

How to Research Law Firm Partner Placements: Strategies & Tips

By Kevin Quinn

Research is obviously a key ingredient to placing any attorney into a suitable law firm, but this is particularly the case when attempting to place partners. Because partners tend to reflect upon the law firm more so than any single associate could, a partner who does not fit with his/her law firm is going to stick out like a sore thumb. Associates obviously should not be cast into a firm that does not fit them, but a sly enough associate will most likely be able to make him/herself fit in if he/she wants it enough. Partners, on the other hand, are unlikely to want to change their ways and are even more unlikely to be accepted by other partners, who all have at least some things in common to have worked their way up in the same firm. This is why it is important to cover all of your bases when researching to match an attorney at the partner level with an appropriate firm. You really need to do both parties justice, or it just will not work.

Summary

The ability for law firms to accurately research partner placements has become increasingly important to the success of their business. Partner placements provide a snapshot of a law firm's performance and overall health, as well as provide insight into how well law firms are performing in comparison to other firms in the same sector and geographical area. Partner placement research is essential for firms to make well-informed decisions about their practice and to plan for future growth and success.

When conducting partner placement research, there are several important factors to consider. First and foremost, the law firm should understand the local legal marketplace and be able to compare and contrast the competitive landscape. Secondly, firms should identify the types of placements they are interested in and research the potential opportunities in that space to ensure that they are making the best decisions. Thirdly, law firms must consider the sources of data they are using and make sure they are using the most up-to-date sources. Finally, law firms should conduct regular reviews of the data to ensure that their partner placement decisions are accurate.

These days, there are a number of online resources available to help law firms with their partner placement research. These include online databases, such as LawClutch and LexisNexis, which provide up-to-date data on partner placements from various organizations worldwide. Additionally, there are tools such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor that offer data and insights into partner placements, allowing firms to quickly and easily assess potential partner placements. Additionally, many law firms are now able to access partner placement data from their own websites through web-based applications like LinkedIn and Glassdoor.

For law firms that are looking to conduct more detailed and comprehensive research on partner placements, there are professional services available. These services typically provide a variety of research tools and data sources that allow firms to accurately identify potential partner placements in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. Additionally, many of these services also provide detailed analysis of the data collected and insights into the effectiveness of the placements they are considering.

Overall, partner placement research is an important tool for firms to accurately assess their performance in the marketplace and to plan for future growth and success. By understanding the local legal marketplace, identifying the types of placements they want to pursue, and utilizing the various resources available, law firms can provide their clients with accurate and timely data to ensure they are making the best and most informed decisions possible.

Researching Partner Placements in the Legal Profession

Partner placements are becoming increasingly important in the legal profession. As firms continue to expand and look for new areas of specialization, partners are being recruited to manage these new areas of

expertise.

Law firms are looking for partners who can provide leadership, knowledge and experience to help the firm grow. Partners are also sought after to help with legal research, provide litigation and trial assistance, and to provide strategic advice to clients.

The internet has made it easier to research partner placements. There are numerous websites and databases that detail the qualifications and experience of potential partners, as well as the current job openings available. It is important to research these sources thoroughly, as they can provide invaluable information to potential partners.

When researching potential partners, it is important to consider their background and experience. Many firms prefer partners with a specific area of expertise, so it is important to make sure that the potential partner's background and experience match the firm's needs. It is also important to research the firm itself, as a potential partner should be sure that the firm's values, culture and approach to practice align with their own.

In addition to researching the firm's background and experience, it is also important to research their partners. This can be done by searching for partner profiles that are available online. By reading each partner's profile, you can gain insight into their background, experience, and areas of expertise which can help determine if they are a good fit for the firm.

What a Firm is Looking For: A Book of Business and a Firm Believer

When a firm takes on an extra associate, it is adding a worker bee. When a firm takes on a partner, it is adding a queen bee. Because adding a queen bee to a hive that already houses a queen bee is generally not a good idea, the main reason a law firm takes on a new partner is to make an entirely new place for him/her. In other words, a law firm adding a partner is seeking either to expand the hive or to replace the queen bee that flew away.

Law firms that are seeking expansion tend to want established partners with business to temper the risks involved. Partners come in all different shapes and sizes, especially when it comes to the business that they handle. Of paramount importance in trying to place a partner in a new firm is finding out if the [portable business](#) that he/she is planning on taking to a new firm fits the mold that firm wants. Because the majority of junior associates have little to no business that they are directly responsible for, this is not an issue with them, but it almost **always comes up when trying to place a partner**.

When it comes to the book of business that firms are looking for, firms do not restrict themselves to million-dollar players. Obviously, the more business that a partner is going to be bringing to a firm, the more sought after he/she will be. It is not difficult to explain to a firm that you are going to be bringing in someone who can increase your revenue by five million dollars. In some cases, that is the only way to get him/her in the door. In order for the firm to pay a partner a hefty salary, that partner had better be writing his/her own checks. Other firms, however, are so swamped with the work that they are already getting that they cannot handle enough and would take someone with a minimal book of business, or perhaps none at all, to take some of the load off the current partners. Researching books of business on behalf of firms is very time-consuming, as it is not something a firm will usually publicize. While senior partners at top firms are likely to have a long roster of clients, limiting yourself to these candidates eliminates young rainmakers that may make more of a future in a new firm. Finding out who can have an instant effect on a firm is some of the most important research done in the [recruiting process](#) and requires [recruiters to take notice](#) when and how big deals happen for a firm because an attorney is always behind it.

