



ATTORNEY SEARCH

*By A. Harrison Barnes, Esq.*

## 10 Things That Most Legal Recruiters Will Not Tell You

### Introduction

The legal recruiting industry is unique. With the goals of placing attorneys in new positions and, most importantly, helping attorneys' careers progress by finding the appropriate match, there is an important responsibility that falls on the shoulders of legal recruiters. However, unlike the practice of law, the legal recruiting industry is not regulated by the states. No licenses are needed. Therefore, anybody who wishes to become a legal recruiter (whether a former car salesperson, captain of a cruise liner, or an exotic dancer with good people skills) can easily hang out a shingle and call him/herself a recruiter. No licenses, tests, or ethical-fitness qualifications are necessary. "Not an attorney, and you have no knowledge of the legal market? No problem!"

Of course, we are not saying these things to denigrate the legal recruiting industry as a whole. There are certainly recruiters for whom we have a high level of respect. However, the harsh reality is that due to the lack of regulation in this industry, not all recruiters are created equal. Thus, it is in your best interest to find a recruiter that practices legal recruiting in the same way you practice law-with the utmost professionalism and dedication.

There are very few articles on the inner workings of legal recruiting companies. This article talks about some of the dangerous trends we see occurring among many recruiting companies, which are important to you because they affect the manner in which your career is handled. This article also illustrates some of the things we at BCG Attorney Search do to distinguish ourselves so that we can practice legal recruiting at the highest level and, most important, provide our candidates with a leg up on the competition in their job searches.

### 1. Most Legal Recruiting Firms Are Not Equipped with Resources to Provide the Highest Standard of Representation.

Most legal recruiting firms are not serious organizations because they typically do not invest in heavy market research or growing their businesses. Furthermore, most are very small organizations (perhaps with a telephone answering service) that are based out of and operate from home offices. While there are certainly recruiters who are very small but still very effective because they are appropriately focused, most legal recruiting companies do not invest in developing the manpower, research/job-searching capacity, or general resources to provide the highest level of service.

Think of this: If you were looking for an attorney to handle your most important legal issue, would you rather use a sole practitioner working from a home office or a respected law firm with established offices, a group of attorneys who are intimately familiar with your exact issue, discounted access to Lexis/Westlaw to ensure that research is exhaustive, and the benefit of years of institutional and expert knowledge that is freely shared among the attorneys handling your case? Better yet, what if you had this choice AND the cost to you was the same: free (as you may know, legal recruiters don't charge the candidates; the fees are paid by law firms)? Whom would you choose?

## 10 Things That Most Legal Recruiters Will Not Tell You

Why is this dangerous for you? Working with a recruiting company that has limited resources will result in limited opportunities for you. It's that simple.

At BCG Attorney Search, a division of Juriscape, we are part of a large international organization with more than 10 offices strategically located throughout the U.S. and other offices in Europe and Asia. As the first Juriscape company, our intense research in the legal market has led to the creation of the largest legal job board in the world, the largest legal outplacement company in the world, the largest law school loan company (a federally recognized lending institution), the largest attorney resume company in the world; and we have significant operations in both the United States and abroad. We have founded numerous companies, including a legal staff company. We own multimillion-dollar real estate holdings.

Most relevant to you, we employ more than 150 researchers in our core company and have more than 30 full-time programmers working for us. Our researchers consistently monitor the market so that we have the most recent openings at our fingertips, and our programmers create the most advanced database technology, which ensures that you have the quickest and most immediate access to the most opportunities. In this field, timing is everything. Therefore, we operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Our recruiters are also treated very well. They are all employees of the company and have 401(k) plans, health coverage, and all of the attributes that any serious organization offers.

There is simply no legal recruiting firm-anywhere-with the breadth of resources we have in this industry. We are exceptionally good at what we do, and we are run as a professional organization that does great things. For our candidates, that means we can provide an exceptionally high level of service, a level far above anything out there in the market. We are serious about what we do, and it comes through in everything we do.

## **2. Most Other Legal Recruiting Firms Are Comprised of People Not Serious About Legal Recruiting.**

Many of these legal recruiters are populated with people who dropped out of the practice of law because they did not like the pressure and were looking for easier jobs, where they did not have to work as hard. The entire style of business at these organizations is either very cavalier and casual or extremely aggressive, where the focus is on just making a placement at any and all costs, regardless of whether it is likely to be a good long-term fit.

Why is this dangerous for you? Working with legal recruiters who are not serious about their profession will likely cause you unending frustration and regret on many levels.

