

# CLERMONT INSIGHTS

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALASDAIR BLACKSHAW

Location: Geneva, Switzerland

Current role: Trust Manager and Solicitor

One word that best describes how you work: Committed

### **1. Born and educated in Scotland, what attracted you to Geneva?**

After qualifying as a solicitor, I worked for a City law firm in London but felt that I wanted to do something focused more on individuals and on building relationships than being a pure private practice solicitor. My elder sister has worked in the wealth industry in Geneva for many years and I spoke with her about her role and thought it sounded like a good next step for me. I also wanted to be closer to the Alps to pursue my interests in climbing, ski touring and cycling, so Geneva was uniquely well-located for both my professional aspirations and personal interests.

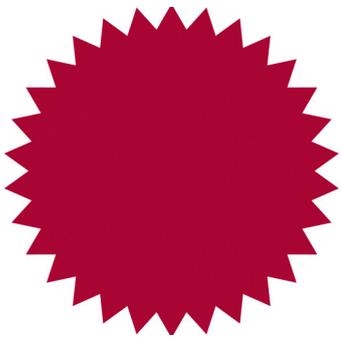
### **2. Take us through a recent workday.**

Since early March, all staff across the Clermont business have been working remotely. This has brought inevitable challenges and had an impact on the shape of our workdays generally, but we are really pleased with how well we have all adapted to the situation.

On this particular day, I spend the first couple of hours going through emails received overnight and dealing with any urgencies or payments that need to be made before the banking cut-off at lunchtime.

I meet with my Team via Zoom at 11am to check in with my colleagues and discuss workloads. This is really important when working remotely as it helps to keep up the team spirit and remind us that, although we are not in the same room, we operate as a team and are able to support each other effectively.

After the team meeting, I plan out my time for the rest of the day to ensure I deal with things in order of priority and allocate sufficient time for each task. I note that I have been asked to review some documents for a proposed investment for a significant client and also prepare a deed changing an aspect of another trust.



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Both of these will take some time and concentration and I need to fit them in around a Zoom conference call with another client scheduled for mid-afternoon. Additionally, I need to arrange for the execution of a number of minutes and documents in relation to a major compliance exercise we are undertaking at the moment, which is a slow-burn exercise that I need to keep chipping away at. In combination with more general day-to-day administrative tasks, it's going to be a busy day and I'm glad I've taken a moment to plan my time for the day.

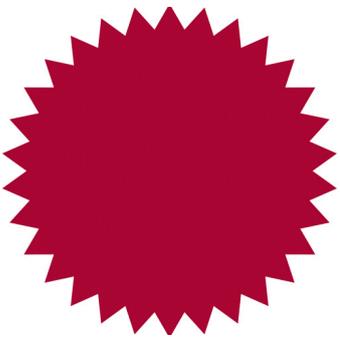
Before getting stuck into my workload, I head out for a short walk to get some fresh air (which I find particularly important when working from home).

After my walk, a black coffee gives me a welcome boost to assist with reviewing the investment documents. I send a couple of queries to the relationship manager on the file to get their input and then jump on the Zoom call, which turns out to be really useful. Our business is ultimately about people and it's essential to maintain client contact despite not being able to have physical meetings. We have a good meeting that generates a number of follow-up action points for me to take forward over the next days.

I move on to my drafting task and then notify the relevant parties of the changes before putting some time into the big compliance exercise we are working on across the business. It affects a large number of entities I work on and I'm therefore spending a couple of hours per day on the exercise to make sure I finish it in a timely manner.

Once I've completed my compliance shift, I draft several sets of minutes and arrange for these to be considered by the relevant authorised signatories. This is important so that I can action certain matters the following day.

That brings me to 6pm and time to wrap up for the day. I update my timesheet and head out on my road bike. I'm lucky to have some great cycling that I can access from my door.



