

Career Doctor



By Nalini Moore, Mahlab Recruitment

On the move ... from Victoria

Q *I am a second year lawyer practising in Melbourne, and am keen to move to Sydney to work. However I am worried that I will not be able to get a job. Are my qualifications valid in NSW? If not, will I have to sit any tests to get qualified? What is the best way to find a job and are there any particular considerations that I should take into account when applying (including what pay to expect)?*

On the move.

A It is quite common these days for lawyers at all levels to consider a move interstate. This move can be attributed to a number of reasons, whether it be a desire for a sea change, wanting to specialise in a specific area not offered in one's home state, career development reasons, relocating due to one's partner's employment, or simply wanting to relocate for lifestyle reasons.

There is obviously a great deal to consider when looking to change jobs and relocate to another state – it certainly rates high on the stress-o-meter! So you need to ensure that you consider your options carefully, do your research thoroughly and allow yourself time to move and settle in to a new city!

Getting admitted interstate

On the logistical side, Victorian qualified lawyers looking to relocate interstate must apply to be admitted in that state – in your case, New South Wales. You will be pleased to know that the admission process is reasonably simple and does not require any further study. You need to apply for admission in New South Wales under the *Mutual Recognition Act 1992 (Cth) (Act)*. By visiting the Law Society of New South Wales' website (see www.lawsociety.com.au), you can learn about the steps that you need to follow to make such an application and the costs associated with it. You need to allow yourself approximately one month from the date of filing your application to the date of your admission.

In order to practise in New South Wales, you will also need to make an application to the Law Society for a New South Wales practising certificate. It is advisable to make this application at the same time that you file your application under the Act to the Supreme Court, to avoid any delay.

The interstate job market

As far as your job prospects go, today's job market nationally is very competitive. In that vein, I would strongly recommend not leaving your current job until you have secured a position in Sydney. Generally, you will present as a more attractive prospect if you are coming from a position of employment.

It is important to research the Sydney market thoroughly while contemplating your move. This

information-gathering task should include researching your suitability to various firms ranging in size, in-house opportunities, salary differentials, and differences in cost of living. A legal recruitment consultant should be able to assist you by providing you with detailed information about the various private practice and in-house organisations in general, more specific information about current suitable roles available in the Sydney market and advice on a salary range that would be appropriate for your level of experience. You should note that while the cost of living in a city like Sydney is slightly greater than in Melbourne, salaries are also still comparatively higher in Sydney. Mahlab Recruitment conducts a national annual salary survey that you can access by visiting www.mahlab.com.au. You can also visit this website to view current roles (private practice, corporate and contract roles) in the Sydney market.

The application

Once you have made a decision as to which organisations you wish to target as a potential employer, you need to make those applications! Again, a legal recruitment consultant can assist you with putting together a detailed resume and approaching the various organisations on your behalf.

I have set out a few basic tips for you below:

1. The best resume is one that is concise, professional and logically arranged. Remember, your resume is your sales document – it needs to accurately reflect your professional skills and experience in the best possible way.
2. There is no fixed rule on the length of your resume. Given that you are a junior lawyer, I would recommend keeping your resume to approximately three to four pages long.
3. Always include a full academic transcript with your application. Although this lessens in importance as you become more senior, law firms, in particular, will often request them from even the most senior of candidates.
4. Have a friend proofread your resume – there is nothing worse than a typographical error in your application.

The interview

If your application is successful in catching the eye of a potential employer, you will need to interview with that organisation. Given that you are an interstate applicant, this can be achieved by arranging a telephone interview, an interview by videoconference or by travelling to Sydney to meet with the potential employer. On some occasions, the organisation will offer to pay for your flights, or will reimburse you if the interview is successful and turns into a job offer.

Interviews can be difficult at the best of times! Face-to-face interviews tend to be less difficult than telephone interviews or videoconferences, simply

because it is easier to build a rapport with the interviewer and gauge how your responses to questions are received. If you are to interview by telephone or by videoconference, the dialogue may seem a little stilted, and may not flow as well as a face-to-face interview, because you will need to pause after each person speaks, to ensure that they have finished their comments. Otherwise you will run the risk of talking over others. Be patient and calm in your presentation to ensure things run as smoothly as possible. Once the interview has concluded, do not make any further comments until both parties have hung up the telephone, or you have exited the video-conference studio. I have heard some scary stories about comments and conversations overheard when one party believes the cameras and speakers have been turned off!

If you ensure you are well-prepared regardless of the format of the interview, you will place yourself in the best position possible to achieve the desired result – a job offer!

For more information on interview techniques and salary negotiations, seek advice from your legal recruitment consultant.

At the risk of sounding obvious, I have set out a few basic tips for you below:

1. Arrive on time – you must know the location, the time of the interview, and the names of the interviewers and their titles. Do not be put off your game if you find different people than those advised attend the interview – substitute interviewers are often called in if someone is delayed.
2. As mentioned above, find out as much as you can about the particular position and the organisation. If dealing with a firm, familiarise yourself with its key areas of legal practice and, if a corporation, the nature of its business.
3. Revise the work you have undertaken in the various positions you have held. You must be able to remember and discuss in some detail your professional experience or any other work experience and activities, which may be of interest to the organisation.
4. Prepare the questions you wish to ask during the interview. Your questions indirectly reveal further information about you and are another way in which an employer will assess your suitability for the role. Asking questions is also an opportunity for you to assess if the position will provide you with the quality of work and prospects you seek.
5. Dress in a professional manner and pay close attention to your presentation.

Sounds like you have an exciting time ahead – good luck! ■

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