At BCG Attorney Search, a great majority of our recruiters were successful attorneys at top law firms, who frequently received calls from legal recruiters. BCG recruiters transitioned into legal recruiting not because they wanted an easier lifestyle, but because of their passion and demonstrated commitment to recruiting and helping people. They were selected because they are not only compassionate, but also intense, focused, Type-A overachievers. Our recruiters are expected to be (and are) in the office early and work hours comparable to attorneys. They undergo an intense initial screening (including personality profiling and multiple rounds of interviews) before being hired and receive training on an annual basis. Our recruiters are the sorts of people whom you would also take seriously if you were practicing law. Our recruiters are high achievers who exceed the norms of the recruiting industry by a great margin. Our recruiters are passionate about what they do. They spend evenings and weekends speaking to candidates and as well as other recruiters. Our recruiters are regularly quoted in the news media, write articles frequently, and all have very strong backgrounds. In addition, our recruiters communicate as a group each day; therefore, they all have a good understanding of the market at all points in time.

The work ethic our recruiters bring to their positions makes a major difference when you are looking for a position. When looking for a legal recruiter, whom would you want representing you?

## **3. Most Other Legal Recruiters Try to Take on Too Many Different Types of Searches and Are Not Focused.**

Most other legal recruiters will place you in whatever type of job they can-whether the position is inside a law firm or corporation (or wherever). In order to make a few more bucks, some will place contract attorneys, paralegals, and legal secretaries, in addition to attorneys. In many instances, some recruiters out there will place accountants, manufacturing plant managers, and attorneys all at the same time.

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It takes an incredible amount of time to learn the intricacies of the legal market, just like it takes a lot of time to become an expert on a particular area of the law. If you had a divorce law matter, would you be comfortable using an attorney whose practice also consisted of patent law and education law?

Why is this dangerous for you? While some people may be impressed that a recruiting firm does in-house and law firm placements or contract attorney and paralegal placements, this is something that you should view with a great deal of skepticism. This may harm you when you are looking for a job because a “Jack of all trades, master of none” recruiter will not be able to provide you with the highest level of knowledge about the particular area in which you are seeking a new job.

There are several levels to our focus at BCG Attorney Search. In fact, our focus is fanatical. First, we only place attorneys in permanent positions inside law firms. This is all we do, and we do not do anything else besides this. The reason for this is that our focus helps us be aware of the idiosyncratic nature of our market and understand what is going on inside the market at all times. Furthermore, having this focus also enables our recruiters to not get distracted.

For example, if you were a recruiter in Silicon Valley and Google was suddenly hiring a number of in-house attorneys, you might concentrate on this for some time. However, how much good would this be for your candidates seeking a positions inside law firms? In some recruiting firms, they only become interested in the law firm market when the in-house market slows down. Would you want this firm advising you on the market?

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At BCG Attorney Search, we take our focus one step further. We are also geographically focused. Our recruiters in each region of the United States can only work with candidates seeking positions in that area of the United States. Accordingly, our recruiters are only monitoring and working with law firms in a given city/state/region. This focus makes a major difference on several levels. On one level, our recruiters speak with the hiring partners and recruiting personnel inside most of these law firms on a weekly basis. Our recruiters see these recruiting personnel at local events and visit them in their offices. Most important, our recruiters know what is going on inside each of these markets and have behind-the-scenes knowledge of opportunities, often before they are announced. This precision gives you an advantage when you are looking for a position.

#### **4. A Model Based on Proprietary and Territorial Listings as Opposed to Shared Information Among Recruiters.**

Some recruiting firms may divide up a city and allow only certain recruiters to send candidates to a given firm. For example, if there were four recruiters servicing New York City, each recruiter might be responsible for 25 separate firms. If one of those four recruiters wanted to send the candidate to any of the other 75 firms they would need to go through one of those other three recruiters to do so and would have to split any compensation from placing that candidate with the other recruiter. Given the disincentive to split a fee, many recruiters in this situation only send their candidates to their 25 firms. In addition, we have heard stories where one recruiter in an office does not like another recruiter in the same office and therefore will bar the other recruiter from sending candidates to his/her own firms. As a result, in some recruiting firms, you may actually be limited to applying to very few firms by the randomness of the recruiter to whom you are assigned.

While the problem above may sound serious, some recruiters work with only a few firms at a time! In this case, you may only have the option of applying to a handful of firms.

At BCG Attorney Search, we do not divide up law firms among recruiters. A recruiter in a given geographic area at BCG Attorney Search can send his/her candidates to any firm in that geographic area. This means when you approach BCG Attorney Search, you have the entire market open to you. This is not something you are going to get at every major legal recruiting firm.

