



Article of the Week from Harrison Barnes

Top 12 Reasons Attorneys Do Not Get Law Firm Interviews

Summary: *Why don't attorneys get law firm interviews? Find out some of the most common reasons in this article.*

One of the most common mistakes attorneys make when looking for work is to give up. This may seem like a strange way to begin an article about why attorneys get rejected from law firms, but it's true. Attorneys give up all the time when they shouldn't. Generally, the more places you apply and the more effectively you look, the more likely you are to get interviews and get hired.

- **See [Why Every Attorney Needs to Apply to a Lot of Places \(and Not Give Up\) When Rejected](#) for more information.**

There are so many fish in the sea. I watched a documentary last night about men who travel to Russia to find brides because they cannot meet women they like in the United States. After sitting in a trance for an hour, watching unhealthy, broken down 60+ year old factory workers from the Midwest meet and marry extremely attractive 19-year-old girls at prearranged "mixers," I came to the conclusion that if you look hard enough and put enough effort into anything, you can succeed beyond your wildest expectations.

As a preliminary matter, it is important to understand that every attorney is employable. An attorney can always find a better job regardless of:

- What practice area they are in;
- Where they went to school;
- Where they are located in the country;
- How old (or young) they are;



- Whether or not they have a book of business; or
- Whatever limitation they may believe is holding them back.

This is true. It does not matter who the attorney is. Barring a serious criminal record or egregious ethical mistake, every attorney is employable in a better job. The problem is most attorneys get discouraged, dispirited, stop looking and give up. The constant rejection is too much for them because they take it personally. They do not realize most law firms have a myriad of arbitrary (and often insane) reasons for rejecting people.

Unfortunately, the legal profession is not as welcoming to attorneys as it should be. There are all sorts of reasons attorneys get rejected from law firms. In fact, there are so many reasons it would be impossible to even categorize all of them. These reasons are not something you need to be overly concerned with; after all, you will never be able to please everyone. Instead of giving up you really need to just try harder.

Most attorneys get rejected before they even get an interview. If you do not get an interview there is nothing to feel bad about. If a law firm gets 300 applications for a given position (which is a realistic number), they may interview two or three people—or just one. Those are not great odds no matter what your qualifications are. This brings us to the first reason attorneys generally don't get interviews:

1. The Firm Has Better Applicants for the Same Position

Once a law firm starts publicizing its open positions, it gets a lot of applicants—sometimes literally a ton of them. The odds are pretty good that out of these hundreds of applicants, many are going to have better qualifications and be better suited to the position than you. They may harken from a more prestigious law firm, a higher-ranked law school, have more on-point experience, or be from a certain class year. You really do not need to worry about it—for the firm's purposes, another applicant is better. This is just a fact of life and you cannot change it. Why worry?



HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER HELPS YOU STAND OUT IF THERE ARE BETTER APPLICANTS FOR THE SAME POSITION

There are scores of average to poor legal recruiters sitting around, dumbly submitting candidates only to the largest, best known law firms that have well-publicized openings. Unless you are an outstanding candidate, this is not likely to go anywhere—which is one reason a lot of candidates give up on their job searches. This is sad and it makes no sense. If an attorney is properly marketed, he or she will generally be employable in a good firm.

The following principles apply in the field of legal recruiting:

- **A good legal recruiter will promote and lobby you to law firms that may not have openings but are likely to be interested in someone with your background.** If the law firm does not have any other applicants for a job, it is axiomatic you are more likely to be hired. At our company, for example, we have a data scientist on staff and use information that we have gained in over a decade of monitoring law firms to predict when law firms are likely to have openings, and the sorts of people (from certain schools, firms and practice areas) they consistently interview. The best legal recruiters can even use that information in combination with your outside interests and personality to match with the most appropriate firms—and it works. Certain firms are composed of former athletes, other law firms are composed of liberals who will gravitate towards someone with your background and want to bring you on and have you as part of their “tribe”. This is the sort of thing the best legal recruiters understand and it is far more than openings that get the best candidates hired.
- **A good legal recruiter will have access to every opening in the market and not just the low-hanging, obvious large law firms.** In addition to a great deal of technical wizardry going on inside our datacenter and over 20 servers behind the scenes, we have a [staff of over 30 people](#) who do nothing but source jobs from law



firms. Many recruiting companies are composed of just a few individuals working in a “lifestyle recruiting firm.” If a recruiter has access to openings that other recruiters do not, then very few people will apply to these jobs; it is logical you will be more likely to get an offer.