Knowing which firms are willing to take partners with smaller books of business is not always easy. Firms will always try to put a shiny coat of paint on anything to try to make it look good. So unless the walls are caving in, it can be difficult to tell what is going on inside a firm. Intense market research is required. Who the firm's clients are, the kind of workload that is piling up at the firm, the recent hires, and the recent cutbacks are all facts that can be dug up with a little ingenuity and will go a long way to finding out if a firm would be willing to take on a partner with a less than impressive book of business. Going to a firm with financial troubles and presenting anything but a rainmaker will make a recruiter look ridiculous, so it is important to be aware of its current financial outlook.

A constant issue when moving a book of business is whether an attorney's clients will be willing to travel to a new firm. Will the new firm's name ring as well in the ears of the clients? Many of the top companies would not like their business to be **brought to a less-prestigious firm**, especially one that notoriously does not put out as good a work product as the previous firm. Perhaps more important to the client will be the rates at which a potential firm would like to bill its new partner out. Paying a much higher bill for the same attorney just because he/she has new letterhead may not sit very well with a client. Because it is considered unseemly to go right out and ask a client whether or not he/she will be following the partner to a new firm, a good recruiter will research its likelihood by weighing the changes that a **new firm** will impose on the partner's clients.

Beyond business, a firm is looking for someone who will mesh with its way of doing things. The existing partners are going to be the decision makers with respect to any partner who is trying to join their club, so having researched the ins and outs of the kinds of partners at a firm will give you a pretty good idea of the type of partner they would hire. Of course, you can never really know someone unless you have talked to him/her, but getting a good sense of the academic background and the work history of a partner can tell a lot about the type of partner they would accept. For example, a firm that counts only top-10 **law school graduates** among its ranks is most likely going to reject a partner that went to a second-tier law school.

Similarly, a firm that rates certain values as more important than others will look for the same in its partners. A uniform goal among the higher-ups in a firm, while not always present, is something that **every law firm should strive to achieve**. A good recruiter, therefore, should have properly researched the firm's partners to know whether or not the partner he/she is trying to place fits the mold. As previously mentioned, the chances are small that a partner who has earned the respect of one firm is going to want to have to prove that he/she is going to fit in with this new firm. A recruiter's job is to make sure that this will happen.

What a Partner is Looking For: Change

When a partner with a work history that has proven steady enough to achieve the highest possible goal in a single firm is willing to move, he/she is generally looking for one thing: a better environment. A partner may be willing to search for the brass ring in a pile of mud, but when he/she finds it, first instincts may tell him/her to run away to greener pastures to enjoy it. This has proven the case time and again, as attorneys suddenly realize that after years of living under the same rule, they would really prefer a change of pace.

What exactly each partner is looking to change varies, of course. One partner who has worked a particularly brutal work schedule for a dozen years may be looking for some more free time, while another who works at a firm with a dried up practice may be seeking more hours. Administration changes, client moves, the inability to generate business under his/her current firm's banner-these are all issues that have been voiced to us as reasons for moving. Willingness to stick around until you have made partner no longer means a willingness to stick around permanently, as options for top partners are more open than ever before.

Because a partner hopes to solve these problems by moving to a new firm, he/she has to be able to expect not to see them again when he/she shows up for work there. Because there is a plethora of literature put out

by publications like [American Lawyer](#) and companies like WestLaw Group, which details insider knowledge of how a firm functions, any recruiter who is ignorant of this type of information is not putting forth the proper amount of effort for his/her candidates. Every firm is different in at least some ways, so finding a firm that lacks the qualities that drove a partner away from his/her old firm is just a matter of researching the vast amounts of sources currently available and deciphering what's true and what's bitter employee talk.

Finding a firm with a different feel to it usually means finding a firm that is larger or smaller. A firm that operates on the same level (in terms of size and prestige) as another firm within the same practice areas generally runs the same way, with a few exceptions. Those exceptions, however, are where the best recruiters are looking to place their clients. It would be easy to place a quality partner candidate at a less prestigious firm that incorporates the kinds of changes he/she wants, but few partners are going to want to take a step down to achieve these objectives. Finding a firm that is just as prestigious and yet different from the firm the partner is leaving is tough, but it is necessary in order to place a partner candidate in an environment where he/she can thrive and produce the way that a law firm expects its partners to. Knowing how a firm operates on the inside is part of the equation, but knowing how the law firm is perceived on the outside is important too; otherwise, you may be suggesting a partner go to a firm that he/she should never consider.

The Difference Between Placing Partners and Associates

Placing a partner and placing an associate both boil down to the same idea: bringing together an attorney and a law firm that will mutually benefit from each other. However, the methods of finding a partner or finding a law firm for a partner differ from associate recruiting, as does the research involved. The research must be much more detailed and involved and extend into the actual practice of the partner. While it is obviously important to know what type of work an associate does, a recruiter has to have a comprehensive understanding of the clients that the partner can bring. Additionally, partners are much less willing to adapt to the change of a new law firm environment, and it is much more of an issue to find the exact type of firm that will fit their personalities and work habits best, without unnecessarily lowering their standards. After all, the most important aspect of [partner recruiting](#) is finding a situation where a partner can thrive. Without doing that, a recruiter really has not done anything.