#### **5. A Business Model Based Solely on Cold Calling.**

A recruiting firm whose model is based solely on cold calling can limit your access to all of the available opportunities without your even knowing it. Here is why: If the recruiter is calling attorneys in a firm and the firm finds out, it will likely “ban” that legal recruiter from making placements in its law firm because the recruiter has sent the message that he/she does not consider that firm to be a client. If you were working as a recruiting

manager in a law firm, how would you feel if an outside recruiter with whom you had an existing relationship had a candidate interviewing with your firm on Monday morning, but was cold-calling into your firm later that afternoon? The danger with cold calling-focused recruiters is that given the nature of the market, they are forced to choose their “placer” firms and their “taker” firms. In other words, half of the market consists of firms in which they place attorneys, and the other half consists of firms from which they take attorneys (i.e., firms into which they call).

Why is this dangerous for you? If there is a great opportunity at Firm X, but your recruiter simply won't mention it to you because Firm X is among the 50% of “taker” firms, you have missed out on a very good opportunity. So, the next time you receive a cold call, you should think twice about the large number of opportunities that are likely removed from the map, even before the game begins.

Another characteristic of many cold calling recruiters is that they either do not have many candidates or spend very little time focusing on helping their existing candidates. Why do you think that is? Is there something about the quality of the service they are providing? Why aren't other attorneys referring them candidates? Can the recruiter not afford to advertise?

At BCG Attorney Search, our business model is not based on cold calling. To the contrary, most of our candidates come through word-of-mouth referrals. In addition, we do an exceptionally high amount of targeted advertising to ensure that we have the ability to access, screen, and hand-pick from the broadest range of candidates, which minimizes our need to cold call.

While we do cold call for unique searches if our current database of more than 30,000 candidates does not have an appropriate match, we never call into our client firms, which are typically the best and most desirable firms to work at in each city. Furthermore, we rigidly adhere to any agreements we have with firms regarding cold calling their attorneys. As a result of our business model, there is no law firm we are aware of that has ever banned us for cold calling and recruiting from their firm. The good relationships we have with law firms signify our access to the entire market, and this makes all the difference when you are searching for a position.

There are secrets to the success of BCG Attorney Search compared to other search firms, and we believe this is one of the greatest: “Do not take from the mouth that feeds you.” This business philosophy gives you more options.

#### **6. A Lack of a Core Value That Demands Getting Attorneys Jobs.**

Most legal recruiters are in the business for a variety of reasons. When you question these legal recruiters why they are recruiting, you are likely to get a variety of answers-most of which are not the answer you will get from a BCG Attorney Search recruiter.

Here at BCG Attorney Search, we are clear (and always have been) that our number-one core value is to get attorneys jobs. We are passionate about getting attorneys jobs. We believe our jobs exist to get attorneys jobs. When you deconstruct this statement, you realize that this statement is “all about others” and has nothing to do with our recruiters. This has everything to do with others.

We believe the greatest gift you can provide someone is the ability to work. We also believe ours is the noblest profession because we are providing people the ability to work at their highest level. Some might ask what is noble about getting attorneys jobs and helping them work. We believe when you help people work, you are improving their lives and improving the lives of their families. You are contributing to society and enriching people in a way that nothing else can. This value results in our recruiters' taking extraordinary pride in helping attorneys get jobs.

#### **7. A Lack of a Demand for a First-Rate Work Product.**

Most legal recruiters cavalierly email your resume or fax it to law firms with little explanation as to your strengths or why you are seeking a job. They hope that an employer will “bite.” In some cases, the recruiter may write a paragraph or two about you as well; however, in a large proportion of the cases, this explanation will be so rushed and riddled with typos that it does you more harm than good.

Why is this dangerous for you? If a recruiter that simply sends out a resume and transcript without a detailed cover letter, what value is added? A well-trained monkey can fax a resume and transcript to a firm.

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At BCG Attorney Search, we can confidently say that we go way beyond what every other recruiting company does in terms of candidate preparation. We write in-depth profiles (often more than five pages long) for every single candidate we agree to represent. No exceptions. Our recruiters (many of whom are former litigators) interview each of our candidates in depth and put together persuasive and compelling cover letters that contain comprehensive explanations of your strengths. As legal recruiters who are specialized and well versed in the needs of our clients, we spend a lot of time debating how to specifically position our candidates to look the absolute best they can in the eyes of employers. The sort of exactitude and level of understanding they bring to your job search make a major difference, and we believe this is something that greatly increases the odds of our candidates' getting hired.