- **A good legal recruiter will have access to jobs in other parts of the country, including small towns.** If you apply to areas outside of major cities, there will be fewer people like you trying to get jobs. This means you won’t be competing with a ton of other attorneys, swarming a hill like ants.
- **A good legal recruiter will have scores of exclusive jobs that other recruiters do not have.** If you are working with a recruiter that has access to positions that are exclusive, you are much more likely to get a job. This is especially true if the recruiter takes an interest in making sure you land such an exclusive position.
- **A good legal recruiter will humanize you to the law firm, make you seem more appropriate and likeable, and highlight that you are better fit for the position than other applicants.** Some legal recruiting firms simply email resumes around with little regard to how you are perceived by the law firms they work with. This is just “throwing your hat in the ring.” Unless you are the most highly qualified candidate, it’s unlikely to get you anywhere. [BCG Attorney Search](http://www.bcgsearch.com) takes the time to understand your background, creates an in-depth and compelling write-up about you, and does its best to humanize and present you in a way that makes you stand out from other applicants.

There is a lot more that a good legal recruiter does in the search process; however, the ultimate goal is to put you in a role where you appear to be the best candidate for every position. If you are the only applicant for the position, applying in an area where law firms do not get a lot of applicants with your skills, you are more likely to get the position. This is especially true if you appear to be the most likable applicant.



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- See [A Comprehensive Guide to Working with a Legal Recruiter](#) for more information.

2. You Applied Too Late

Oftentimes you may, in fact, be the most qualified applicant for the position but—for whatever reason—you apply to the position too late. Once a law firm starts interviewing and speaking with people for a position it is often reluctant to start other people in the process, especially if there is only one position available. Here is why:

- **Once a law firm starts interviewing people it is already bonding with these people and starting to connect with them.** Interviewing other people at this stage is something that often feels “disloyal,” and is not something the law firm is interested in doing. The firm will “sit on” your resume in case the people they are speaking with do not work out, but it will not bring you in because it is already interviewing people.
- **Once a law firm starts interviewing people it is already spending a lot of attorney time and money on the process.** The cost of interviewing and bringing various people in is a big investment. It’s not something the law firm is eager to continue incurring once it starts. Attorneys are busy; they have deals, motions, and billable hour targets. Most attorneys do not particularly enjoy interviewing and would rather just make an offer to someone once the process starts—even if someone else might be a better fit for the job.

If you applied too late, there isn’t much you can do to change the situation. You may be the best applicant, and cannot feel bad if you don’t get the position.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER SUBMITS YOU TO JOBS IMMEDIATELY

At [BCG Attorney Search](#), we are literally “all over it” when it comes to aggressively tracking down openings and getting them to our candidates. We work seven days



a week identifying openings. We use a large staff of people and [sophisticated, proprietary technology](#) to get openings as quickly as we can from law firms. Nothing is more important to the success of your search than applying to openings immediately, as they become available. You need to do everything you can to apply to openings quickly; if you do not, you are unlikely to get the position—the person who applied before you is.

The second we get an opening we send a “high priority” email to our candidates advising them of the position. Then we consistently follow up with them about the opening if they do not apply through us immediately. We hound our candidates about applying to new openings and take the process extremely seriously.

An exceptional legal recruiter does everything he or she can to make sure you apply to new openings within a day or so after they come open. There is nothing “casual” about your search for a new position. The process requires a level of intensity and staffing that cannot be carried out by a recruiter running around on a cell phone or by any legal recruiter not 100% fully engaged at all times. Getting a position is serious business; you should be hearing from your legal recruiter constantly.

Even applying to a position a week after it opens can put you at a serious disadvantage. You need to do everything within your power—and your recruiter needs to do everything within their power—to get you out to positions as soon as they become available.

3. Your Law School Is Not Good Enough

Some law firms are snobs in terms of hiring, and are only interested in individuals from certain law schools. There is not much you can do about this. If you were in the top of your class from a given law school, this is often enough to get past the gatekeeper—but not always. There is not much you can do if a law firm is not interested in you because of the law school you attended.



