

Business & Careers

Separating yourself in a crowded field of candidates



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The Headhunter

I recently completed a general counsel search where the candidate who landed the opportunity beat out a field of talented candidates whose industry-specific experience and subject-matter knowledge clearly dwarfed her own. And yet, she was chosen for the role, and the CEO and board of directors would tell you it wasn't even close.

So what happened in this process that led an otherwise dark horse candidate to emerge as the candidate of choice in a highly competitive, sought-after GC position? In part because this candidate knew she was an outside choice for the role, she did an extraordinary amount of preparation for the role—she had researched the organization, its structure and recent media profile events,

and had a thorough understanding of the existing legal team and structure, and external counsel relationships. At points in the interview it seemed she knew more about the organization than some of the senior executives in the interview process.

One key question interviewers often use as a proxy for understanding how a potential candidate approaches practice and role responsibility is to ask “tell us what you know about our organization.” In this case, the candidate clearly demonstrated her thoroughness and attention to detail by the level of research and understanding she had for the role and the organization.

In every interview, there will be opportunities where you will be asked to provide examples that demonstrate relevant practice experience, or simply navigating complex issues. Having three specific examples “pre-loaded” for the interview, and then looking for opportunities to introduce these stories, are an ideal way to showcase your talent.

Know your stories in advance. Even going so far as to practice how you will tell them allows you to consider what questions your

examples may generate (and have answers prepared), and also ensure your answers are tailored to speak to your key strengths. Where your experience may not specifically match the identified needs of a given role, consider how you can help translate it into relevant terms.

In answering and also asking questions, specificity helps bring clarity to the interview. One of the great potentials for misunderstanding in this process is when two parties who have not had previous interactions rely on different shorthand. For example, one party may think “rarely relying on external counsel” means using them once a week, whereas another might interpret this as “once a year.”

Getting the conversation into specifics highlights your strengths in attention to detail (widely considered a significant asset for counsel), and also ensures clarity of communication between parties (also, as it turns out, a key attribute for effective counsel).

Perhaps the most important skill you can develop in interviews is to convert the conversation from the theoretical to the practical. One of the best ways to do this is to turn

the discussion to what both parties envision happening in the first 90 days on the job.

In doing so, it gets both parties to envision what the relationship might look like, and also creates an opportunity for the candidate to identify possible issues, opportunities, and challenges the role may face—which may help them equally assess whether the role is right for them.

Once the discussion has shifted from “whether” to “how” the parties are going to work together, the chances of that candidate being the finalist candidate increase exponentially.

In the end, it is these types of issues that separate the finalist candidate from the pool of otherwise suitably talented options for a role. As they say, people want to know how much you care, before they care how much you know—and interviews are no exception.

Warren Smith is managing partner of The Counsel Network, Canada's oldest lawyer recruitment and career consulting firm. He also is the first Canadian to be elected president of the National Association of Legal Search Consultants (NALSC). Follow him on twitter @law/headhunter.



JUDICIAL VACANCY ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE OTTAWA BILINGUAL POSITION

The Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee advises the Attorney General of Ontario on the appointment of Judges to the Ontario Court of Justice, and invites applications for a bilingual judicial position in Ottawa.

This appointment, while primarily a criminal law position, may also involve presiding over family law matters. This position also involves travel within the region as assigned by the Regional Senior Justice and/or the Chief Justice.

The minimum requirement to apply to be a Judge in the Ontario Court of Justice is **ten years completed** membership as a barrister and solicitor at the Bar of one of the Provinces or Territories of Canada.

