

Listen to an interview with a lawyer involved in anti-trust (monopoly) cases.

Optional exercise Listen and fill in the interviewer's notes (Answers below)

Interview with Annabelle Collins

Qualifications: Degree in¹
Legal training & specialization in² law

Experience: worked in both public and³ sector

Skills: good at synthesizing large amounts of⁴
has working knowledge of government⁵
keeps on top of changes in⁶
works to strict⁷

Interviewer: Hello and welcome to the second in our series of programmes 'Brief Insights'. Today I'm talking to Annabelle Collins, a legal adviser with the Competition Commission in London. Annabelle, why the corporate sector?

Annabelle: Hello, Simon. Well, I suppose first of all my academic background - I read Economics at university - means I'm quite well equipped for this area of work. After my legal training I went into private practice specializing in commercial law and I've always been interested in the effect of regulation on business practice...

Interviewer: But you're on the side of the consumer now, not the big corporations?

Annabelle: With twenty or so years of experience in the field I've seen things from both perspectives but I like to think now that I'm standing up for the public interest. Keeping the big boys in line, if you like.

Interviewer: There's a lot of research involved, I take it.

Annabelle: There's the sheer volume of evidence in the form of company data and expert testimony. You also need a firm grasp of detailed regulations and to keep yourself up to date with government policy.

Interviewer: It must mean a few late nights...

Annabelle: A merger case may run to hundreds of boxes of documents and you've got to distil that down to the few key themes, get it clear in your head what the issues are over the course of what can be a very complex process. It definitely stimulates the grey matter.

Interviewer: And the cases may be quite high profile at times...

Annabelle: Oh, people are playing for big stakes. There are always powerful interests at work so you have to be pretty focussed at times. On the other hand, companies don't usually want the glare of publicity; they have their businesses to think about.

Interviewer: But there have been major changes in the legislation in recent times?

Annabelle: There's been shall we say a definite change of emphasis and as a regulatory body we have to reflect that. I think the procedures for, say, a market investigation are far more transparent and rigorous than in the past. It's not meant to be an adversarial process, more a gathering and sifting of evidence with expert input and then the application of a suitable remedy.

Interviewer: And you're working to quite strict deadlines...

Annabelle: Oh yes, there are statutory time limits laid down for a merger inquiry for example. The whole process has got to come to a conclusion, contained in its final report, within six months. The business world doesn't hang around and nor can we.

Answers: 1. Economics, 2. commercial, 3. private, 4. information, 5. policy, 6. legislation, 7. deadlines