How to Help Your Recruiter Help You
By Charles A. Volkert, Esq.

Charles A. Volkert is executive director of Robert Half Legal, a leading staffing service specializing in the placement of attorneys, paralegals, legal administrators and other legal professionals with law firms and corporate legal departments. Based in Menlo Park, Calif., Robert Half Legal has offices in major cities throughout the United States and Canada.

When you’re job hunting, it makes sense to tap into as many resources as possible. That’s why many paralegals who are seeking a new position decide to team up with a recruiter. These professionals understand the needs of both employers and candidates and are well positioned to bring both parties together in effective matches.

A legal staffing professional can help you target your search efforts to the most promising opportunities, extend your network and alert you to openings you might not hear about otherwise. The best recruiters can also serve as career guides, providing you with resume and interview tips, salary data and advice to enhance your marketability. But in order to make the most of a recruiter’s services and contacts, you need to choose the right individual and learn how to work with him or her effectively.

Finding the Right Job Search Partner for You

Your job search is a potentially life-changing matter, so it’s important to find a recruiter who inspires your trust and confidence. Consult your network of professional and personal contacts as well as legal trade associations and local chambers of commerce for recommendations.
In addition, visit the websites of recruiting firms that offer the flexibility of online listings and the support of a dedicated recruiter. Many recruiting firms also offer the opportunity to sign up for customized job searches of listings, as well as automatic e-mail notification of new openings that match your job search criteria. Be wary of any firm that offers its services for a fee.

It’s important to narrow your selection to firms that specialize in legal placement. Generalist firms do not have the specific experience of recruiting experts who have worked in the fields they support. A specialized firm, in contrast, will have a strong sense of the marketplace and can offer more opportunities in the legal industry. The best specialized legal staffing firms also have larger networks, including long-standing alliances with professional organizations.

Once you’ve identified two or three recruiting firms, evaluate them using consistent criteria such as:

- Reliability – How long has the firm been in business? Does it have a history of stability?
- Specialization – Does the firm focus on the kinds of positions that interest you?
- Professionalism – Is the staff courteous and respectful in their interactions with you?
- Connections – Does the firm have the resources and business contacts to locate job opportunities at the firms where you would most like to work?

How involved are they in professional and community organizations?
Getting the Most from the Relationship

After you’ve selected a firm, you’ll likely have an initial meeting with your recruiting manager. Bring an accurate, well-written resume and the names of at least two references with you. To determine precisely the type of positions you prefer and are most qualified for, the recruiter will ask questions that verify your accomplishments and abilities. Be completely honest when discussing your past compensation and previous positions. If you resigned from your former law firm after a disagreement with your supervising attorney, example, be forthright with this fact. Withholding information from your career partner gains you nothing and limits his or her ability to fully understand your needs.

As you begin working with a recruiter, try the following suggestions to build the most productive relationship possible:

Be receptive. A key advantage of working with a legal staffing service is the ability to gain an insider’s perspective and advice on the job market. Because these professionals know the companies that are hiring, they also have a solid sense of what the business is looking for in a potential candidate. Leverage this experience by remaining open to suggestions that might improve your marketability. If your recruiter recommends that you take a particular course to update your technical skills, for example, be willing to follow this advice.

Recruiters can also help you stand out in a competitive job market by reviewing your resume to determine if you are highlighting your strongest skills. In addition, they can assist you in preparing for interviews.
Focus on quality, not quantity, of interviews. Some paralegals begin to worry when their staffing professionals do not arrange several interviews a week for them. But a high volume of interviews does not necessarily mean that the recruiter is devoting a great deal of time or effort to your search. The more experienced they are, the better able they are to judge – before you go on an interview – whether the company is likely to view you as a serious candidate. Good recruiters don’t waste your time (or their clients’) by sending you on interviews for jobs you’re not really qualified to fill.

Be an active participant in the search. Recruiters can be a tremendous asset, but don’t expect them to do it all. It’s still your responsibility to prepare well for interviews, for example. And don’t let the fact that you’re working with a well-connected staffing professional cause you to cut back on your own lead-generating activities. You still have to maintain the initiative and keep networking.

Supplement their efforts by regularly reviewing e-mail notifications of new job listings from the staffing firm. If you come across an opening that interests you, let your recruiter know. By keeping in touch, you’ll demonstrate that you’re committed to finding a new opportunity, which will encourage the recruiter to work even harder on your behalf.

Maintain communication. Keep your recruiter apprised of progress in your job search, especially right after an interview. This will enable him or her to leverage your feedback in a follow-up call to the employer, which could lead to a second or final interview. Similarly, be forthright in communicating any changes in your career needs or availability. If you’re interviewing for other jobs that you’ve set up on your own, let
recruiters know. This information can help them better understand your goals and help you streamline your search.

*Make it a mutually beneficial relationship.* It’s your recruiter’s job to help you reach your employment goals, but you can stand out from other candidates by serving as a resource in return. For example, if you know of someone who is considering a job change or is simply in need of career advice, provide your recruiter with the person’s name and contact information. Distinguishing yourself as a source of referrals is a great way to ensure you are on your recruiter’s speed dial list. You can also share your expertise by forwarding articles of interest you come across in business and trade publications.

In addition to these strategies, one of the best ways to strengthen your relationship with your recruiter is to be a person they enjoy calling. If you are professional, enthusiastic, considerate and quick to respond, a recruiter is more likely to call you first when there’s a suitable opening – and to feel comfortable recommending you for top assignments.

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