

## Choosing a Recruiter: Red Flags to Watch Out For

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Probably the most reliable way to get a great recruiter is through friends or colleagues who have worked with her. However, not everyone has access to someone through these channels, or they don't know who to ask. If you feel you need to choose from among the recruiters who are contacting you, or the ones you can find online, here are some red flags to definitely watch out for.

*She Asks You For Money.*

If you have never worked with a recruiter before, know this: a good recruiter will never, ever ask you for money. Reputable recruiters have law firms for clients. They pay us well, and you pay us nothing. Recruiters who do not have law firm clients paying them are probably not recruiters you want to be working with. While some services like resume services or job boards with exclusive listings may require payment, legal recruiters do not make their money by charging the attorneys we place. In short, if a recruiter has to ask job-seeking attorneys for a fee, they are not making their money making placements, and you should probably keep looking.

*She Doesn't Understand The Legal Market*

Many legal recruiters are former practicing attorneys or have a background as placement coordinators in law firms. This enables them to truly understand what attorneys do. Ask your recruiter if all they do is place within the legal industry (preferably only attorneys). If they are also placing accountants, IT people, restaurant and zoological workers, they probably don't truly know what you do all day as a Derivatives, ERISA or IP attorney. Handling multiple industries is just too much for a recruiter to really understand them all. If they handle more markets than just legal, please proceed with caution, and make sure they understand your profession as well as you do.

*She Doesn't Know Your Geographic Area*

Similarly, many recruiters attempt to handle the whole country, or even the whole world. I clearly remember when I was an associate at a major law firm, I was approached by a recruiter who was working out of his home somewhere in South Florida. I was trying to make a move from DC to Chicago, and it quickly became clear that he didn't understand where I was coming from (DC is a very special legal market), and was attempting to market me as someone I wasn't. He just wanted to get a hold of my resume and plaster it all over Chicago without understanding which firms might actually be interested in someone with my background.

While no recruiter is going to be able to know each and every firm, she should have an idea what type of firm you are coming from, what practice areas your firm is known for, what types of clients it services. Then she can assess, using her knowledge of the firms in your target geographic area and her research skills, where you might fit. Beware of recruiters who don't seem to understand what type of practice you are coming from, and are sending you openings where you obviously would not fit.

*She Is Pushy and You Don't Feel Comfortable*

A great recruiter is flush with great candidates and great connections. She makes a comfortable living doing what she does, and is not desperate to make a quick placement; she's more interested in her long-term

reputation in the community, so placing you in a position where you will be happy long-term, and where the law firm will be happy with you, in her long term interest. A good recruiter is not trying to make a quick buck by placing you in a position where you will not last.

While I often encourage my candidates to keep an open mind and talk to as many firms as possible, even ones you think you don't want to work at, you should also listen to your gut feeling. Here are some things to be very cautious of: Is the recruiter trying to push you to fudge your skill set? To exaggerate your book of business? When you say you are not interested in a particular opening, will she not take no for an answer? Do you feel like she is trying to sell you something you don't want? Here's my advice: If your gut tells you something is fishy in the way she conducts business, run a mile.

In sum, a good recruiter should know almost as much about your practice area as you do. She should know which firms in your target geographic area might be interested in someone with your specific background. She should truly listen to what you want and, while it is great for her to be overinclusive in presenting options to you, she should listen when you say no, and move on. She should not pressure you to pretend to be someone you're not so that she can make a quick placement. A great recruiter will not try to sell you anything you don't want, and is happy to take her time to ensure the right fit for you.