Law firms often want their attorneys to be graduates of prestigious law schools for the following reasons:

- If all of the attorneys went to good law schools, the law firm is positioned to look better in the eyes of its clients (and potential clients).
- Attorneys who went to good law schools are also interested in working and practicing with attorneys who went to other good law schools.
- Attorneys (and many clients) also assume that attorneys who went to good law schools are smarter than attorneys who did not go to good law schools. The law is about using your mind, and intelligence is important.
- Attorneys who went to good law schools have typically been hardworking and competitive for some time (at least since college). Being competitive and succeeding are important to being a good attorney.

While some law firms don't care about the school you attended, most do. Many firms will simply reject you due to your law school.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER PERSUADES A FIRM TO OVERLOOK YOUR LOW-RANKED LAW SCHOOL

Some law firms can be persuaded to overlook your law school if you are a perfect fit for the position. This requires presenting you as the absolute best candidate for the position. A good legal recruiter can shape your experience and qualifications to make you stand out from the crowd. When you did not attend the best law school, you need to look different in the eyes of employers to succeed.

- **See [10 Factors That Matter to Big Firms More Than Where You Went to Law School: Why the Law School You Went to Ultimately Does Not Matter as Much as You Think It Does to Major Law Firms](#) for more information.**



In my career as a legal recruiter, I have seen many people from the lowest ranked law schools in the country get into excellent law firms. In general, though, these attorneys do so by being in practice areas without a lot of competition. For the most part these practice areas are transactional in nature. For example, the law school does not matter as much for practice areas like ERISA, patent prosecution and some types of corporate law. This is especially true if an attorney is trained in a large law firm. Litigation attorneys from lesser law schools have more difficulty simply because there are more of them. The more specialized an attorney is and the fewer attorneys there are competing for the same positions, the less relevant the law school is likely to be. This is one reason it is important for attorneys from lesser law schools to go into practice areas without a lot of competition.

Regardless of the level of competition, there are certain law firms that can almost never be persuaded to look at you due to your law school—and that is perfectly fine. If this occurs, the best bet is for your legal recruiter to try harder and find firms that are not concerned with your law school—or figure out how to package you so your experience looks more unique. It is as simple as that—the more options and places you look at, the more likely you are to get a job. Every law school out there has attorneys practicing and succeeding in major, important law firms.

4. Your Law School Is Too Good

Some attorneys may have attended law schools that are too good. Sometimes this makes the law firm think you are going to make trouble, feel entitled, or be likely to leave. Law firms sometimes distrust graduates of top law schools for the following reasons:

- While they may be very good and difficult to get into, some law schools tend to breed attorneys that may not have the staying power for a large, demanding law firm. If an attorney goes to an excellent law school and applies to a firm where everyone else is from an average or not-so-good law school, the law firm will believe the person will be likely to leave.



- Just as law firms that have a bunch of people from prestigious law schools feel comfortable around others from prestigious law schools, people from average law schools feel comfortable around others from average law schools.

There is nothing wrong with going to a prestigious law school, of course. But in the experience of many law firms, people that went to great law schools believe they have some sort of special “aura” due to this and require special treatment. These attorneys often believe they should be given the best work, not expected to work the most hours and advanced based on the fact that they got into a great law school when they were in their early 20s. This can be a recipe for disaster. I have certainly seen many people have problems due to having attended excellent law schools.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER CONVINCES A FIRM YOU ARE A TEAM PLAYER EVEN IF YOU WENT TO A TOP LAW SCHOOL

The best legal recruiters will not allow the good law school you attended to hold you back from being successful. Instead, the legal recruiter will frame you as someone who works hard, is eager, has a genuine interest in the law firm, will stick around and is humble. Different law firms need to hear different things about the attorneys they are considering interviewing. Regardless of the law school you went to, your recruiter needs to portray you as approachable.

Sometimes a recruiter can take an attorney with a serious law school pedigree and make him or her more appealing to a firm composed of people from average law schools. One way to do this is by talking about the candidate’s hobbies. This can make the applicant look more human and interesting. Other times the recruiter can humanize you by talking about struggles you faced early in your life. Getting the law firm to understand the person is often enough.

