



O Shaped

Putting people and relationships at the heart of your business

**The
O Shaped
Recruitment
Toolkit**

The O Shaped Recruitment Toolkit

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Welcome

O Shaped Recruitment

Welcome to the O Shaped Recruitment Toolkit.

This report is written at a time when the legal industry is experiencing a so-called 'war' on talent. Most people we speak to in the industry agree that they have never experienced such a challenging talent market. Salary increases at big law firms are having an impact on recruitment in-house which simply can't compete on the financial packages now being offered in private practice.

So in-house teams need to think differently about recruiting top talent. This report is intended to provide support to the in-house legal community in navigating the recruitment of diverse talent with the mindset, skills and behaviours you need to enhance the quality of your teams.

We hope that the content will help you to recruit O Shaped legal professionals and it includes case studies and best practice we have seen across the industry in the last 12 months.

The report is not intended to be exhaustive of all the great practice out there, but to provide guidance and a framework to help you build your O Shaped team.

We hope you enjoy reading the report. We want it to be dynamic and continuously be improved so please do share your own experiences with us and we will include them as part of any future publication of this report to ensure we keep the thinking up to date.

If you have any comments, suggestions or content that will enhance the toolkit further, please do get in touch at info@oshaped.com.



Also, keep an eye out for the light bulb icon which appears throughout the document giving useful hints and tips.

O Shaped Lawyer
October 2022



“

The secret of my success is that we have gone to exceptional lengths to hire the best people in the world.

”

Steve Jobs



Our Purpose

To make the legal profession better for those who are in it,
those who use it and those who are entering it

Our Vision

To realise the potential of every legal professional to create
a more engaged, inclusive and healthy profession

The O Shaped Mindset

The 5 Os

The 5 Os of Open Mind, Opportunity, Originality, Optimism and Ownership provide a framework which can be applied across any recruitment activity.

For example, when interviewing for roles, you can assess candidates using the 5 mindset below.

Growth Mindset

Taken together, the O Shaped 5 O mindset represents a growth mindset, where the candidate demonstrates a real passion for learning and growing to become the best version of themselves.

In the right environment and with the right support, they could be a real asset to your organisation.

Originality

Is the candidate creative or do they demonstrate an aptitude for innovation? O Shaped Legal Professionals are capable of thinking outside the box and are not constrained by their previous experience or their job title.

Open Mind

Does the candidate demonstrate a desire to learn? 'Know it alls' are not O Shaped! There must be a humility and a willingness to learn new approaches, perspectives and ways of working.

Ownership

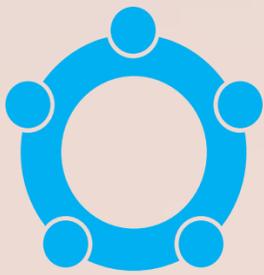
Does the candidate take responsibility for their own personal and professional development? Do they see the role of the legal professional as being accountable for the business outcomes of their advice and not just the delivery of their advice.

