

Recruitment

RESOURCE GUIDE

How to Become Someone a Legal Recruiter Wants to Represent

by Barbara Levenson

During my 25 years as a legal recruiter, I have spent a great deal of time educating attorneys, law firms and companies about the value and benefit of working with an ethical and knowledgeable legal recruiter. At the same time, I've attempted to clear up a number of misconceptions about the legal recruiting profession. Candidates and client firms need to understand not only the intricacies of the recruiting process, but also how recruiters decide whom they choose to represent and why. The job seeker is the "candidate," and the employer paying the legal recruiter is the "client."

MISCONCEPTION #1: All recruiters do is make a few phone calls, send a few emails, and then they get a big check.

Recruiting is a relationship-based business, and as in all relationships being truthful is crucial. I spend a lot of time getting to know each of my candidates who are seeking new positions, as well as their potential employers. This is the only way to help ensure a good fit, both professionally and culturally. A lot of factors go into the hiring process and it's a competitive market, even in a strong economy. Therefore, the importance of working with a recruiter who really understands the market, and who has long-standing relationships in the legal community, is vital to your success. Time is money, and employers are willing to pay recruiting fees in order to fill their positions with qualified attorneys as quickly as possible.

MISCONCEPTION #2: The more recruiters working on my behalf or my firm's behalf, the better.

Attorneys are paid for their discretion and knowledge, and so are recruiters. When too many recruiters are in the mix, the likelihood of a breach of confidentiality increases significantly.

As an employer, you are faced with potential client conflicts any time a new attorney wants to join your team, or whenever a new company wants your firm's representation. You have a loyalty to the clients you already represent, as well as to the attorneys on your team. You are not going to want to start a relationship with a client or attorney whose presence could lead to a conflict of interest, or whose values don't match your team's values and culture.

Recruiting works the same way. You need to make sure that the recruiter representing your group understands your hiring criteria

and what makes your firm or company a great place to work. The recruiter should be a positive reflection on your organization. Make sure anyone calling prospective employees for your team is someone you trust, with a proven track record sending qualified and quality attorneys to you.

It is not in your best interest to work with multiple recruiters. On the most practical level, there's the issue of diminishing returns. My company does not demand exclusivity, although exclusivity is always appreciated. By the same token, if someone is working with several other recruiters and asks me to represent them as well, I won't have an incentive to make their search a top priority. Résumé submissions are viable for six to twelve months and using multiple recruiters dilutes your impact.

MISCONCEPTION #3: All recruiters have the same job.

While it's true that many law firms work with multiple recruiters, for many of our firms we are either their only recruiting company, or on a very short list of recruiters they work with. Be selective.

Forge a good working relationship.

Transparency is key. Don't lie to your recruiter, and don't lie to your clients.

This also includes lies by omission, not just commission. If you want your recruiter to go to the mat for you, you need to be willing to do that for them.

- Don't let a recruiter twist your arm or manipulate you into working with them. What does that say about them? If you capitulate, what does that say about you?

- Candidates should never ask the recruiter whom they authorized to submit their materials to a firm or company, to withdraw that submission so another recruiter can submit their materials instead.

- If a candidate believes he or she has portable business, the attorney should be sure how much of it is really going to follow to a new firm.

- If your team receives résumés from a recruiter whose approach is to "throw everything at the wall in the hope something will stick," stop accepting them. If a recruiter can't be bothered to send you candidates who meet your standards on a consistent basis, why would you reward them? ■

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