5. You Look Like You Will Move

Law firms are in the business of hiring and bringing on people who look like they are going



to stay in the firm and not leave. Law firms want to hire attorneys that are likely to stick around. There are multiple reasons law firms want to hire lawyers who are likely to stick around:

- It looks bad to a law firm's clients when they hire an attorney to work on their matters and the attorney ends up leaving. It costs other attorneys in the law firm money to get back up to speed and may cost the law firm lots of time, which it will ultimately need to write off.
- When an attorney leaves a law firm it can hurt the morale of the attorneys that are still there. Attorneys who see other attorneys leaving may feel they need to leave too.
- Attorneys who leave the firm need to be replaced. This requires a lot of work on the firm's behalf interviewing new attorneys and finding new people to hire.
- Attorneys predisposed to leave are likely to start looking around at some point in the future. They will start missing work, not taking assignments seriously and creating all sorts of issues that make it difficult for the law firm to function.
- Law firms want a group of people that are all committed. Law firms function best when everyone is on the same team. If someone looks like they are likely to leave, they will never really be on the same team.
- People that leave law firms often leave because there are problems with their work quality, or they have an inability to get along with others, or they are asked to leave. Law firms do not want to take on someone that is likely to be a problem in their next firm either. Law firms want to hire people who are likely to stay put.
- Some attorneys will leave regardless of what the law firm is like. Some people will cheat on their romantic partners no matter how good things are. This is just how they are. Some attorneys are predisposed to simply leave.

If a law firm believes that you are likely to leave, they will generally bring in someone who looks like they won't leave. The benefits of stability for many law firms outweigh the



drawbacks of bringing someone on who may have good experience, but is not likely to stick around. Law firms have work that needs to be done. It is too much trouble for them to hire and advance people who are likely to leave.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER CONVINCES A FIRM YOU AREN'T A FLIGHT RISK

The most important thing any good legal recruiter does with your background is to frame you as someone who has not yet found the perfect home—and the new law firm represents the perfect home. Moves need to be framed in one of these ways: You cannot do the work you want to do at your current (or past firms), the law firm has systematic issues and problems (not caused by you) that are holding you back, you need to move to a new geographic area and so forth.

There is a whole science to how your move needs to be portrayed. For the most part, your move (and past moves) need to look like you are trying to advance your career. You are so talented, motivated and special that your current employers did not have the ability to accommodate this. The idea is your new firm can meet your unique goals; therefore, you will thrive there.

- **Please see the following book I wrote about this for more information: [Top 22 Law Firm Interview Tips: How to Excel in Law Firm Interviews](#)**

6. Your Grades Are Not Good Enough

Some law firms have grade cutoffs—even for lateral partners. [Gibson Dunn](#), for example, is known for not letting in otherwise impeccable, very high-ranking government officials due to not making their internal grade cutoffs.

If a law firm has a problem with your grades, there is generally not a ton you can do about fixing it, so it's best to move on. Law firms are businesses and like to distinguish themselves



based on various factors (the grades of their attorneys being one of them).

As a practical matter, if your grades are not that good then leave them off your resume. I review resumes all day, every day and have for years. I am still astonished when I see resumes daily that say things like “2.5 GPA average” in the education section—or things like 3.2 (top half of class is 3.25). I do not know why people draw attention to average performance, but you should not. Law firms want to feel like they are hiring the best (even if they are not). Making yourself stand out and look strong should be your primary motivation. You should deemphasize the things that do not make you look strong and emphasize those that do.

- See [Law School Grades and Your Career](#) for more information.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER DOWNPLAYS YOUR BAD GRADES

There are several ways a good legal recruiter deals with this. I've placed attorneys with “C-ish” grade point averages in major law firms repeatedly in my career. The strategy for doing this is quite simple.

Primarily, if the attorney has poor grades then the recruiter needs to make the attorney look astonishing and great irrespective of his or her grades. The resume may need to be built up to reflect more accomplishments. The attorney's personality, drive and other characteristics need to be well-documented in a compelling write-up that gets the firm's attention.

If at all possible, the recruiter needs to get the attorney looked at carefully—and interviewed—without their grades being reviewed. Once the process is started, the law firm is not likely to pay too much attention to the attorney's grades, and will evaluate them more on how well they interview and how they would fit into the firm's culture. I have placed numerous attorneys where the law firm forgot to ever request the transcript. I have also placed scores of attorneys who started interviewing, or had



interviews scheduled, before the law firm ever requested the transcript.

