

How Long is Too Long?

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Over the past week, I've had several friends of mine (all of whom are either attorneys or investment bankers) ask me, "Is it normal to not hear from my recruiter for several weeks?" "Is it normal that my recruiter did not call me back in 24 hours?" They are asking me this because, quite simply, I am a recruiter, and I should know. However, the answer to that question is not as simple as it sounds.

First, it depends on your recruiter and his/her time pressures, client needs, and other typical daily work demands. Typically, a 24-72 hour turnaround time is normal. If it goes longer, that may be odd; however, it will all depend on that recruiter's workload.

Second, it may depend on how many new calls your recruiter is getting every day. If he/she is getting 30-50 new candidate calls per day--on top of their typical workload--that is a high volume of calls to handle and return. Thus, you may wish to give them a little more time to get back to you.

Third, it depends on your relationship with your recruiter. If your recruiter is engaged in a process with you already and/or they have you out for an interview and/or already submitted you for an active position, the turnaround time for a return call should be shorter (within 24 hours) as your relationship has already been established.

At the end of the day, however, there is no rhyme or reason relative to "timing" for a return call. The best case scenario would be 24 hours but that may be a utopian viewpoint, especially in this economy. However, the fact that I am fielding these questions from my friends tells me that others may be wondering the same thing relative to their job process. Thus, I will give you the advice I give to my friends: "You don't know why there is a delay, and there may be good reason for it. As such, try to look at your relationship as a partnership and give your recruiter the benefit of the doubt...especially if you have already established a friendship. If, however, this is a new recruiter, and you are not feeling taken care of, you may wish to interview other recruiters before choosing this person. It's a personal decision based on your own comfort level. The market has definitely had an effect on timing because recruiters are being inundated with phone calls at all levels and/or sometimes won't have feedback from interviews right away as firms/in-house delay their own responses to recruiters' inquiries. Knowing this, try to be patient. If patience is not your virtue, move on. First, however, I would urge you to leave a few messages (just like you would for a distracted friend) and see if you get a response. If that response doesn't come in a timely fashion, you may do well to [choose a new recruiter](#). These relationships are about trust and either you trust your recruiter enough to know that he/she will get back to you when they have some news -- or you don't. If you don't, move on. If, however, you have not yet established a relationship with a recruiter enough to say that trust exists but rather can't even seem to get a new recruiter on the phone, give it a few weeks and ring again. That recruiter may not have any options to offer you at the current time, but that can change -- and does change -- daily. A call three weeks from now may prompt a response and an opportunity."

I, myself, struggle to stay on top of phone calls, with some weeks being more successful than others. Still, I try. I hope that helps! In the meantime, keep the faith that 2010 will bring a smoothing out of the process and things will start moving at a "normal" pace again.