find out more details, including a contact phone number.

New Zealand has three national groupings of law firms. LawLink is a network of 17 law firms around New Zealand, NZ LAW Ltd is an association of independent law firms, as is Law Alliance NZ.

LawLink	http://www.lawlink.co.nz/working.php
NZ LAW Ltd	http://www.nzlaw.co.nz/careers/
Law Alliance NZ	https://www.lawalliancenz.co.nz/index.php

Legal publishers

CCH	http://www.cch.co.nz/nz/careers/default.aspx
LexisNexis	http://www.lexisnexis.co.nz/careers/professional-candidates/
Thomson Reuters	https://www.thomsonreuters.co.nz/work-for-us

Other resources

New Zealand Law Students Association publication Lex, recruitment issue	http://www.nzlsa.co.nz/NZLSA/Publications_files/The%20LEX.pdf
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APPLYING FOR A JOB

Whether you are responding to an expression of interest from an inquiry, or applying for an advertised job, you should always include a covering letter with your application.

Cover Letter

General

- » Make your cover letter concise: keep it to one page only.
- » Use a standard business letter format and a clear and easy to read 10 or 12 point font.
- » Ensure it is edited for style, clarity, spelling and grammar. Get someone to proofread your cover letter and give you feedback.
- » Avoid repeating the information contained in your CV. Highlight and elaborate on the most relevant aspects of it.
- » Don't simply copy and paste a general letter; they must be tailored to the specific role.
- » Keep a copy of your covering letter. You will want to refer back to it in preparing for an interview.

Research

- » Firstly, carefully consider the position – what are the skills and attributes required? Do you have these skills? How can you best show that you have them?
- » The organisation – find out as much as you can about it. Show why you are suited to the organisation. Researching the organisation is a good way to show you are enthusiastic,

thorough and hard-working.

Purpose

- » The object of the cover letter is to encourage the employer to consider your application and CV carefully. You need to convince them to give you an interview and that you are a serious contender for the job.
- » Your cover letter is an opportunity to make a positive first impression, highlighting and drawing attention to the most relevant aspects of your CV. Don't be afraid to sell yourself.
- » Quantify claims you make about your achievements and attributes rather than simply stating them.
- » Try to convey a positive attitude and confidence in yourself (without sounding cocky). For example, avoid prefacing statements with "I believe" or "I feel" as this lessens their impact.
- » If you are a recent graduate, don't rely solely on your academic achievements. Mention work experience, clerking, volunteering, etc.

Structure

- » Find out who to address the letter to. Avoid using "To Whom It May Concern". Call to find out if you don't know. Ensure their name and title is spelled correctly.
- » In the first paragraphs state the role you are applying for, why you are applying and (briefly) who you are.
- » Then explain how you meet the requirements of the role, highlight your strengths and how they relate to the role, show that you have researched the organisation, and also explain anything in your CV that may be of concern to the employer (eg, gaps between employment).
- » In the final paragraph state that you would like to interview for the role. Personalise the sign-off with something like "Thank you," "Thank you for your consideration" or "Looking forward to hearing from you soon". Include a digital-appropriate signature if you can.

CV checklist

General points

- » Your CV is your first chance to show off your suitability for employment to a potential employer.
- » Attention to detail is everything. Your CV must be edited carefully. Check and double check for clarity, grammar, punctuation, spelling and formatting. As with the cover letter, get someone to proofread it.
- » Keep the layout uncluttered to enhance read ability. Use a clear font, in 10 or 12 point, leave lines between sections.
- » Make sure your CV is relevant to the position applied for and up-to-date. Leave out irrelevant information: you do not need to include your life story.
- » Keep it as brief as possible. If you have less than five years' work experience try to limit

yourself to two pages.

- » To avoid making generalisations, support statements about yourself with specific examples.
- » Remember you are selling yourself so be positive – highlight your strengths not your weaknesses. Show your enthusiasm and competency for the work you seek. Describe achievements as your own, using active words (eg, achieved, created, designed, implemented).
- » Be truthful, avoid exaggeration, and steer clear of humour as this may be taken the wrong way.
- » Keep dates aligned to one side of the page.
- » Avoid unexplained gaps in your career history – say why you weren't working. If you were travelling, or on maternity leave, say so.

Personal details

- » Include your address, phone numbers and email address.
- » Use your name as a heading rather than “curriculum vitae”.
- » Other details to consider include the possession of driver's licence and date of birth.