In general, the firms that are most likely to pay a lot of attention to your transcript are always going to be the more established law firms that have been around for some time. These law firms get very bureaucratic and start putting in all sorts of systems to shoo people away. They become like bug lights at a Texas Barbeque, pushing away everyone for inconsequential reasons. A good legal recruiter will know how to find growing firms, or disorganized firms, that are not going to pay as much attention to your law school grades.

7. You Look Too Entrepreneurial

One of the things that law firms are looking for (and should be looking for) is how likely you are to be happy and stay at the law firm. If you have a history of starting various businesses and flaunt this, the law firm is going to very quickly figure out that the odds of you sticking around are going to be quite slim. Going to law school and becoming an attorney requires a lot of drive. It requires enough drive that the attorneys who do it often have an interest in making money and starting businesses.

Attorneys with a history of entrepreneurial activity typically get into law firms and grow restless within a short time. They may complain to other attorneys about the money, tell them about people they know making more money in business. This may sow discontent among other attorneys. Additionally, these attorneys are likely to steal clients and set up their own law firm, or go to work for clients and convince the clients to switch law firms.

The problems and issues with attorneys who look entrepreneurial are far too numerous to list here. Lawyers' jobs in all but very small law firms are to service entrepreneurs and businesses. The lawyer's job is to make sure that businesses are protected. They should take an interest in this. If an attorney is interested in starting their own business, they are generally not going to be good at servicing other peoples' businesses.



Entrepreneurs are typically wired a certain way, and they enjoy taking risks. Attorneys are typically wired a different way, and are more risk-adverse and interested in protecting others. Most people are one or the other; you need to do a job that compliments your nature.

Attorneys often leave law firms to start businesses and then try to come back later. This rarely succeeds, and attorneys usually want to come back because they failed. They also quickly realize that to make \$200,000 a year in a business is not bad. (If a business has a 10% profit margin and does \$2,000,000 a year, this is a quite successful business. It is hard to net \$2 million a year in a new business). When attorneys start their own businesses they often do not realize that they had it pretty good when they were attorneys. An attorney who wants to come back after starting his own business often experiences problems because the law firm (1) knows he failed and (2) he is likely to leave again.

I've met countless attorneys who went back to law firms after starting their own business. Most of them are silently plotting their next escape and generally leave to start another new business. It might take a year or more, but they generally always leave again.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER ADDRESSES YOUR ENTREPRENEURIAL BACKGROUND

A good legal recruiter may tell you to remove your entrepreneurial pursuits from your resume, or at least de-emphasize them in the interview process. A few law firms may admire entrepreneurial endeavors. A law firm where the partners routinely make millions of dollars a year is not going to feel very threatened if you operated a small company and made a bit of money. However, the best legal recruiters know they need to paint you as an attorney and not an entrepreneur.

The problem I see with many entrepreneur resumes is that these types of people often have a fairly profound need for recognition and it comes out in their resume. They spend a lot of time and seem quite proud of the various things they have achieved in



their business pursuits. This comes through so strongly in their resumes that you often wonder why they are practicing law. Their independent nature is not likely to work inside of a law firm.

A good legal recruiter generally needs to tone down the resume of this sort of attorney and help the attorney adjust her attitude. Attorneys who tell a recruiter they are just interested in working for a few years before they start a business are rarely good hires for law firms. They enter their next firm uncommitted. This lack of commitment and interest generally is visible in the resume. It also comes out in interviews and on the job. Unless the legal recruiter has a “come to Jesus” talk with the attorney and sells them on the virtues of working in a law firm, they are not likely to do well and succeed.

8. Your Law Firm Experience Is Not Good Enough or Appropriate

Many legal positions require very specific experience. If you are a corporate attorney, the law firm may be seeking an attorney with IPO or other sophisticated securities experience. If you are a patent attorney, the law firm may want someone with a degree in electrical engineering and not mechanical engineering. If you are a litigator, the law firm may want someone with experience doing trials.

When they are hiring laterally, law firms typically want someone with significant experience doing a given type of work. If you do not have that experience then it is going to be more difficult for you to get hired.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER PLAYS UP YOUR LAW FIRM EXPERIENCE

A good legal recruiter draws out the extent of your experience as effectively as he or she can. When I work with attorneys, I have them all fill out an in-depth questionnaire about their experience. When attorneys fill this out, they generally realize they have more experience and have done more types of work than they realized. The appropriate work for the position is then emphasized, while the non-relevant work is downplayed.



