

Why You Should Never Use a Legal Recruiter

By A. Harrison Barnes

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ATTORNEY SEARCH



Why You Should Never Use a Legal Recruiter

By A. Harrison Barnes

Summary

In this article, learn how legal recruiters have harmed so many attorneys and why you should never use one.

I worked very hard at a top college and did the same at a top law school. When I got out of law school, I did a federal clerkship and received offers from several very competitive law firms. When I was interested in switching law firms, I reached out to legal recruiters with the expectation that I would encounter people like me—people who worked in a different capacity but who had a similar professionalism, work ethic, and sense of commitment. *I was wrong.*

Whether or not they were attorneys, the legal recruiters I spoke with did not seem to understand what I did for a living or the legal market. They had access to a few jobs, but they certainly did not know of all of the jobs out there. They were very quick to attempt to sell me on any offer or interview I received. They were aggressive and more salespeople than anything. I was disappointed and disillusioned. Is this who would be responsible for my career? Is this all a high-achieving, motivated attorney looking for career guidance could hope for?

I became further disheartened when I saw the work product of these recruiters. When it came to written work, I found misspellings, formatting issues, and lack of clarity. Much of the writing appeared to be cut and pasted from other documents. My calls would almost always go to voicemail and the recruiter might call me back one or two days later. Sometimes the call would be patched through to a cell phone and I would find the recruiter shopping for a dress or buying a new car. Most recruiters seemed to work out of their homes. Very few recruiters knew much about the law firms or could prepare me for interviews. I could not believe it. Who were these people?

I was depressed, angry and felt that attorneys deserved something far more substantial and professional when they were looking for positions. I felt as though we (as attorneys) have come so far and overcome so much that it was unfair and even absurd that we should have to rely on people who did not care about us. In fact, my experience with legal recruiters made me so angry that rather than continue to look for a law job I decided to channel my

energy towards helping solve the problem. I became motivated and realized my calling was to help elevate attorneys and the legal profession instead of taking a new position with a law firm.

I believed then and believe now that nobody who has gone so far in life—as is the case with so many attorneys—should be reduced to working with someone who neither cares nor understands them, especially at the very time that person is most in need of assistance. That

is not right. You matter. Your career matters. Your future matters. You need someone who takes all of this extremely seriously, understands the market, and wants you to succeed.

I came to learn that there is a big difference between legal recruiters and legal placement professionals. As I discuss in the first part of this article, recruiting is opportunistic, not relationship-driven and about money. Recruiters are not required to have depth or to understand you particularly well. In contrast, as I discuss in the second part of this article, placement professionals are part of a profession with rules. They are motivated by constant improvement and connection to the subject matter of recruiting, candidates, and law firms.

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When it comes to people who work in the business of getting attorneys jobs, there is a huge dividing line between people who work in recruiting, on one hand, and people who

work in placement, on the other hand. If you are an attorney and have a genuine interest in improving your lot in life and career, and in getting the best job, there is nothing more important for you to understand than this difference.

Almost every person you encounter in the legal market holding him or herself out

with a legal job opportunity is a legal recruiter and not a legal placement professional.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU WORK WITH A RECRUITER

If you work with a recruiter—regardless of your qualifications—you may get frustrated and reach the (mistaken) conclusion that you are not marketable because your search is getting nowhere. This happens all the time. People working with recruiters do not get “traction” in their job searches and give up being attorneys. I have seen otherwise talented attorneys end up working at Home Depot, or as bartenders, or as teachers in junior high schools, and other ridiculous uses of their talents because they went awry with recruiters. I even saw one former associate

from O'Melveny & Myers become a long-haul truck driver.

When you work with a recruiter, you may end up only speaking with places that do not fit what you are interested in. In doing so, many attorneys (falsely) conclude that if this is all that is out there then they will go in-house, or quit the practice of law, or take some type of other direction with their careers.

It is incredibly common for attorneys who work with “recruiters” and not placement professionals to leave the practice of law, to develop serious self-esteem issues, to remain in positions they do not like, and to fail to discover opportunities that could benefit them. One example is finding opportunities in different geographic areas—opportunities rarely accessible to your typical recruiter who only works in a limited region with limited firms and a limited mindset. For example, I recently spoke with one attorney who was extremely marketable, yet he was driving from Sacramento to San Diego each weekend to see his wife and son because he was under the mistaken belief that “there were no jobs in San Diego” because he had been working with “recruiters” who told him so and who had been poorly managing his job search.