Personal statement (optional)

- » Keep it brief, to the point and personalised to the position you are applying for.
- » Consider what you are trying to convey to a potential employer. Avoid making a generic statement. Does it contribute to a positive perception of you as being suitable for the role?

Education and qualifications

- » List your qualifications in reverse chronological order, ie current position first.
- » Include the name of the establishments where you obtained your qualifications, the start and finish dates of study and the full title of qualification.
- » Consider including brief details of any dissertation/thesis you may have completed (if it is relevant).

Work experience

- » Include work experience that is relevant to the position.
- » Include the name and location of each organisation, the nature of the business, the start and end dates of work and what you did there.
- » Include relevant unpaid work such as volunteering or interning.
- » Avoid repetition. If a more recent role has the same responsibilities, these can be either omitted or summarised in the earlier role to save space.

Skills profile (optional)

- » Emphasise skills relevant to the position being applied for. Check the job description for an

indication of the skills sought.

- » Illustrate skills by way of examples. Instead of simply stating that you have excellent communication skills, reference achievements or qualifications that support this claim.
- » IT skills and computer literacy skills are worth mentioning. State what programmes you are familiar with and your level of proficiency.

Interests (optional)

- » This can be used to give a more rounded picture of yourself. If you choose to include this, try and say something about your interests rather than simply listing them.
- » Highlight interests that demonstrate skills that the employer seeks or ones that illustrate self-motivation and commitment.
- » Less relevant or generic interests are best left out unless you have something particular to say about them.

Referees

- » It may be sufficient to note that references are “available on request”.
- » Get the permission of a referee before listing them. You may wish to brief the referees on the position you are applying for and provide them with a copy of your CV.
- » If you list a referee, make sure to give their name, contact details and job title. Avoid clichés. According to one source [<http://blog.linkedin.com/2010/12/14/2010-top10-profile-buzzwords/>] these are the top 10 most over-used phrases in CVs:
 - » Extensive experience
 - » Innovative
 - » Motivated
 - » Results-oriented
 - » Dynamic
 - » Proven track record
 - » Team player
 - » Fast-paced
 - » Problem solver
 - » Entrepreneurial

THE JOB INTERVIEW

When you get asked to an interview, take the time to prepare thoroughly. Remember that the people interviewing you have probably an hour at most to form a favourable impression that you will add value to their firm or business.

Research

The best way to allay your fears and instil confidence in yourself before an interview is to prepare well.

Reflecting on yourself

- » What do you want to say about yourself?
- » What aspects of your skills and experience are relevant to the role and you want to emphasise.

Researching the firm/organisation

- » What is their corporate culture/vision?
- » What attributes do they place emphasis on? Ambitious driven types or communicative team players?
- » Do you know who will be interviewing you?
- » What work have they done in the past?

Anticipate interview questions and think about how you would answer them (see appendix for common interview questions). Have questions ready to ask the interviewers (see appendix for ideas).

Rehearse

- » Develop answers to likely questions (many are listed below).
- » Rehearse responses aloud, get someone to fire questions at you.
- » Don't memorise answers word for word, however.

The day of the interview

- » Allow plenty of time to get ready.
- » Find out directions, where to go, and how long it will take to get there in advance.
- » While you may be too nervous to eat, it is vital to do so.
- » Look the part: professional attire, shoes shined, be clean and neat.
- » Keep up to date with any legal or other relevant news stories – they may come up in the interview.
- » Make sure you bring with you anything you were asked to bring, eg passport, driver's licence, copies of qualifications, transcripts, references, relevant work samples, any research you have done, etc. If you have time before the interview you can review this material.
- » Arrive a few minutes early so you don't feel rushed before the interview. Let the receptionist know you have arrived.
- » Use the bathroom beforehand as you could be in the interview room for some time.
- » Remember, first impressions count. Be polite to everyone, including anyone not in the interview room.

- » Learn the interviewers' names and titles, check pronunciation if in doubt.