Optimism

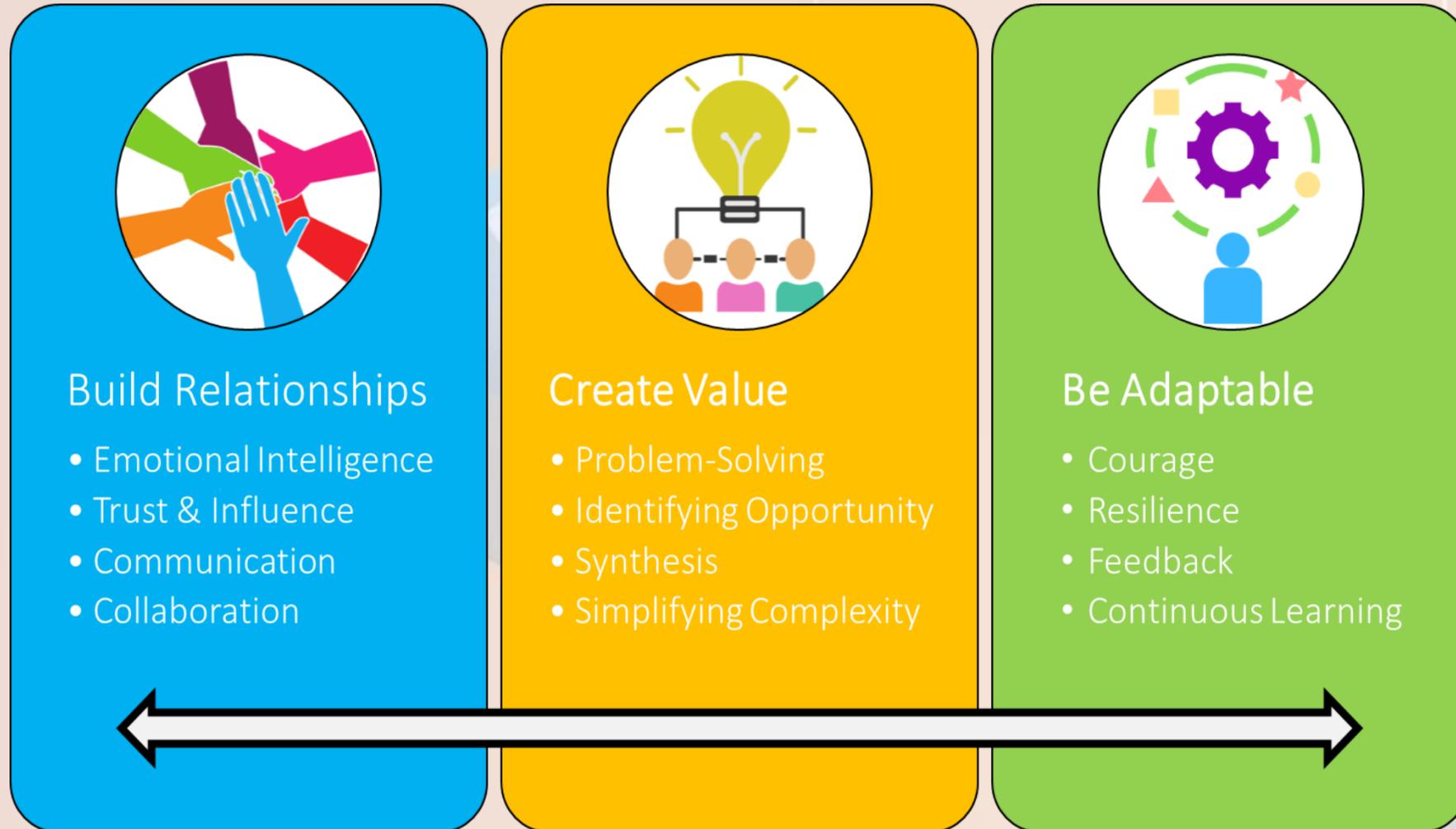
A 'can do' attitude is an essential ingredient for an O Shaped candidate. They recognise that how they present themselves has an impact on others and an optimistic mindset is a much more progressive one.

Opportunity

Is the candidate someone who seeks out new opportunities and demonstrates a willingness to step out of their comfort zone? Those who wait for opportunities to come to them are less likely to be O Shaped.



The 12 O Shaped Attributes



The 12 O Shaped Attributes were developed from a series of interviews with 18 senior in-house leaders in the UK. Those interviews highlighted that:

- Legal knowledge is a given;
- Effective lawyers understand their clients' businesses; and
- The most effective lawyers are capable of creating value for those clients.

The output from the interviews fell into three main categories:

1. Building Relationships
2. Creating Value
3. Being Adaptable

Each category consists of 4 skillsets which form the O Shaped Attributes.

This attributes were developed in consultation with 18 GCs from FTSE 350 companies.

O Shaped Recruitment



Building an O Shaped Team

Hiring for the right mindset and behavioural skills requires a different approach from that traditionally adopted in the legal profession. O Shaped recruitment highlights the importance of human skills and involves putting yourself in the shoes of those who you are appealing to as well as what you need.

You are unlikely to find candidates who have the both the right mindset and excel across all of the O Shaped Attributes. In fact, O Shaped is much more than any individual, you are likely to be trying to create an O Shaped team.

Therefore, consider conducting a gap analysis and think about what O Shaped gaps you have in your team and how you would identify and attract candidates who display the strengths to fill those gaps.

For example, if you really need someone who will be a highly effective collaborator, think about recruitment channels and networks where you are more likely to find people who excel at that (e.g. using a broader range of social media channels than normal), and design your job advert and hiring process to focus on that attribute.

Take the description of what you are looking for to the next level of granularity. For example, its very common in job adverts to see criteria such as “a great team player” or “works well in a team”. Think about how that might be read by a potential candidate and what it means to them.

Keep the talent pool as wide as you can. Don't arbitrarily rule out whole swathes of candidates (such as those applying with a 2:2 degree). You might be missing a gem. Recently PWC publicly stated that graduates don't need a 2:1 degree to work at the firm. **See [PWC - BBC Article](#)**

The wider the group of people your role appeals to, the more likely you are to be promoting human skills, and the more likely you are able to attract those who have them.



There are lots of good resources out there to help but we particularly like this one from the University of Nottingham:
<https://bit.ly/3FazA7R>.

O Shaped Job Adverts

There is no one size fits all for job adverts, but we have identified some criteria that you might want to consider incorporating in to your next advert to attract more O Shaped applicants.

