

Do I Need to Meet the Patent Experience Requirements for Patent Agent Opportunities at Major Law Firms?

Question:

I have a quick question. When most of the patent agent job posts ask for a specific number of years' experience (usually between 1-5) of patent prosecution or drafting, does that mean that "entry level" candidates with little experience (like me) have no chance at all in those opportunities? I find I match the requirements of many posts but not the years of experience that they require. I'd like to know if patent agent recruiters like you suggest that entry level candidates not apply for those posts that require years of patent prosecution experience. Thanks.

Answer:

Your question is a common one among "entry level" [patent agent candidates](#). The answer is that, [as a general rule at most major law firms, they will not hire candidates who lack the required experience](#). The reason is that they usually don't need to hire "entry level" candidates. The market is very competitive and includes candidates that have both the experience and the other requirements. Law firms also prefer not to hire beginners because they do not want to pay to train them. They also like to have someone who has proven abilities to prosecute patents, rather than someone who is so far unproven. Consequently, I do not recommend that candidates apply to opportunities that require years of experience unless they have that experience or at least close to it. Otherwise, the odds of success are very slim. Of course, there is sometimes an extraordinary case where a candidate is stellar on all other requirements but is just short on the amount of experience (but they at least have some, preferably). In that situation it may still be worth applying, but that has to be determined on a case-by-case basis. Due to that possibility, I sometimes provide opportunities that have experience requirements to an entry-level candidate so that the candidate can at least consider whether or not they are an exceptional case that may be able to consider that firm anyway.

For candidates that lack experience but are strong in other areas, I recommend that they apply primarily to opportunities where the job description says expressly that the firm will consider "entry level" or "junior" candidates or "technical specialists." The other exception where I believe entry level candidates should consider applying is where there is no mention of an experience requirement, thus suggesting that it may not be that important for that firm.

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