



Points To Ponder Before Using A Recruiter

Time can be saved by turning to a legal jobs market expert

By **MICHAEL LORD**

Law firms and corporate legal departments looking to hire a new attorney and attorneys seeking a new position face a common question at the outset of their searches: Should I or should I not use a legal recruiter? While there is of course no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, there are a number of basic considerations for employers and candidates:

From Candidate's Perspective

Situation No. 1: You are a fourth-year associate. Your department is top heavy with partners and, while the work is interesting, you don't necessarily see a long-term future. **Situation No. 2:** You are a partner with a significant client following but are currently employed at a law firm that is struggling financially, does not have a satisfactory inter-generational succession plan, or has an expiring lease. In each scenario, using a reputable legal recruiter is wise for several reasons:

1) Knowing the Market: A good legal recruiter can provide valuable market intelligence that you, as a candidate, may never be able to obtain by yourself. A legal recruiter regularly communicates with firms and hiring managers about their hiring needs and other developments which may provide increased legal work. Moreover, a legal recruiter may know of law firms that are not in the spotlight, but

whose practice and culture may be a perfect fit.

- 2) Saving Time:** Trying to look for a job at the same time as excelling at your own job, not to mention family, religious, and community activities, is a daunting task. A legal recruiter can focus on your needs and help in identifying firms/corporations that are a good fit, as well as dismissing those that are not. A legal recruiter can also handle the time consuming, ministerial tasks of resume submission and interview scheduling.
- 3) Access to Hidden Job Market:** Recruiters oftentimes build strong relationships with clients, not unlike relationships between attorneys and their clients, which give them exclusive or semi-exclusive searches. Smart job seekers will tap into these relationships in order to have access to jobs that other candidates cannot.

In assessing which legal recruiter to use, consider referrals from trusted friends or advisors. Check for complaints at the Better Business Bureau. Determine if your legal recruiter complies with the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Legal Search Consultants (www.nalsc.org). Be wary of slick advertisements or fancy web sites. Initially, judge a recruiter by his/her level of responsiveness. If your inquiry does not produce a response, move on.

There are also instances in which job seekers should avoid using a legal recruiter.

If you fit into any of these categories, think twice about using a legal recruiter:

- You are a recent graduate of law school without experience.
- You are unemployed or looking to transition practice areas or looking to return to law after a hiatus.
- You are an experienced attorney without a client following.
- You are looking for a job in government.



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In these instances, networking and searching online are the best methods of finding a job. Join Linked In (www.linkedin.com) and update your profile and include a photo. Check into various networking groups; BNI International is an example (www.bni.com).

For online job postings, check www.law-jobs.com and [Vault \(www.vault.com\)](http://www.vault.com). Additionally, www.inhouseblog.com or www.acc.com offer excellent resources for in house jobs. Jobs in the court system can be found at www.jud.ct.gov/opportunities and www.uscourts.gov/careers.

From Employer's Perspective

You are a managing partner of a 50-attorney law firm. You need a smart third-year

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litigator. The ad you placed produced too many unqualified candidates. Your assistant fields numerous follow-up calls. Sound familiar? If it does, here are reasons why a legal employer should hire a recruiter.

- 1) **Saving Time:** It is the legal recruiter's role to actively source and screen candidates by reaching out to active and inactive candidates. An effective recruiter only presents those candidates who could be a good fit based on an employer's particular needs. Employers who go it alone spend a significant amount of time sifting through the résumés of large numbers of unqualified candidates and other time-consuming tasks associated with the process. Hiring a recruiter allows a legal employer to focus on current clients or business development.
- 2) **Providing Talent:** Hiring attorneys regularly claim that because there is so much available talent in the market that they can easily find a suitable attorney without having to pay a fee. But while there may be a bounty of available candidates, that does not mean that they are the most

impressive candidates or that they will be good fits. Inactive candidates often focus on their jobs, not on job searches. Hiring such top-notch attorneys provides value that outweighs the cost of paying a fee.

- 3) **Managing Costs:** Hiring the wrong person can be expensive to remedy. An effective recruiter increases the chances of hiring the right candidate. In addition, a fee is not a burden on cash flow, particularly if payment is made over time, because the client pays the fee out of the work of the new associate (or, in the case of a partner, out of her/his book of business). Finally, if a candidate should fail, most recruiters

provide a money-back guarantee period of varying length that will provide adequate protection.

There are, however, instances where hiring a legal recruiter is not necessary. If you are searching for any of the following types of candidates, you can probably find them on your own without paying a fee:

- Newly minted law school graduates.
- Experienced attorneys without a portable book of business.
- Candidates transitioning from one practice area to another.
- Unemployed candidates. ■

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