- Put your commitment to O Shaped up front. It will increasingly become a differentiating factor in who you will want to hire and who will want to work for you.
- Consider tone and language to showcase the personality of the team and promote diversity and inclusion.
- Describe the organisation and team authentically.
- Sell the job, with real examples of what it involves and who the applicant will work with.
- Emphasise organisational purpose, values and culture. Make it clear 'why' people would want to come to work with your organisation.
- Tell the candidate what you are looking for, including your most important O Shaped Attributes, and why you consider them essential for the role.
- Cover the rewards, benefits, ways of working, wellbeing and approach to development.

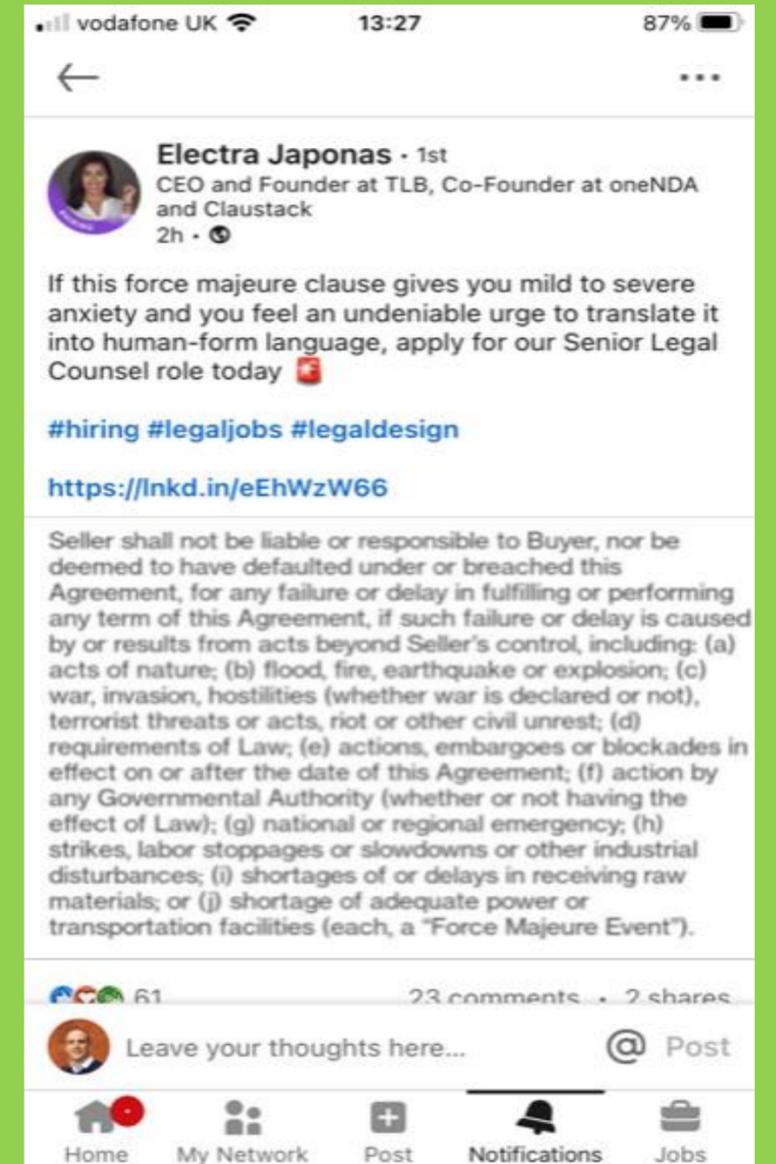
- Explain the recruitment process and likely length of time. Be clear whether a cover letter is needed how many interviews there will be, where they will take place and any tests that might be involved.
- Most of us will be working within a set template, but think about the purpose of job descriptions: go beyond the traditional focus on academics and technical skills and bring in O Shaped Mindset and Attributes.
- Use the 'purpose' (or similar) section to give a sense of what you want the role to achieve in human/behavioural terms as well as technical expectations.
- Be precise about what previous experience is really needed – don't use PQE as a proxy as it can be off-putting for experienced candidates who have struggled to qualify, nor be prescriptive about which kind of law firm you want the candidate to have worked at.



Don't simply rely on academic results or university attended to filter the first applications – be more creative. You will narrow the pool of talent and potentially miss out on some fabulous candidates, reducing the scope for attracting more diverse talent.

A little humour goes a long way to differentiate your advert!

We love this one from Electra Japonas, CEO of TLB posted on 12 October 2022



The Interview Process



People-Centred interviewing

The origin of O Shaped came from a legal recruitment process back in 2019. It was evident during the process that candidates were very focused on demonstrating technical legal knowledge throughout, with very little focus on their broader skillsets. It was as though there was an expectation from the candidates that interviewing for a legal role meant they needed to demonstrate an abundance of technical legal excellence and little else. There was very little focus on the human skills that are at least equally important when it comes to selecting the right person for the role.