The interview

- » Have your cellphone and other devices turned off.
- » Maintain eye contact. Smile - but don't overdo it.
- » Give a firm handshake on arrival and at the end.
- » Wait to be told where to sit. If you are not told and there is more than one interviewer, make sure you position yourself so you face them all and don't have to keep turning your head.
- » Be aware of your posture. Don't slouch or fidget. Holding your hands together on the table in front of you is a good position as it prevents you from fidgeting. You can gesture and return your hands to this position naturally.
- » Speak with conviction. Be persuasive, use active verbs in preference to saying you "did" something.
- » Remember, the interviewer will probably assume you are nervous - and you will probably appear less nervous than you are.
- » Address each interviewer equally - don't just talk to the lead interviewer.
- » Think before you answer questions, take time to formulate your answers, don't hesitate to ask for a moment to think, or for them to repeat the question. Avoid waffling, be succinct but don't sell yourself short.
- » Actively listen to all of the question before you answer. You can start your answer by rephrasing their question, eg "I think my greatest weakness in this role would be..."
- » If a question is in two/three parts, make sure you answer each part. You can always ask the interviewer to repeat parts of it.
- » Ensure that every time you answer a question about your experiences you spell out why something you did was effective or valuable. Describe the situation you were in, outline what you did, what the result was and why it was a positive outcome.
- » Remember that non-law jobs and short-term holiday jobs can be a very useful way of answering some questions about your skills and experience. Working in or leading a team of apple pickers requires the same teamwork skills as anywhere else.
- » Be flexible, be sure your answers reflect what was asked of you and not what you expected to be asked.
- » If you are not sure you have answered a question fully, ask.
- » Be honest. And make sure the answers you give correspond with the information you have given in your CV and cover letter.
- » At the end of the interview, thank the interviewers for inviting you to the interview. Ask when you can expect to hear back from them. Get the business cards of your interviewers.

FOLLOW UP

Reflect on the interview

- » What did you do well?
- » What could you do better next time?
- » Within 24 hours email or call to thank the interviewer or HR person for the interview and restate your desire for the job.
- » If you haven't heard back in the time they promised, call them back.
- » If you hear back and they don't offer you the job ask them for feedback - what were the main reasons for not offering you the job?

THE SECOND INTERVIEW

Sometimes a firm will conduct second-round interviews if the standard is high. During a second interview, you will likely be asked more specific questions about the job, the company, your ability to perform in the job, and how your skills and abilities translate into what the company is seeking in the person they are going to hire. There may be some curveballs thrown at you in the second interview, as they find out as much about you as possible, so be prepared for anything.

APPENDIX

Common interview questions

- » "Tell me about yourself". An open-ended question like this is a chance to tout your achievements and show why you are the best candidate for the job, not tell your life story. Keep it short, two or three minutes at most, ask them if they would like any more details. Focus on your professional experience and qualifications.
- » "Why did you leave your old job?" Be diplomatic if it did not end amicably.
- » "Why do you want to work for us? Why should we hire you? Tell me what you know about this organisation?"
- » "Why do you want to be a lawyer?" Don't mention money!
- » "What do you think is your best work-related achievement? What was your biggest failure?"
- » "What is your greatest strength? What can you offer us?"
- » "How would your colleagues/friends describe you?"
- » "How do you manage your time?"
- » "Have you ever held a position of responsibility?" You can use non-legal examples, such as being captain or coach of a sports team.
- » "Tell me about a time you went beyond the call of duty at work."
- » "Tell me about a decision you made that you later regretted." Put a positive spin on this, ie what you learned from it.

- » “Tell me about a suggestion you made that was implemented at your work. Tell me a time you showed initiative.”
- » “Tell me about a conflict you have solved. How do you resolve conflict?”
- » “Tell me about any issues you have had with a previous manager or colleague and how you resolved them.”
- » “Tell me about a successful team project you have been involved in. What was your role and how did it contribute to the success of the project?”
- » “Where do you see yourself in five year’s time? What are your career aspirations/long term goals?”
- » “Do you prefer to work independently or in a team? Are you a team player? Are you a leader or a follower?” Make sure you emphasise your team-working skills.
- » “Why do you want to work here? What do you know about this firm?”
- » “Where else have you applied?”
- » “How do you handle pressure/stressful situations?” Hint: well! - and follow it with an example.
- » “What is your greatest weakness?” Think about how you can present a weakness in a positive light. Make sure the weakness you mention is not a key element of the position.

Questions to ask at the interview

- » “If I was offered the job, when could I start?”
- » “How do you measure success in the job?”
- » “What responsibilities would I have on a day-to-day basis?”
- » “When do you expect to make a final decision? When can I expect to hear back from you?”
- » Postpone asking about salary, holidays, benefits etc until you have been made an offer.

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Information in the Practice Briefing series is provided by the Law Society as a service to members. This briefing is intended to provide guidance and information on best practices. Some of the information and requirements may change over time and should be checked before any action is taken.

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