What makes legal recruiting so exciting is the variety of tools and methods recruiters can use to market attorneys with niche skills. If you have skills in a narrow practice area, the recruiter should be able to identify law firms that do this narrowly-defined work as well. Because of your “niche” experience, the recruiter can get you in front of more law firms.

Additionally, a good recruiter should be able to market you to various law firms by consistently monitoring the market. By constantly monitoring the market, the recruiter is more likely to find the right position for you. I email my candidates new jobs almost daily and put together suggestions for new firms weekly. I never let anyone fall through the cracks. Many recruiters simply send people out once and then forget about them. This is not what a good recruiter does. A good recruiter knows that if they keep trying and have faith in you, you will find something.

9. Firms Do Not Like That You Are Not Working in a Law Firm

Law firms typically are quite prejudiced against attorneys who are not currently working inside of law firms. While there are some exceptions (judicial clerkships, for example), most law firms want to hire people coming directly from law firms and not people who are in-house or from the government.

- **See [The ‘Dark Side’ of Going In-house](#) for more information.**

This is the case due to the fact that law firms put a certain level of demand on the people working there (i.e., billable hours) and believe that people inside of law firms do better work than people outside of law firms. In addition, law firms understand the quality of work that is expected out of attorneys inside of various law firms. If you are coming from a given law firm they know you are probably accustomed to doing work of a certain quality.

In some practice areas such as real estate, corporate, and patent, it is not as difficult to transition from a position outside of law firm back to a law firm—but in general, once you leave a law firm it becomes very difficult to go back.



HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER MAKES YOUR NON-FIRM WORK AN ASSET

A good legal recruiter will stress to the law firms that you are hungry, want to do high-quality work and would prefer being in a law firm to working in another environment. The legal recruiter will also take pains to make your experience and the training you have gotten outside of a law firm look exceptional. If possible, the legal recruiter will also hint that you may bring your current employer over as a client. Your experience working outside of a law firm needs to be made to look as strong as possible.

In addition, because law firms are businesses and need people to do the work, the recruiter will need to work harder to find law firms that might be interested in hiring you. The only issue with being in-house is that you become a more difficult placement; you need to find a recruiter who is willing to work harder to place you. Law firms may be interested in you provided you can find firms with openings. Oftentimes your experience outside of a law firm can be portrayed in a way that makes it look like you are more likely to stay in your next position.

10. You Are Currently Unemployed

Law firms look down on candidates who are unemployed. Law firms want to hire people that are in demand. They like to feel they are “wooing” someone and getting a hot commodity. If you are unemployed, in a law firm’s eyes it could mean any number of things:

- **You were fired because there is something wrong with you.** Attorneys who are fired from jobs often say they were fired because they were not billing enough hours. The problem with this, however, is that generally some people in the firms were billing enough hours and managed to get work.
- **You quit your last job because there is something wrong with you.** Attorneys who quit jobs often say things like they did not like the management and felt there were issues with the firm and so forth. This is never a good explanation and will



prevent you from getting a new position in most cases. Regardless of the reasons you quit, most are not good ones in the eyes of any law firm if the result is you were left unemployed.

The myriad of reasons you may be unemployed are numerous and law firms do not want to hire people that are likely to be trouble. If you quit your last job, you are likely to quit the next one under their logic. If you were fired from your last job, you are likely to be angry about this and take it out on your next employer. In fact, when an attorney is fired from a job it is very common from them to “fire” their next employer and stomp off that job in a rude way. I am not sure why this is, it just seems to occur quite frequently.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER EXPLAINS YOUR CURRENT UNEMPLOYMENT

A good legal recruiter will frame you leaving in a way that looks good to the next employer. If you were fired from your job the recruiter may be able to tie your firing to major structural issues in the law firm (loss of major clients, settlement of huge cases and so forth). If you left the firm, the recruiter may be able to tie this into a significant life event such as a family crisis involving a sick child, relative, parent; an illness you may have had; working on an important project; a move and so forth.

There are numerous reasons a skilled recruiter can give for your unemployment. A good recruiter will use every tool at her disposal. The most effective legal recruiters are able to bring out the best in attorneys and make whatever gap you have on your resume seem a positive thing—and there are ways to do it for almost every attorney.