Whilst you may be interviewing a number of candidates, for them this might be the dream role and a really significant step in their career. Interviews are about them, not about you, and setting that tone from the outset will create the environment where the candidate can be at their best.

This includes ensuring that the room is set up appropriately, or if virtual that the tech is all working.

Remember that some brilliant candidates have 'off' days too! Giving them every opportunity to demonstrate their skills and talents is critical to an O Shaped interviewing process.



Particularly, where you are interviewing junior candidates, help them through the process. We love what Flex Legal are doing in this space (page 19)

Balance the Panel

If you have appealed to a diverse audience through your advert and job description, then you will have a diverse shortlist. This means you should be presenting with a suitably diverse panel. We would also highly recommend involving interested stakeholders outside your team in the interview panel (ideally a future customer of the candidate). This will allow you to bring a fresh perspective to your interviewing approach.



Involve key stakeholders in the interview process. If they are going to be working with the new team member, they should have a say

Don't assume that just because someone manages people they are effective interviewers. All interviewers should come well prepared, fully briefed on the role and on what you're looking for in a candidate.

We would recommend that anyone who participates in interviews will have completed interview training. This not only provides assurance that interviews are being conducted by competent people and will achieve a more consistent outcome, increasing the chances of removing personal bias, but it's also a great way for any organisation to demonstrate its core values/USPs to those who are responsible for bringing the talent into the company/firm.

The Interview Process



Hire for Attitude, Train for Skill

Aside from getting the basics right, there is much more to the interview than simple process.

The most effective interviews are two-way conversations that enable the candidates to share much more about themselves, what matters to them (such as their interests, hobbies or families) as well as their values, motivators and personal 'why'.

Candidates need to be made to feel comfortable from the outset. This is likely to be a very significant moment for them. They will be nervous, perhaps dealing with imposter syndrome and might have very little experience of interviews or not been interviewed for a long time. **Providing the environment where they have every opportunity to be their best is crucial.**

Get The Basics Right

Interviews are notoriously prone to unfairness and bias. To try to avoid this, follow these suggestions from CIPD:

- Plan questions carefully before the interview and decide who is asking which ones.
- Try to ask all candidates the same questions but allow some time for responding to answers – show you are really listening.
- All interviewers should take notes and score answers using the same rating system.
- Focus questions on the attributes and behaviours needed in the job only.

After selection, give all applicants feedback as quickly as you can. It's possible that they will be interviewing elsewhere so if you aren't proceeding with their application, explain why so they can work on improving their interview technique going forward. Try to keep the process as short and stress-free as possible.



To run a truly O Shaped process, go a step further: ask your candidates for feedback on how the process felt from *their* perspective so you can continuously improve your recruitment approach too.

Sample 5 O Mindset Interview Questions

Your potential new recruit is sitting in front of you and you want to ask the right questions to ensure you can select someone who will enhance the quality of your team and the value you create for the business.

There are so many options when it comes to what questions to ask so the content below are just some examples using the O Shaped 5 O Mindset and Attributes as the framework and based on the input of an O Shaped GC working group.

Originality

- Describe a time when you solved a problem in an innovative or creative way. What was different about your approach?
- Can you think of an example where you have challenged norms – such as ‘it’s the way we have always done it’ – what happened?
- How would you bring a more innovative mindset to the team?

Ownership

- Describe a successful team project you have worked on. What was your contribution?
- Give an example of when you have made a mistake? How did you feel? What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when a colleague, manager, customer or client challenged the quality of your work? How did it feel? What did you do?

Openness

- Can you give an example of something that you have achieved which you never thought was possible? How did you do it?
- If we asked you to go on a secondment to another function outside the [legal team], how would you react? What would you do to learn about that new role?
- Share an example where you have opened up to a more senior colleague at work about how you were feeling. What was the outcome?

Optimism

- What motivates you to do your best work?
- What are you most passionate about?
- Can you share an example of where you supported a colleague in achieving their goals?
- Share an example of a mistake you have made at work – how did you feel about it? How did you address it?

Opportunity

- Tell us about your ability to initiate change and give an example when this resulted in an improvement.
- Describe a time when you improved the way you work – perhaps found an opportunity to do something more effectively or efficiently?
- What would you say has been the biggest risk you have taken professionally? Talk us through why you took it and what the outcome was.

Sample O Shaped Attributes Interview Questions



Building Relationships

- Have you ever worked with someone you struggled to communicate with? If so, what was the obstacle and how did you handle it?
- Talk us through a recent project you worked on with a different function in the organisation that went well because of great teamwork?
- Recognising that everyone at [x] is very busy, how do you engage colleagues on important issues which need addressing but are not urgent?
- Tell me about a time when your mood had an impact on your communications at work (this could be positively or negatively)
- What does good customer/client service mean to you?
- Describe a time when you received great/poor customer service – how did it feel?
- What would you do to build relationships with stakeholders across the organisation?