Within one month of talking to me, he was at a new firm in San Diego. I see this sort of thing all the time and it never ceases to upset me. It harms lives and careers and it happens when people trust their job search to recruiters.

LEGAL “RECRUITING” EXPLAINED

At the outset, it is important to understand what recruiting is and what recruiters do. A recruiter typically, and historically, has “recruited” for one or a few jobs—generally a job or jobs that have been around forever and that everyone in the business already knows about. A recruiter does not understand the market. Instead, a recruiter understands the few jobs he or she happens to be recruiting for at that time. A recruiter understands how to target individual attorneys for positions and not much else.

In areas like New York City, when a legal recruiter gets a “new job” from a law firm the recruiter will start dialing, emailing, advertising and doing what he or she can to fill the position. It is not uncommon for attorneys to get several calls for the same job. A recruiter learns a little bit about the job, decides whom to contact and proceeds to “recruit.” The recruiter knows enough about the job to tell you about it and if you send the recruiter your resume the recruiter will do his or her best to get it in front of the firm. This method of recruiting is as old as the hills. It does not require any particular skill other than having thick skin, the ability to pick up the phone again and again and to get people to send you their resumes. This is recruiting in its purest sense and it is what most attorney recruiters do.

Recruiters are not at all equipped to advise you, to get you other jobs or to “place” you in a truly suitable position. They will try if you ask, but in most cases, they do not know what they are doing. In the old days, many recruiters would simply fax your resume to every large law firm in the city. I once met a recruiter in New York and he proudly showed me a large fax machine in his office that had been programmed to send resumes to over 50 New York law firms automatically.

"Many recruiters are a manipulative, dishonest lot of people who are looking out for themselves and whose motivation is at odds with your career."

In today's legal market, these recruiters may email your resume to every firm they know about if you tell them you want to explore the market. This is incredibly common and it upsets me a great deal. If a firm expresses interest in you, the recruiter will call you and act like the recruiter is trying to get your permission to send you to that firm and then a day or so later (after you “approve” this—without knowing your resume was sent there way before you “approved” the submission), the recruiter will call you and tell you the firm wants to see you. This sort of game is played by lots of recruiters—not the majority—but this is the sort of thing that happens when you trust your career to someone who has no real understanding of the market or concern for you.

Many recruiters are a manipulative, dishonest lot of people who are looking out for themselves and whose motivation is at odds with your career.

Recruiters can be all sorts of people at different stages of their lives. They can be \$10/hour

people used to make phone calls, former car or appliance salesmen, or even attorneys with or without good pedigrees. It does not matter what the person is or was. All that matters is that the person is skilled at getting your resume in hopes of filling the jobs that he or she happens to know about. Recruiters of all backgrounds rise and fall based on this strength.

Many recruiting firms attract “recruiters” who are former attorneys with good qualifications. The market perception is that because the

recruiting firm is comprised of people with good law schools and firm histories that the firm must be good at what they do. This could not be further from the truth. Regardless of where they went to law school, or where they worked, most of these former attorneys are “recruiters” and not placement professionals. Most work from home and only do the work at all because it offers good income potential and flexibility. These recruiters have no significant interest in what they are doing. They believe they are entitled to respect in the market because they did well on the LSATs and worked in big law firms and now work for recruiting firms comprised of similar people. They do not get their respect from what they are doing now—only from what they have done in the past. Most do not make very good livings and have little interest in advancing anyone's career.

Many attorneys in the recruiting business are people who were not very interested in or good at the practice of law and only pursued recruiting in the first place because it looked like an easier job. They are losers, flunkies and what

have you. Many attorney recruiters are relatively aimless and looking to do something that does not stress them out and offers the allure of easy money. Is this who you want representing you?

Many recruiters have financial problems and live placement to placement; moreover, most are not overly interested in the profession of advancing the careers of attorneys. Instead, they are interested only in commissions. If they were not recruiting they would likely be doing other sales-related jobs.