All candidates must apply either by submitting 14 copies of the **current (April 2014)** completed Judicial Candidate Information Form in the first instance or by a short letter (14 copies) if the current form has been submitted within the **previous 12 months**. **Should you wish to change any information in your application, you must send in 14 copies of a fully revised Judicial Candidate Information Form.**

If you wish to apply and need a current Judicial Candidate Information Form, or if you would like further information, please contact:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
Tel: (416) 326-4060, Fax: (416) 212-7316
Website: www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/jaac/

All applications, either sent by courier, mail or hand delivery, **must** be sent to:

Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee
c/o Ministry of Government Services Mail Delivery
77 Wellesley Street West, Room M2B-88
Macdonald Block, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N3

Applications must be on the current prescribed form and must be **TYPEWRITTEN** or **COMPUTER GENERATED** and **RECEIVED BY 4:30 p.m. on Friday, January 16, 2015**. **CANDIDATES ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE 14 COPIES OF THEIR APPLICATION FORM OR LETTER.** A Fax copy will be accepted only if 14 copies of the application or letter are sent concurrently by overnight courier. Applications received after this date **WILL NOT** be considered.

The Judiciary of the Ontario Court of Justice should reasonably reflect the diversity of the population it serves. Applications from members of equality-seeking groups are encouraged.



POSTE À POURVOIR AU SEIN DE LA MAGISTRATURE COUR DE JUSTICE DE L'ONTARIO OTTAWA POSTE BILINGUE

Le Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature conseille le Procureur général de l'Ontario sur les nominations de juges à la Cour de justice de l'Ontario et invite les personnes intéressées à présenter leur demande au poste de juge bilingue à Ottawa.

Cette nomination, bien que principalement liée aux dossiers de droit criminel, peut également exiger que la personne qui occupera le poste préside sur le traitement de dossiers relevant du droit de la famille. Le poste exige en outre des déplacements dans la région selon ce que détermine le juge principal régional ou le juge en chef.

Pour pouvoir poser sa candidature à un poste de juge à la Cour de justice de l'Ontario, il faut, comme condition minimale, avoir été inscrit comme avocat-plaidant et procureur au barreau de l'une des provinces ou de l'un des territoires du Canada **pendant au moins dix ans**.

Tous les candidats et candidates doivent poser leur candidature soit, dans le premier cas, en présentant le Formulaire de renseignements sur le candidat/la candidate à la magistrature **courant (avril 2014)**, soit en envoyant une courte lettre (en 14 exemplaires) si le formulaire courant a été présenté au cours des **12 mois précédents**. **En cas de changements à apporter à un formulaire déjà envoyé, le candidat ou la candidate doit envoyer à nouveau 14 exemplaires du formulaire de renseignements corrigé.**

Si vous voulez poser votre candidature et que vous avez besoin d'un Formulaire de renseignements sur le candidat/la candidate à la magistrature courant, ou encore si vous souhaitez obtenir de plus amples renseignements, veuillez communiquer avec :

Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature
Téléphone : (416) 326-4060 Télécopieur : (416) 212-7316
Site Web : www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/fr/jaac/

Toutes les demandes envoyées par service de messagerie, par la poste ou en main propre **doivent** être soumises à l'adresse suivante :

Comité consultatif sur les nominations à la magistrature
a/s Ministère des Services gouvernementaux - Services de distribution du courrier
77, rue Wellesley Ouest, salle M2B-88
Édifice Macdonald, Queen's Park
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N3

Les demandes de candidature doivent être déposées par l'entremise du formulaire prescrit courant et DACTYLOGRAPHIÉES ou CRÉÉES PAR ORDINATEUR et **reçues au plus tard à 16 h 30 le vendredi 16 janvier 2015**. **LES CANDIDATS ET CANDIDATES DOIVENT FOURNIR 14 EXEMPLAIRES DE LEUR FORMULAIRE OU DE LEUR LETTRE DE CANDIDATURE.** Une télécopie ne sera acceptée que si 14 exemplaires du formulaire ou de la lettre de candidature sont également envoyés par service de messagerie de 24 heures. On n'accordera **AUCUNE** considération aux candidatures reçues après cette date.

La magistrature provinciale doit refléter raisonnablement la diversité de la population qu'elle sert. Nous encourageons les membres de groupes de promotion de l'égalité à présenter une demande.