Creating Value

- Please provide a recent example where you have created value? What did you do? How do you know it was valuable to the other party?
- How do you think you will be able to add value to the company?
- You have five matters that you have been asked to get done. You only have time to complete three. What do you do?
- Please give two examples of experiences you have had that you believe give you the edge as a candidate for the position and that will help you to succeed in the role.
- What is the role of the [legal team] in creating value for the organisation? How can we best achieve it?
- Your client asks for a yes/no answer to an urgent issue – you know it is more complex than that – how do you respond?
- When you face a difficult problem at home or work, how do you go about solving it?

Being Adaptable

- What has been your biggest career or life challenge to date and how did you deal with it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a crisis or setback. What did you do?
- Please share an example where you have deliberately stepped outside your comfort zone – how did it feel? What did you achieve?
- Describe a situation where you had to adjust your approach for circumstances not under your control?
- Please share an example of where you received feedback that you didn't agree with – what did you do?
- When have you felt demotivated, and what did you do to overcome this?
- How do you feel about making mistakes?
- Can you tell me about a time you made a mistake at work and how you managed it?

O Shaped Recruitment



Concluding Thoughts

Recruiting in the legal market has never been so tough. The so called ‘war on talent’ has seen a significant increase in associate salaries at law firms as they compete with each other for what on the face of it seems to be a limited pool of talent.

However, the talent pool can and should be widened. Each year, thousands of students graduate from law school without a training contract. Many of those students pursue careers outside of the legal profession entirely, some of whom could have made significant contributions to the profession if they had been given a chance.

This toolkit is therefore intended to highlight a different way of identifying and recruiting talent into our profession.

By suggesting a widening of the traditional pool for legal talent, we are recommending opening the profession up to many who would never have been considered before.

We have offered sample questions and case studies to demonstrate how to attract candidates with broader mindsets and capabilities than is often the case in the profession. This is a good thing for those candidates right now and a more sustainable approach for the profession in the long term.

Please do share your experiences of using the toolkit or any other practices you have seen that we should be recognising in future iterations of this report.

Thank you for taking the time. Please do get in touch at info@oshaped.com with any thoughts or comments.

O Shaped
October 2022

“

***If you think its
expensive to hire a
professional, wait
until you hire an
amateur.***

”

Red Adair

Kantar is the world's leading marketing data and analytics company recruiting for a Legal Counsel in New York. It is a great example of using O Shaped as the basis for your advert.

Job Advert

Case Study

Kantar

We have a complete, unique and rounded understanding of how people think, feel and act; globally and locally in over 90 markets. By combining the deep expertise of our people, our data resources and benchmarks and our innovative analytics and technology, we help our clients understand people and inspire growth.

As the Kantar Legal Team, we are committed to transparency, diversity, merit and fostering a culture of empowerment, personal impact and career growth. This is a role where you will have the opportunity to shape your own future with a continuous opportunity for growth as you develop your career at Kantar.

Are we a great fit? We are looking for someone who.....

- *Is Optimistic – whether it's sorting out a knotty problem or calming a stressed-out stakeholder, can you look on the bright side (of life)?*
- *Is Original – we love to hear ideas on how we can be doing things differently so that we can all be more engaged and successful with our clients.*
- *Makes and takes Opportunities – are you the kind of person who will step up and volunteer to take something on even if it's outside of your comfort zone?*
- *Takes Ownership – for the team! You use your strengths to help us grow together.*
- *Has an Open Mind – we favor constructive feedback given in a kind way and appreciate the same in return.*

“We have a passion for learning and growing to be the best version of ourselves. Do you have strengths you can share? If so, we'd love to hear from you”

Our Legal Counsel will...

- *Have a primary focus on drafting and negotiating commercial agreements with both our clients and our suppliers*
- *Collaborate with company leadership and business leads to understand business goals, translate legal risks to easy-to-understand concepts, and establish full alignment around legal processes and procedures that support growth.*
- *Continually improve our legal operations to support new customer and supplier agreements, products and services, and business risks.*
- *Partner with our external legal counsel as needed*
- *Have the opportunity to develop their expertise in areas of interest – we are looking for someone with a growth mindset who is keen to learn new areas of law with appropriate training and support.*

A great candidate will have

- *JD degree and membership to at least one US state bar.*
- *Experience drafting and executing commercial agreements.*
- *Employment and privacy law experience.*
- *Strong project management skills including an ability to multitask, prioritize and respond quickly within a rapidly changing environment.*
- *Ability to translate business objectives and goals into legal concepts that allow them to be incorporated into Plain English commercial agreements.*
- *Potential to step into a leadership role as the Kantar Legal Team grows.*

We as a team have a passion for learning and growing to be the best version of ourselves. Do you have strengths you can share? If so, we'd love to hear from you.