Recruiters can make very good livings if they get enough resumes from good attorneys. They will typically target attorneys at the largest law firms and with the best pedigrees. Recruiters can talk a good game. Their sales tactics are often amazing and they will say whatever it takes to get a resume and make a placement. They have all sorts of tricks and games they play behind the scenes to get people to do things they should not be doing. They often lie to law firms and candidates. It is a dirty world, and I am reminded of it virtually every day when I speak with candidates who have worked with “recruiters” before.

Last year I was speaking with an attorney who had just gotten an offer in Seattle through another recruiter. He had just interviewed with his “dream firm” in his home market of Chicago. The firm in Chicago was going to bring him back in a few weeks for a second interview and everything looked good. He was senior, however, and had no business, so he knew things could go either way. He had grown up in Chicago, his wife worked there and he had three children. He was unemployed and had been for months and really needed a job.

He called me in a panic. He said his recruiter had told him that the firm in Seattle was going to “withdraw” the offer if he did not accept it that day. The recruiter was upset he did not accept it immediately. What should he do?

My advice to him, given the uncertainty of his situation, was that he should likely accept it—but that he should confirm with the firm that the firm actually needed him to respond by 5:00 pm. I told him that he should explain that he needed a bit more time so he could discuss the situation with his wife.

He told his recruiter that he was going to call to confirm things but the recruiter urged him not to do so, said that everything was on “pins and needles,” and that he needed to accept right away. The recruiter also told him that he did not have time for any more interviews and that the firm needed him to start right away or the firm would make an offer to another candidate.

He accepted the offer. A few weeks later he was living in Seattle alone and he was unhappy with the firm. His family moved out several months later, but it was not a good situation for anyone involved. Moreover, he found out within weeks of starting that the firm had never had a “5:00 pm deadline” and the recruiter had manipulated him. I think it is incredibly unethical for a recruiter to turn someone’s life upside down like this. I do not know if he would have gotten his “dream job” in Chicago, but I suspect he might have. This sort of stuff upsets me, and I see it all the time. Many lives have been turned upside down by this sort of behavior, but at least this attorney was lucky enough to get a job.

Legal recruiters tend to be most focused on what they call “job orders,” which are openings



that firms give them. They get an opening and go to work. They may have several orders for the same type of attorney, or not. They recruit based on job orders. Once they have a “job order” they start calling attorneys and doing what they can to get resumes.

Historically, many legal recruiters have not wanted attorneys to contact them. They are generally uninterested in people calling them on the phone, or attorneys emailing them their resumes out of the blue. They are generally only interested in getting the resumes of attorneys who fit their “job orders.”

Law firms typically find “recruiters” pushy. They will call the firm and do whatever they can to get the attorney in there. They will be aggressive and demanding for fees. They will also mislead firms, say inconsistent things and often not even know any details about their candidates. Many resumes that law firms receive through legal recruiting firms contain no write-ups about the attorneys whatsoever. They simply contain the recruiting firm’s stamp to alert the world that is where the resume came from so they can get paid.

Most legal recruiters will typically not provide a lot of information about the attorney beyond the resume itself. The pure legal recruiter is more

of a salesperson than anything. The pure legal recruiter finds the product and presents it. The pure legal recruiter is not interested in what he or she is selling. If a Lexus is popular, he or she will try and sell that; if a BMW is selling he or she will sell those. Recruiters are journeymen going after what is hot and concerned with what sells and commissions.

If the legal recruiter works for a legal recruiting firm, the firm also tends to be driven by money. The legal recruiting firm does not care where the money comes from, or how the legal recruiter gets it. The firm just wants it to keep coming. Because of the psychology of recruiting firms, many tend to make enemies among law firms who ultimately refuse to work with them. This, of course, results in fewer opportunities for the candidates who work with these firms and their recruiters. These kinds of firms can also be terrible places to work. Many make recruiters sign noncompetition agreements, impose quotas to ensure recruiters call a certain number of people per day, and have other draconian arrangements that keep the recruiters hungry, down and under the recruiting firm’s control.