While you cannot remove the gap from your resume, a good legal recruiter can also be consistent and make sure that every firm with an opening sees you—and you are consistently and effectively marketed to each opening. Candidates with gaps on their resume can almost always be placed and they are often hungrier, more likely to stay and less likely to make problems in their new firms when they do find a home.



11. They Do Not Like Your Sex, Race, Sexual Orientation, Political Party, Extracurricular Activities, Or Obvious Issues You Have in Your Background

After September 11th, I remember that a few very strong candidates I had with Arabic last names simply could not get interviews in New York City. I am not sure if there was something prejudicial going on, but it sure looked that way to me.

There are law firms all over the country that are composed only of men. There are others that are composed only of women. There are other law firms that are composed only of African Americans. There are law firms that are composed entirely of Democrats and others that are composed entirely of Republicans.

I once had a candidate that was exceptional. She had all sorts of stuff on her resume about how she was raped and now was involved in leading an organization for other rape victims. It is horrible what happened to her; however, law firms were very uncomfortable interviewing her because this was so prominently featured on her resume. When I told her this she got angry and defensive. She stated this was part of who she was; she wanted to talk about it and wanted others to know. This was her choice, of course, but it made law firms uncomfortable.

There is not really any reason to get too far into why law firms take an interest, or no interest, in people from one background or another—they just do. As an observer of this, you just need to know that this sort of thing can hold you back and may prevent you from getting interviews. On the flipside, it can also get you interviews.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER ADDRESSES SENSITIVE ISSUES AROUND A FIRM DISLIKING YOUR SEX, RACE, ORIENTATION, POLITICS, OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

There are a couple of approaches that can be used.



First, the best legal recruiters will know law firms that hire and have an interest in people exactly like you—whether it is your political party or other aspects of your background. This requires a lot of knowledge of various law firms and also an understanding of your background.

Second, the best legal recruiters may ask you to remove certain information from your resume. Not having various pieces of identifying information on your resume is likely to help you because law firms will then evaluate you more objectively and not bring their various prejudices into the calculus. This is, of course, a personal decision every attorney needs to make with their resume.

- **See 6 Things Attorneys and Law Students Need to Remove from Their Resumes ASAP If They Want to Get Jobs with the Most Prestigious Law Firms for more information.**

12. You Are Too Old

If you had a career prior to law school, or attended law school later in life, you may be an older attorney. Law firms prefer younger attorneys because they are generally less jaded, willing to work much harder, and are more impressionable (i.e., they will do what they are told). If you are an older attorney, law firms will generally avoid you. Older attorneys are more likely to get sick, take time off, have family and other outside obligations, sue if fired and have all sorts of other problems that law firms are wary of. Older attorneys are often resentful of younger partners telling them what to do. If they are associates, they may also not fit in with the younger associates, which can affect the dynamic and camaraderie of the group. Firms believe they are almost always better off hiring younger attorneys.

HOW A GOOD LEGAL RECRUITER OVERCOMES AGE DISCRIMINATION

A good legal recruiter will generally highlight your experience and skill set. He will stress that you have “limitless energy” and are willing and able to work extremely hard.



The best legal recruiters also make your age and experience appear to be a benefit and not a liability for the law firm. The legal recruiter will make you seem like someone who is likely to fit in and get along well with others.

Because law firms are businesses, someone will eventually hire you because you have the experience they need and can profit from. When you have age against you, it just means a good recruiter is going to need to try harder to get you a job.

Conclusions

As a general rule, attorneys are most marketable when they have between 1 and 6 years of experience. Beyond this, the attorney will be marketable if they have portable business—the more business the attorney has, the better the law firm they can join. Law firms do not bring attorneys in for interviews for a variety reasons. These reasons are as diverse as the reasons they do bring people in.

If you are not getting as many interviews as you would like, realize that it is probably because of one of the above 12 reasons. Some of these reasons can be fixed and others cannot. The point of every search is to do your best to look good on paper and then get in to as many interviews as you can.

You also need to be persistent in your search and not give up. Keep applying to places. Everyone gets a job eventually; the more you do to look good to employers, and the more places you apply, the more likely you will be to succeed in your search.

- See **Persist Until You Succeed** for more information.

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