

Preparing for your interview session

Here are some questions directed to assisting in your preparations for tender interviews.

Questions/areas of interest are likely to fall into these categories:

- confirmation that what they've read is what they'll get - they will want to be certain that your firm is as it has presented in the proposal - that you are "the goods" and not just great on paper
- clarifications of our responses to the RFP - areas requiring more detail, amplification
- extensions/additions to the RFP - things the client has since wished it asked, including issues which have arisen during the evaluation process
- concerns and negotiation items - obstacles to the client being happy to go ahead and areas where they may wish to drive for more
- implementation considerations - they will want to understand whether your firm has the capacity to absorb additional work volume and work in areas which it has previously not served the client, whether you've figured out how you'll manage, and how you'll forge relationships with their business units
- cultural fit - that your firm feels right and will be internally saleable to its personnel
- any questions which you may have for the client.

To prepare adequately requires you to be prepared for all which is even remotely likely to arise in the interview.

Many benefits of this thorough - as opposed to minimalist - approach to preparation are obvious.

A less obvious benefit is that you will approach the session with calm confidence, knowing that you're going to put in a great performance, and relax into expressing your personality and engaging the interviewers.

A selection of likely questions you will be asked by a selection panel follows.

Confirmations

- What role will each of you have, day to day, with our work ?
- How do you recognise conflict of interest and how do you respond ?
- Are there any circumstances under which you would act against us ?
- We specifically required that you maintain confidentiality of our RFP. Have you disclosed it to any other party ?
- What do you understand as our key strategic drivers?
- Are you able to handle all categories of our legal needs ?
- What are the key aspects of your proposal ?
- What value added services will you provide ?
- Tell us about your corporate social responsibility or pro bono programme.

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Clarifications

- When a partner delegates work to another lawyer, will we be charged for that delegation? How?
- Are there any limits on the value added services you offer?
- You did not propose alternative pricing? Does that mean you do not see alternatives as appropriate?
- You say that you will align your interests with ours in terms of costs - how do you propose to do this?
- Will you staff our work with part-time lawyers? How will this work in terms of achieving service levels?
- How do you control legal costs for clients?
- What are the performance-based cost structures with which you have experience?
- Could you upload opinions and advice to a database for us and we could retrieve this?
- Will you second lawyers to our internal legal group, and on what commercial terms?
- Who will manage the relationship with us day-to-day?
- How will any complaints be escalated?

Extensions/additions

- How will you allocate our work within your firm?
- What are the criteria you use to determine whether a file should be handled by a partner, senior associate, or other lawyer?
- What recent innovations have you introduced?
- What is your prediction of our necessary future legal spending versus our expenditure in the last two years?
- What has been your most successful strategy in lowering a client's legal costs?
- Where do you see your firm in, say, five years time? Where would we fit into this?
- Would you be prepared to introduce a reward system for lawyers working on our files which reflects our satisfaction?

- How would your firm advance our wider interests with regulators, professional bodies, and government?
- How can your firm work with us reduce our legal costs?

Concerns and negotiation items

- Would you be prepared to increase the value added services allocation to us?
- It is of concern to us that your firm does not have a recognised quality certification.
- Why are there so few female partners and leaders at your firm?
- Your firm has acted against us in the past. Can you assure us that this would not be repeated?
- Your staff turnover is high. What are you doing to address this?
- Are you prepared to fix your prices for three years?
- What room is there for discounting on the prices you've quoted?
- If we doubled work volume to your firm, how much price relief could you give us?
- Your prices are higher than many of your competitors. Will you match them?
- Will you provide financial remedies for service failures?

Implementation

- If we wanted to triple its overall work volume with your firm, how quickly could you absorb this increase?
- Would increased work volume place stress on any of your internal resources? How would you manage this?
- If we transferred in-progress files to your firm, how would you approach the task?

Cultural fit

- How do we fit with your firm's culture?
- How do you see the balance between internal and external legal services?