We appreciate that everyone has different backgrounds and experience so if you don't meet all of the criteria above, please don't be deterred from applying. We could be just what you are looking for!

10X Banking's advert for a legal counsel in February 2022, led by then General Counsel Richard Given (now General Counsel at OpenPayd), gained a significant number of likes, comments and reshares when it was posted on Linked In. Here it is in full.

We are a technology company headquartered in London with colleagues working across the UK and with operations in Sydney, Australia. Our aim is to transform banking - we believe in making banking 10x better for customers, banks and society. We provide SaaS based technology solutions to financial services institutions that support their core banking requirements. At the heart of our platform is the 10x SuperCore™. With its transformational end-to-end architecture, everything has been designed from first principles to bring forward a new way of banking. We enable our client banks to engage their customers with more timely, relevant, and personalised experiences when it comes to managing money.

About The Role

10x is looking to hire its first legal counsel. You will report to the General Counsel, Richard Given. Together, the two of you will make up the internal legal function. You will provide general corporate and commercial legal support across the business, supporting the Group's requirements here in the UK as well as Australia and elsewhere as the Group expands into new territories. You will work closely with numerous business operations and technical teams across the business, including Risk, HR, Finance, Information Security, Supplier

Making banking 10x better.

Management, and IT engineering. You will also work closely with the Group's ecosystem of external legal providers to deliver the most effective, relevant, and considered legal support to help make 10x successful.

It is important for 10x that you always remember that you are first and foremost a solicitor or barrister and the responsibilities that this entails. We recognise the inherent conflict between the requirements for independence and the fact that your "client" is your employer. 10x needs its lawyers to keep this front and centre as they do their job and work with external counsel as necessary to ensure that the legal advice and support provided is mindful of those requirements.

You will be initially focused on drafting and negotiating commercial contracts with all 10x's suppliers, both in the UK and overseas and overseeing adherence to the contractual obligations in those agreements. You will liaise with outside counsel, including in relation to the flow-down of commitments from 10x's client contracts.

You do not need to live in or near London. Richard lives in North Devon and has worked from home on a regular basis since he joined 10x in 2017. 10x uses all available technology to enable work to be done in the most efficient way. He attends face to face meetings where it makes sense to be "in the room". Otherwise, he works from home (with his 5 miniature long-haired dachshunds supervising him on the sofa behind his desk!). There is no "presenteeism" at 10x. You may prefer to be in an office (whether Leeds or London) or, equally, you may prefer to spend more time working from home (somewhere in Great Britain or Northern Ireland with stable broadband!) 10x will provide you with what you need to be able to do your job. Being in the office will be a decision based on the circumstances not on perception.

Whoever you are and wherever in the UK you are, therefore, please send us your CV as well as a cover letter telling us your story and why you think 10x could be the right fit for you and why you could be the right fit for 10x.

"You may not be a member of the Law Society or the Bar Council in the United Kingdom. You may have undertaken your training in-house or just not in a 'traditional' law firm. You may have been taking a career break for several years and are looking for a first role back in work. You may only want to work 4 days a week. Your journey may just not be considered 'standard'. We believe these are things that can enrich a candidate and do not disqualify them"

Job Advert Case Study

10X Banking



The Interview Process

Richard also intends to read all applications (anonymised as far as possible to limit unconscious bias). Applications and accompanying CVs will be used to develop a long list.

From this, candidates be invited to meet with Richard (most likely over video). Further interviews will then be arranged as appropriate.

We do not want to subject candidates to round after round of interviews. Equally, we do want to make sure that both sides get to know each other properly and this cannot be short-circuited

More About 10x

Our home is in London but our 10x teams work around the UK and Australia provide our clients with deep and relevant experience amassed from multi-billion-dollar businesses, challenger brands, disruptors and start-ups.

At 10x you work alongside innovators and leaders in banking and financial services, big-technology and consumer-focused industries – proven practitioners who understand how to meet the evolving needs of businesses and consumers. Our engineers, product specialists and developers are leaders too, drawing on experience from within and outside financial services to deliver transformational new digital solutions.

“10x-ers all want to enjoy working at 10x. No-one will question you taking the dog for a walk in the middle of the day to help recharge your batteries, or just sitting outside with a cup of tea. Output is what counts”

We are driven by the belief that whatever we do as a business has to be done in the right way. Our three core values amid this are fundamental to our 10x approach: Transformation, Integrity and Impact. Working at 10x is demanding. We are at the forefront of changing banking, and this is challenging at times.

Equally, 10x-ers all want to enjoy working at 10x. No-one will question you taking the dog for a walk in the middle of the day to help recharge your batteries, or just sitting outside with a cup of tea. Output is what counts. Furthermore, whether it is initiatives to support Movember, discussions and activities throughout October as part of Black History Month, or just sharing our scores on the social Slack channel for the Joe Friday Pub Quiz, 10x-ers connect with each other. If you share an interest with others at 10x, then there is probably already a group that you can join. And if not, we will support you in setting it up!