On a regular basis, our candidates will return from an interview and comment: "A number of the interviewers told me to tell you that your cover letter was incredibly helpful and the best that they have ever seen." Recently, one of our candidates interviewing for an international trade position in Washington, DC, noted that four of her six interviewers praised BCG on the stellar quality of her cover letter and overall presentation to the firm.

Indeed, numerous candidates have called us asking to work with us because, in their words, "I read your cover letter for a candidate I was interviewing and was so impressed. I made it a point to remember your name for when I wanted to seek a new job." All of our written work comes in addition to the other work we do speaking with our clients about you in person and on the telephone.

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Our profiles all go out not only by email, but also by mail on expensive stationery. All of our cover letters are proofread with considerable attention to detail and follow the same style format. In addition, we also make personalized color PDFs of our application materials available to our clients, which contain your information and look exceptionally good to hiring authorities (we developed a proprietary process for doing this).

We are the only legal recruiter that employs in-house proofreaders to review all of our written materials before they go out. We take our work product very seriously, and we believe the quality of the recruiter says something about the quality of the candidate. Law firms know that if you are using BCG Attorney Search, you value excellence and have done your homework. As many law firms have told in one form or another time and time again:

"When we receive application materials from BCG, they go right to the top of the pile."

#### **8. A Lack of a Focus on Servicing Law Firms.**

The only time most law firms hear from other legal recruiters is when they are sending them a candidate. This could be once every few years.

BCG Attorney Search mails out more than 10,000 copies of our annual publication, the [BCG Attorney Search Guide to Class Ranking and Law Review Admission at America's Top-50 Law Schools](#) (a 200-plus-page publication) to every significant law firm in the United States every year. In addition, our BCG Attorney Search law firm news goes out to more than 4,000 law firms as a hard copy each week. We also send an astonishing 100,000 handwritten holiday cards each year.

Because of our size, our geographic focus, and the fact that we only place attorneys inside law firms, most law firms also hear from us frequently to discuss various candidates. We are not strangers to any law firm in any city we work in.

Our focus on servicing law firms is extreme. We do everything we can to provide law firms with the best service possible because we want our candidates to be the ones who stand out and are hired. We have the ears of most law firms in the geographic areas we are in, and this makes a huge difference.

#### **9. A Lack of Integrity.**

Most attorneys are aware of all the horror stories regarding legal recruiters. You may know somebody who worked with a legal recruiter who sent out a resume without prior permission because the recruiter was so anxious to make a placement. Some may even discuss your candidacy with others without your permission. Other recruiters may misrepresent their candidates' qualifications in order to make a quick buck. While these things are highly unethical, unfortunately, they still happen. Remember, unlike the practice of law, there is no license that can be

revoked when a legal recruiter behaves unethically. The only thing that can be done is to spread the word and hope that the recruiter's reputation catches up with him/her.

At BCG Attorney Search, we have a strict policy that any dishonesty by our recruiters in any manner results in their termination. We have never sent a candidate to a law firm without his/her authorization, and our recruiters are all known to be ethical. Our recruiters would never have a reason to be unethical because they are all exceptionally good at what they are doing and the thought of cutting corners is something that would never cross their minds.

#### **10. A Lack of Training.**

A lot of legal recruiters (even a few firms that consider themselves in competition with BCG Attorney Search) have a training program that consists of putting their legal recruiters in front of a computer and beside a phone and saying "go to work." Training is very costly from a company's point of view, and many recruiting companies simply do not want to invest in training. When you speak with a recruiter, odds are that you have no idea whether the person has been appropriately trained, is sufficiently experienced, or whether that person will know how to most effectively handle your candidacy. Don't forget, a well-trained monkey can fax a resume and transcript to a firm.

At BCG Attorney Search, we go to great lengths to train our recruiters to be the best in the industry. Most recruiters we train are brought out to our headquarters, and in some cases, these recruiters have stayed with us, thousands of miles from their families, for up to six months in order to receive the highest level of training possible. On an annual basis, our recruiters get together in person for a three- to four-day intense training session, with more than eight hours of interactive lectures per day. These presentations are also professionally filmed for training new recruiters. In addition, we train our recruiters by weekly, individual teleconferences, where a more senior recruiter checks in with the individual recruiters, learns what is going on with each candidate he/she is representing, and then offers suggestions for improving the representation of the candidate where appropriate.

No matter how senior or experienced our recruiters are, we are training and working with them at all times. In addition, our company is distributing material to our recruiters for training purposes on a weekly basis. We believe that outstanding training makes a major difference not only in how well our recruiters do their jobs, but also in how well you are represented by them.

Good representation makes all the difference.

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