# CLERMONT INSIGHTS

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ALASDAIR BLACKSHAW

### **3. Who are the people who help you get things done, and how do you rely on them?**

My role is to deal with the day-to-day administration and issues that come up on client entities and to ensure that tasks are carried out efficiently by drawing on appropriate skillsets across the business as appropriate.

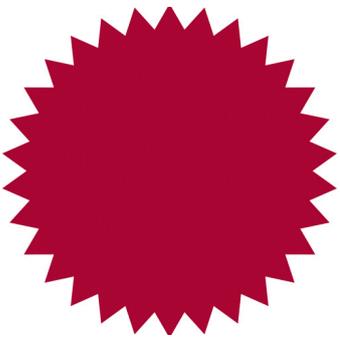
I'm lucky to be supported in my role by two excellent junior team members (Isabelle Briner and Laetitia Bertolotti) who assist with a lot of the day-to-day matters and form-filling exercises we are involved with. They often know much more than me about certain tasks and provide invaluable support, which often only involves light supervision from me.

At the other end of the spectrum, I also draw on more senior colleagues' expertise when faced with complex or unusual issues that it is helpful to have their input on. A quick call to Elliot Goodman, Martin Chesler or Tania Steven-Jennings will either provide quick confirmation of a point or generate useful ideas to solve an issue. Valerie Dagnaud is also a font of knowledge on all things Clermont and has deep experience of nearly all matters we work on. I find it very useful to discuss points with her and tap into her significant industry experience.

On the more specialist side, we're lucky to have an excellent in-house legal counsel, Katy Shayle, who is always precise and quick to draft documents or provide feedback on legal queries. Additionally, our compliance specialist, Andrea Aegerter, provides much-needed business-orientated advice on the ever-increasing maze that is the regulatory universe in which we operate.

### **4. If you could have any superpower, what would it be?**

That's a tough one as I suppose I'd ideally have all of the superpowers! To choose one, I think I would go for time travel...



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### **5. What to date has been the highlight of your time with Clermont?**

Clermont has very strong links to South Africa and much of the business' historical client base is South African. Senior staff members make regular trips to South Africa for client meetings and I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to travel with Elliot Goodman on one of these trips last year.

It was a busy ten days of meetings split between Johannesburg and Cape Town during which I met a lot of interesting clients and got a better understanding of South Africa as a country. I loved the buzz of Johannesburg and the beauty of Cape Town. We were lucky to have good weather throughout our trip – despite it being the South African winter – and managed to hike up Table Mountain on our day off.

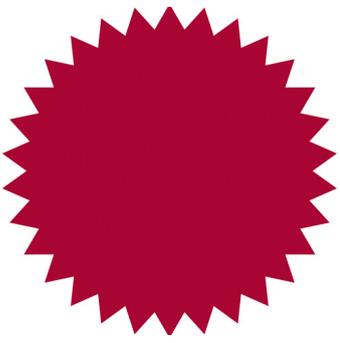
The other highlight would have to be winning the go-kart racing at our annual Clermont global get-together in Ireland last year! A wet track and good competitive spirit from all racers made it a great event.

### **6. What are you currently reading or what do you recommend?**

I've just finished reading Kafka on the Shore by Haruki Murakami. My wife Danielle and I went on a two-week trip to Japan last year and were completely blown away by the culture, people and country. I wanted to read more Japanese literature following that trip and really enjoyed Murakami's crisp writing style and the intricate storyline.

I also love Catch-22 by Joseph Heller. It's hilarious and sad at the same time and has brilliant characters.

I also make sure to read the FT to keep me up-to-date on financial and political matters.



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## **7. What praise would mean the most to you if you heard it?**

I like to be part of a team and feel that my contribution makes a difference to the whole. It means a lot to me when people say that I'm doing my job well and moving the business forward by helping clients and colleagues.

## **8. What gets you up in the morning during lockdown?**

My cat, Missy... and generally at 5am.

**Thank you for your contribution!**