Learn more at www.10xbanking.com

Whatever your situation, whatever your story, we would love to hear from you if you think 10x sounds like a company you might want to work for and you have the skills and experience to help support 10x on its exciting journey.

We recognise that joining a new company is very much a decision for both parties, and we want to ensure that both sides get what they need to do that. To that end, if you do have any questions at any time, please do contact us.

Job Advert Case Study

10X Banking



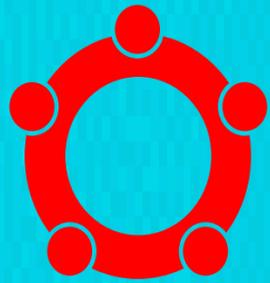
10x

“We recognise that joining a new company is very much a decision for both parties, and we want to ensure that both sides get what they need to do that.”

Interview Case Study - RVU Legal

Interview Case Study

RVU Legal



RAPID Behavioural Questions

RVU's true purpose is to do all we can to make a positive change to the people and communities around us.

RVU ask candidates to answer their RAPID behavioural questions using the well-known STAR model which they first explain to candidates.

By doing so, they are giving the candidate the best opportunity to shine and giving RVU the chance to dive deep on specific examples and assess how they use the information they are providing to help them in their responses.

Situation - describe a specific event/situation that you were in. The 'who/what/where/when'.

Task - explain the task you had to complete, highlighting any challenges or constraints (e.g. deadlines, issues, costs).

Action - Describe the specific actions you took to complete the task. These should highlight desirable traits that we are looking for.

Result - What was the result of your efforts?

When a candidate answers your question, you can use the STAR method to dissect their answer. Did they walk you through the situation (S), task (T), action (A), and/or result (R)? If not, then you probe into the letter that's missing.



Results Driver

Tell me about a project or accomplishment that you consider to be the most significant in your academic or professional career?

Walk me through a situation (could be a project, internship or work experience) where you had a problem to solve but there was incomplete information. How was this solved and what was the outcome?

Tell me about a time when there were multiple solutions to a problem and you had to make the decision on which route to take.

Tell me about a time when you had a difficult deadline to meet, how did you approach this challenge and what was the outcome?

What is a goal that you've set for yourself (could be academic, professional, or personal)? Why was this goal important to you? How did you approach your plan to reach this goal? Was it met?

What RVU is looking for:

Candidates that push themselves to achieve great results, overcome obstacles, and do it in a manner that takes others into account.

Candidates that are comfortable with ambiguity and can formulate ways to still get to a good answer.

Since 2016, Flex Legal have been redesigning the way the legal industry works: from connecting top legal teams to the UK's best interim lawyers and paralegals, to pairing socially mobile SQE trainees with forward-thinking organisations through their Flex Trainee scheme.

Interview Case Study

Flex Legal

It's this latest venture which has given them the opportunity to develop a truly 'O-Shaped' assessment and interview process. Launched in October 2021, Flex Trainee is a legal training scheme designed to help diverse, socially mobile aspiring lawyers qualify via the SQE route. By partnering with STRIVE, a legal social mobility charity, Flex have ensured that they source the most suitable talent to meet their criteria.

Following STRIVE's rigorous vetting process, Flex conduct their own assessments to choose which trainees will join their training programme. Flex's Head of Learning & Development (and O Shaped Board Member) Sophie Gould has worked to ensure that this process embodies the O attributes throughout.

A key part of this has been providing the trainees with appropriate constructive feedback across their interviews and group assessments, as well as making it very clear what's expected of them from the beginning.

During each element of the assessment day, the trainees are provided with 'point in time' feedback. For example, when conducting the individual interviews, Flex will provide feedback on every one of the trainees' answers. They are then given the opportunity to reflect on how they could improve their responses for the rest of the interview, which Flex will continue to coach them through.

This format gives Flex the chance to assess the candidates' ability to take on feedback and make improvements, whilst also showing that they can think on their feet.

Through doing this, Flex hope to give the trainees the greatest possible opportunity to improve and perform at their best. This coaching had no impact on who was chosen for the programme, with the full process being assessed as a whole.

During the group task, Flex assess their trainees against various competencies including collaboration, client centricity, commercial awareness and communication skills. For the task itself, they are required to conduct research on a topical commercial issue. They are then asked to present their findings in an engaging and informative way to different audiences. This task was designed to assess the trainees' commercial awareness, as well as how much they possess the O Shaped mindset such as originality, optimism and opportunity.

This positive approach to assessing candidates has ensured that both the trainees themselves and Flex Legal gain positive outcomes from the process, and has received fantastic feedback from the trainees so far, including:

"Many thanks for your time on Thursday at the assessment centre, it was genuinely one of the most enjoyable interviews that I've had!"

