

Traveling for Interviews – Who Should Pay?

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If you're currently on the lateral market and looking for a job, whether it's opportunistically or out of necessity, one of the most difficult things can be managing your time and budget - typically the timing is the most difficult part to manage if you are currently employed, as an attorney in an in-demand practice area can be extremely busy. And if you are out of work, or have recently relocated without a new position in hand, managing your job search on a budget can be quite difficult if you are relying on your savings and have no new guaranteed income to count on.

Both of these factors come heavily into play once you get to the point in the job search where you begin to field interview requests, and especially if you are looking to interview or land a job with a law firm that is not where you are currently located.

When the market was booming, all types of [attorneys](#) were heavily in demand, firms were flush with cash and willing to pay interview and relocation costs for almost every promising candidate because the competition for top candidates was tough, and firms were missing out on tons of potential revenue if they had an opening that remained unfilled for months on end.

A couple of years ago when the market crashed, many firms were laying attorneys off rather than hiring, budgets were tight, and candidates were lucky to get an interview at all. Firms had their pick of candidates in most all practice areas, and thus adopted budget-saving practices of only interviewing local candidates, or requiring candidates to front their own interview travel expenses, and often their own relocation expenses.

Now that the market has recovered a bit, and we are seeing increasing demand for [lateral attorney](#) talent, we are in somewhat of a hybrid situation where top firms are willing and able to pay a candidate's travel costs for interviews and relocation costs for new hires, however a lot of firms have not yet had the confidence or desire to come all the way back around. Having learned to be cost conscious, and having not yet begun to miss out on top candidates due to competition from other firms (it is still a "buyer's market", although I believe we are approaching somewhat of a tipping point once again), there are a large number of firms who are still sticking to interviewing local candidates only, or who will not pay travel expenses for interviews, and even some firms who do not make it a practice of paying relocation expenses for a candidate from another city.

Because there is no established practice, you as the candidate really have to decide on how you will approach this dynamic. If you really want a position and you are in a competitive market, it can be very much worth paying a couple hundred dollars to fly yourself out for a [second round interview](#) that might land you a six-figure offer. On the other hand, if you are only looking opportunistically, you may decide it is not worth the cost, and turn down firms who are not willing to pay those expenses.

I still advocate to my candidates that they be as proactive as possible in their job search, and be willing to pay their own expenses if the firm will not, because we have not yet reached the point where most, or even many, candidates will have their pick of a number of interviews and offers. The market has come back in a major way, but it is not quite there yet, and if you are serious about your search, you should do whatever you can to give yourself every competitive advantage, including being willing to pay your own travel costs.