

Is it a Waste of Time for an Attorney to Apply to Jobs Online?

Summary: I don't blame you for being frustrated and I can understand why you might feel as if you are wasting your time by reading and responding to online job postings.

Question: *I am a junior associate at a large New York City firm. Recently I responded to several classified ads placed by legal recruiters online. These responses included an e-mail introducing myself and my interest in the specific listing along with my resume as an attachment in the form specified.*

In all instances I have received neither an acknowledgment from any of the recruiters that they received my letter of interest, nor any phone calls or emails following up on my requests.

Is this the normal practice for handling such classified ads? If so, am I wasting my time reading and responding to them?

Answer: I don't blame you for being frustrated and I certainly can understand why you might feel as if you are wasting your time with reading and responding to online classified ad job postings. I may have some answers for you, but first I need to ask a few questions.

The ads that you are reading and to which you are responding, are they for specific positions that require very specific qualifications? For example, the ad might ask for candidates with two to three years of commercial litigation experience along with a clerkship, a J.D. from a [top ten law school](#) and a minimum of two years' practice experience within a [major law firm](#). You certainly fit into the major law firm qualification, but perhaps you graduated from a third tier law school, did not have a clerkship after law school and you have not quite yet hit the two year mark in your practice experience. In a recruiter's world, you would not be a viable candidate for the advertised position.

Let's take a moment to [understand what the recruiter's role](#) is. The recruiter does not do the hiring, but rather acts as an intermediary between the client and the candidate. However, if the client is adamant about the qualifications for a viable candidate and you do not fit within those parameters, it would not do anyone much good to present you as a candidate. In fact, the recruiter's credibility would diminish tremendously.

And what about you? You will have been told about a job, and are perhaps genuinely excited over the prospect of this job, for which you don't have a chance to be hired, much less interviewed. This does not seem as if it would be very fair to you, does it?

I have heard from many readers over the years that legal recruiters are snobs and will only work with candidates possessing certain credentials instead of with a broad spectrum of candidates, many of whom are better attorneys even though they may have graduated from lesser law schools. Over the years I have met many brilliant attorneys who did not graduate from top tier law schools. I wouldn't hesitate to hire them myself and would love to have the [chance to find good opportunities](#) for them. Unfortunately, I do not have this luxury. My clients determine who I may or may not represent, and if I don't listen to their needs, and work within their framework, I will be left without any clients.

Some of you have suggested that I refuse to work with clients who are so close-minded to candidates with credentials that are different from their own. If we did that, we would not have any clients. Just remember that it is the major law firms that typically are serviced by recruiters. Recruiters are in a business that dictates that they must satisfy the clients' wishes, because that is the entity that pays our fee. If we continue to present candidates that the client will not see, or if we refuse to work with these firms, we are doing a disservice to not only the client but to our own firm as well. This just doesn't make any sense.

So, before you respond to an ad, make sure that you come as close as possible to what is being asked for. I often wonder why people send their resumes out to an ad and a name in the paper. Don't you want to speak with the advertiser first and, even more important, have a face-to-face meeting with the recruiter prior to submitting your resume and transcript? Do you really just want to send off your resume without any previous contact with the intended recipient? Before you send your resume to some unknown entity, pick up the phone and speak with the person. Check to make sure that they really are interested in receiving your resume before you send it out.

This does not excuse the fact that no one is responding to your resume submission. It really is frustrating to take the time and effort to [write a cover letter](#), [prepare your resume](#) and then mail out the package to a number of different potential employers. However, again I ask you to think about what is happening at the recruiter's end of all of this. [Literally dozens and dozens and sometimes hundreds of people are sending their resume each week to the recruiter for this very same opening](#). More than likely, quite a high percentage of these resumes are completely off-track for the client's specific requirements. If a search firm responded to each of those resumes that were not a fit, most of the day would be spent writing "thanks but no thanks" notes and very little else would get done. The candidates who are being marketed and are interviewing and are waiting to hear if they are about to get an offer are going to be put on the back burner, while the "thanks but no thanks" notes are being composed and mailed out or e-mailed. It is a question of prioritizing on the part of the recruiter. Unfortunately, this seems to be an unhappy by-product of the electronic age. So many more people can send their resume to an ad thanks to e-mail, but that makes it impossible for the recruiter, or any potential employer for that matter, to respond to every single one.

- See [Coping with the Process of Applying for a Position in a Law Firm](#) for more information.

What doesn't make sense to me is that no one is responding to the resumes you are sending out. Something is wrong here and I have to believe that you are not being selective as to where you are sending your resume. Or it could just be as simple as the fact that you have only sent your resume out to several search firms and you haven't covered enough ground to get a true sense of whether or not the recruiters are interested in your background.

You asked if this non-response is standard operating procedure for recruiters. I suppose it is, especially in light of the reasons I mentioned above. In fact, many recruiting firms will state in their ads that they will only be responding to those resumes that are on target for their client.

You also asked if you are wasting your time by reading the ads and responding to the recruiters. I hope you are not serious, because I don't know how it could ever be a waste of time to read the classified ads, whether they are in print or on the Internet. This is one of the best ways to see what is out there on the job market. However, I would suggest that you change one thing when you are responding to recruitment firm advertising. Instead of sending in an unsolicited resume to someone you have never met, take the time to properly market yourself. Pick up the telephone and, as I said above, speak with the recruiter. Make sure that your background is on target for the advertised opportunity. Whether or not that job is the right one for you, set up an appointment with the recruiter before you submit any paperwork.

If you take this extra step you will find that it is well worth your time. Speak with the recruiter before you send your resume. In this way you will not have to worry whether or not the recruiter has received your resume and you will know whether or not the advertised opportunity is something you should pursue.

See the following articles for more information:

[Is Your Networking Working?](#)

[How to Tell if a Recruiting Firm Stands Behind Its Message](#)

[Something Most Recruiters Will Never Tell You: The Way Most Recruiters Recruit](#)

[Click Here to Let Us Answer Your Legal Career Question](#)