Legal recruiting firms are brutally competitive with each other. Because everyone is hunting for resumes, they typically trash each other publicly. They are always on the lookout for opportunities to destroy the credibility of other recruiters and recruiting firms. When a recruiter finds out a candidate is working with another recruiter, it is more common than not for the recruiter to say negative things. Moreover, recruiters leave (and get fired from) recruiting firms all the time, establish competitive shops, and then attack their former employers publicly. The legal recruiting firm is a cesspool of dirt,

attacks, and gossip that puts Hollywood Tabloids to shame.

Legal recruiters have a bad reputation among attorneys, law firms and even each other. In most instances, attorneys would be better off doing job searches on their own than using legal recruiters. Trusting your future with a legal recruiter makes very little sense. Here is why:

First, most legal recruiters know about only a few jobs and not much else. They are “infamous” for getting an attorney’s resume, sending it to one or more firms and then never following up. This happens for a number of reasons, but here are a few:

- ***The legal recruiter may not know what to do with the attorney.*** The recruiter submits the attorney to a few openings, and if nothing happens the recruiter has nothing else to do. The recruiter does not have a serious understanding of the legal market or how to market attorneys. The recruiter does not have access to the jobs or market research. The recruiter is simply a middleman for a few firms and nothing more.
- ***The legal recruiter is uninterested in sticking with the attorney.*** The recruiter concludes that if the firm the recruiter was recruiting for is uninterested in the attorney then the attorney is a waste of time. Once the recruiter submits the candidate to law firms, the recruiter may forget about the candidate and not pick up the phone when the candidate calls in the future. The recruiter does not realize that there could be a large number of law firms interested in the attorney because the recruiter does not know about the market.

- ***The legal recruiter is focused on job orders and not candidates.*** The recruiter tends to jump from job order to job order and is more interested in the jobs than the candidates. As perpetual salespeople with short-term outlooks, the interest of recruiters is in the fastest and easiest path to commissions. The legal recruiter tends to view candidate calls, job inquiries, emails, resumes and so forth with annoyance. The average legal recruiter does not understand what to do with attorneys outside of his or her small universe of “job orders.”

Second, legal recruiters tend to have bad reputations because they will say and do whatever it takes to get a commission. They are often manipulative, lie, and do whatever it takes to get a resume and make a placement. They will tell law firms and candidates whatever they think will advance the ball. They will play all sorts of games and use all sorts of tricks to get what they want. If you have an offer and are not interested in it, they will try and manipulate you into taking it every way they can. To get you to send your resume for a job, they will give you the impression that the firm will interview you. They have an arsenal of tricks and artifices that would boggle your mind. If they spent as much time learning about the market as they do perfecting their tricks and sales pitches, many would be very good at their jobs.

Third, legal recruiters often fail to accomplish anything. Recruiting is about getting the highest number of qualified resumes for job orders and not much else. In many legal recruiting firms, “job orders” are handed out like prizes. In return for receiving a “job order,” a recruiter is expected to make 60 to 100 calls per day

searching for resumes. Many recruiting firms, including what is arguably the largest in the country, actually break the firms up in a given city and allocate firms to their recruiters. If you happen to be an attorney working with a recruiter at that firm, what this system of allocation means is that you will only ever be exposed to—or aware of—the small handful of firms assigned to that recruiter. There might be 300 firms in a given city and you might periodically be made aware of jobs in only 10 of them depending on your recruiter.

To be fair, I want to point out that the work of a legal recruiter serves a legitimate function. Legal recruiters can find qualified candidates for law firms and their “laser focus” on individual jobs for law firms is something that the market needs. They can find the best candidates for law firms and use their sales skill to close deals. This can work to your advantage if you are only applying for one job or a few jobs. It will not work for you if you are in the market and really would like a new job without being limited to just a few opportunities.

Hiring the average legal recruiter is like hiring a contingency litigator taking on a contingency case and hoping to settle it with a single phone call demanding money from the other side—without ever filing a lawsuit, writing a letter, doing a brief, or doing all the

"Legal placement is much different than legal recruiting. A legal placement professional has a fundamentally different mindset than a recruiter—as the placement professional desires to “place” an attorney in a suitable position, whereas the recruiter aims to fill a job order."

work necessary. The contingency litigator could win a quick settlement, but it is unlikely. In most instances, the contingency fee litigator will need to file a lawsuit, litigate and stick it out. They may even go to trial. Nothing is easy and neither is getting most attorneys the sorts of jobs they want. It takes work and commitment. I have gotten some attorneys their dream jobs after working with them for several years and checking

in with them and the market week in and week out. This is what it takes to successfully “win a case” when it comes to attorney placement.

