

dtbcommunications

Are interviews and visits important?

- Interviews and visits give you an opportunity to engage with the researcher who will be deciding how your firm will be ranked.
- They are therefore an extremely useful tool in building a relationship with the person who will ultimately be making public judgments regarding your firm.

Interview format

- Always follow the researcher's instructions regarding interview format.
- The most effective interviews are those where one or, at most, two lawyers can communicate effectively with the researcher and get their message across – rather than fighting over each other to be heard.
- The worst interviews and visits are where the firm has crowded the agenda with as many lawyers as possible. They often turn into “backslapping” exercises and are much less effective.

Poor approaches to interviews and visits

- Alienating the researcher. This is an opportunity to engage positively with the person making public judgments on your firm, not an opportunity to settle longstanding grievances about the publication or your firm's position.
- "Waffling" – ie talking at great length about complicated or irrelevant issues.
- Ignoring the researcher's questions or relating everything back to the firm regardless of the question.
- Anything which is likely to alienate the researcher and make them view your firm poorly.

The market overview

- You will be asked to provide a market overview in almost every interview.
- Try to view your answer from the perspective of someone who really wants to know what drives the market - and make it practice/sector specific.
- Issues such as recent mergers, spin-offs, which companies are currently very active, the current political situation etc are very useful to the researcher who will also often have to write an overview of the market.
- The interview proper has not started yet and this is a chance to really help the researcher and establish rapport.

Positive approaches to the interview

- Establish a rapport with the researcher early on.
- Answer their questions honestly, but never in a way which reveals your firm's weakness or admits that another firm may be stronger or bigger (they may use any such admission to justify negative results).
- Keep answers to a maximum of 1-2 minutes. The researcher may be on their tenth interview of the day and be exhausted by interviewees who talk at great length.
- Allow the researcher to control the interview. They will normally have questions prepared so allow them to be asked.

Statements which can resonate with researchers

- Concrete facts about your practice. If you can state categorically that your firm has as large a team or spends more time in the relevant area than a peer firm ranked above you then this can be powerful information.
- Concrete facts on who you have worked with or against. For instance, if you have worked with a tier one firm on a major deal then this should be mentioned.
- Experience. If there is a team ranked above you which is led by a lawyer with substantially less experience than you then this can be a useful tool.
- New arrivals. Emphasise any new additions to the relevant practice area and how this has bolstered the practice.

Visits

- Visits are potentially an even more effective way to engage with the researcher.
- All the same principles apply.
- You also have the opportunity to entertain the researcher by taking them to lunch or, even better (as their schedule will be tight during the day), dinner.
- As with interviews it is important not to crowd the table with 20 lawyers - make it as comfortable as possible for them.

Conclusion

- Interviews and visits should be seen as a useful available tool the firm can use in establishing rapport but should not be relied on solely to improve ranking.
- Effective engagement during interviews and visits can, when combined with an effective submission and strong client feedback, can make your chances of promotion much more likely.