

What is the best way to respond to recruiter cold calls?

Perhaps you find them bothersome. But if you get them, especially in large quantities, you should be grateful. Perhaps you find them bothersome. But if you get them, especially in large quantities, you should be grateful. It means that your market value is still high. It is when they stop calling that it is time to be concerned. In any event, when you do get a recruiter cold call, it is a good idea to know how to respond to them in a way that best advances your interests.

As an initial matter, there is usually very little risk in accepting a cold call. At worst, it can waste a minute or two, in which case you should politely say good bye and end it. At best, it can provide you with the employment opportunity of a lifetime. Even if you are not currently "looking," cold calls can provide you with valuable information about the current market, which makes those calls still worth a few minutes of your valuable time. Moreover, in the legal profession things can (and do) change very quickly. Consequently, you may have need for a top notch recruiter in the future. Accepting cold calls is a great way to meet recruiters, identify which ones really know what they are doing and then build long-term relationships with the best ones so that they will be available in case the need later arises.

What you certainly don't want to do is immediately agree to have whatever stranger recruiter who happened to call you at that moment send your resume off to however many firms. I have been amazed by how many lawyers will do this. Can you imagine one of your sophisticated clients hiring a lawyer to handle their complex legal work based solely on a single happenstance cold call without any more information about that lawyer, their firm or their experience and level of ability? What if the cold calling lawyer is a complete schlepp?

This is why it is in your interest to do the appropriate research in order to distinguish between the highly competent and fully experienced recruiters from the majority of other recruiters that do not fit either of those descriptions. The best recruiters will be the ones who have successfully placed attorneys like you (such as big firm partner) into the type of firms that you work in over the course of around 10 years or more. They will also typically work for well-established and highly reputable recruiting firms (such as BCG Attorney Search), as well as have impressive credentials (such as top 25 law schools and/or previously worked in prestigious AmLaw 200 type firms). Impressive credentials are especially important if you are an attorney with similarly stellar credentials looking to move to an AmLaw 200 type firm. Do not be shy about asking direct questions about the recruiter's background, experience and credentials. You have every right to know who you are doing business with. It is also wise to check out the recruiter on the internet after you have spoken to them. Once you have verified that a particular recruiter is truly high quality, and not just some joker trying to make a quick buck by emailing your resume all over the city (and there are all too many of those as well), then and only then does it make sense to trust them with your professional future.