"Our interview made me even more excited for the scheme. I appreciate the feedback you gave very much and I will remember to be more positive and make good eye contact!"





Browne Jacobson was the first law firm to partner with O Shaped.

They set up FAIRE (Fairer Access into Real Experience) to revolutionise the way law firms recruit future talent and grow an industry-wide culture of inclusivity. FAIRE aims to support social mobility, offering students equal access to work experience that can pave the way for a career in the legal sector.

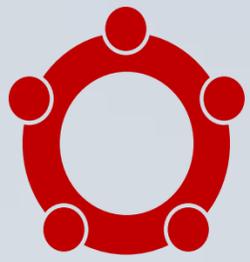
Why change was needed:

- Everyone should have equal access to the profession, but it is far from being a fair, level playing field. The challenges an aspiring lawyer faces are huge - intense competition for work experience with a significant number of firms offering most positions to client or family members. Add to the mix a recruitment process littered with bias, and you have a recipe for diversity disaster.
- Pre-2016, their junior lawyer population was just 7% Black, Asian or EM, was 100% Russell Group by University background and was almost exclusively made up of individuals whose parents are professional by background.
- As a firm that's committed to promoting diversity they conducted an audit of their end-to-end recruitment processes.

What Browne Jacobson did:

- While a lot of the actions they've taken are not 'radical' when compared to other industry norms, they were quite 'brave' when placed against the traditional recruitment practices within the legal profession.
- They removed the need for applicants to achieve a minimum requirement of a 2:1 and ABB at A-level to apply for a training contract or summer vacation scheme - there simply wasn't reliable data that demonstrated someone with these grades would out-perform (in role) someone with a 2:2 or CCC at A-level, so they got rid of it.

- They audited and changed their recruitment processes as a starter. They now anonymise all applications to help reduce bias; they introduced RARE's contextualised recruitment system to better understand a candidate's background and take into consideration the barriers they may have faced to reach the position they are now in;
- They introduced a 'second-look' safety net where they make sure any low SEB candidates, set to be rejected at an early stage of the process, are given a second screen before they make a final decision to progress or reject them; and, importantly, they revised their careers website to make their recruitment processes & assessment exercises totally transparent.
- They had their job description template analysed as part of the University of Nottingham's diversity socio-linguistics project to learn how to make their job descriptions convey inclusivity.
- They completely refocussed their targeted outreach activity, targeting social mobility cold spots, where disadvantaged talent is often overlooked by organisations and get left on the shelf.
- They adopted an 'industry' wide approach to outreach, rather than just focusing on what might only help their own firm.
- They launched FAIRE work experience, offering 80 guaranteed paid placements. A minimum of 50% of those placements go to those from low SEB who would most benefit from the opportunity.
- They introduced a 'reciprocal' work experience arrangement with clients where, if they ask them to give a family member some work experience, they must either fund another placement for a less privileged student or offer a paid weeklong placement in their own organisation.
- Their final action was to build a better on-boarding process, to ensure they view the integration activity through a more diverse lens.



brownejacobson

Browne Jacobson becomes first law firm to join O Shaped's movement to better the legal profession

The difference it has made - in numbers

Browne Jacobson's work in this area not only met the initial aims of the initiative, but **far** exceeded them.

Removing academic thresholds was the biggest game changer, enabling Browne Jacobson to break down some of the most restrictive recruitment barriers in the profession and attract the most diverse talent pool of potential candidates.

36%

In 2021, 36% training contract offers went to candidates who would previously have been ineligible to even apply due to their grades.

90%

In 2021, they retained & promoted 90% of their trainee lawyers. 26% of those have 2:2s or low A-level grades, proving exceptional talent can be found beyond academic prowess.

45%

They are more diverse than ever and better reflect their diverse client base they act for. In 2016 junior lawyer intake comprised just 7% BAME individuals; fast forward to 2022 and this is now 45%.

No.1

They are the UK's no.1 ranked employer for social mobility and were recognised by The Social Mobility Foundation for having 50/50 representation within their junior lawyer population of Russell Group and non-Russell Group attendees (2020 industry average = 84% Russell Group)

85%

85% of internships in 2021 went to low SEB individuals, exceeding their 50% target

23,500 students

Browne Jacobson's outreach work attracted 23,500+ students from 2000+ UK wide schools, successfully targeting schools in every social mobility 'cold spot'.

62%

62% of their online event attendees were from low SEBs in 2021-22, 52% were Black, Asian or EM



Special thanks to the O Shaped Working Group for their support and contributions to this report, led by O Shaped Steering Board members Catie Sheret and Natalie Salunke.

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The O Shaped Recruitment Toolkit

www.oshapedlawyer.com