LEGAL PLACEMENT DISTINGUISHED FROM LEGAL RECRUITING

Legal placement is much different than legal recruiting. A legal placement professional has a fundamentally different mindset than a recruiter—as the placement professional desires to “place” an attorney in a suitable position, whereas the recruiter aims to fill a job order. The “placement” professional uses the entire market as a guide as opposed to an individual opening or a cluster of openings in the big firms. The placement professional asks: which firms have which needs where and is there an opening that suits my candidate’s needs? The recruiter asks: whose

resume do I need so I can get my commission as quickly and with as little effort as possible?

To appropriately "place" an attorney in a position, the placement professional must look at small markets, large markets and everything in between, all of which requires dedication, passion, and resources. Being a placement professional is an entirely different skill with a profound level of commitment. Here are the main reasons why it is always better for serious-minded candidates to work with legal placement professionals:

First, the placement professional is committed to the people with whom the professional works. Once a placement professional has

accepted a candidate into his or her small pool of candidates, the professional's objective will be to do whatever it takes to find a position

the candidate is pleased with. Placement professionals are not interested in single "one-off" jobs, but instead are focused on finding a good home for the candidate. They keep their candidates in their pool and continually update them on new openings. They work with candidates until those candidates find the positions that suit them.

I am an attorney placement professional and my firm is comprised of attorney placement professionals. I communicate with all of my candidates several times per week. I need to because many new jobs open up in virtually every city and practice area each and every week. I have access to these jobs because I have over 100 people supporting me in my

efforts to find legal jobs and place candidates in the right positions. Most of the attorneys I work with are actively seeking a new position and deserve to be communicated with several times weekly. I am working with human beings who have wants, needs and goals. My objective is to stick with people as long as it takes to assist them in finding what they are looking for.

Second, a placement professional tends to have significant and meaningful experience in the legal industry and is attracted to the placement realm for the right reasons. This is important because this experience allows the placement professional to bond with a candidate and effectively make that candidate's

case to law firms.

You need to be interested in people and care about them to be an effective legal placement professional. You

need to want something more for your identity and career than simply filling job orders.

The placement professional knows what to look for when searching for a new home for the attorney. The attorney feels understood because the attorney is understood. Placement professionals have meaningful conversations with their candidates and attorneys realize that they are speaking with people who have been in their shoes. The placement professional understands the differences between law firms and can advise the attorney when to stay and when to leave a firm. Dealing with a placement professional is far different than dealing with a salesperson trying to make a commission.

Fourth, a placement professional typically will have access to multiple geographic markets. This means that the placement professional (and firms comprised of them) will be able to work with you across multiple markets where there may be positions. In contrast, most recruiters will have a good understanding of only the jobs they are recruiting for and not the market as a whole. It is extremely important for placement professionals to have access to the entire market. Many attorneys are senior, have no business, are in slow practice areas, or may be in markets where there are few jobs. They need to know about every opening in the market at one time, because this is how lives are changed and people get jobs.

At BCG Attorney Search, we have placement professionals in different areas of the country who are responsible for understanding their own markets. They typically work in limited areas because this allows them to understand the firms in the market they work with most effectively. But we also have the ability to cross over into different markets by working together. When we cross into various markets looking for the best jobs for our candidates, we draw upon the resources of the BCG recruiters in those markets, where those recruiters have cultivated strong relationships. The placement professional understands that certain personalities may work in certain firms while others will not. A placement professional can be more concerned with “fit” and culture than a “recruiter” because a placement professional knows the sorts of attorneys and firms that will fit well together.

The difference between working with someone who takes the time and can

appreciate nuance in the characters of candidates and firms can make the difference in being placed into a position that will lead to lifelong success and happiness or being dropped into a job that will lead to decline and unhappiness.

Fifth, a placement professional has access to sophisticated technology. Tracking down jobs, alerting attorneys about new jobs and making matches among thousands of potential opportunities requires sophisticated technology. Most legal recruiters only keep track of a limited number of openings and only learn about them and get the word out about them slowly. Many legal recruiters work from home and do not have any technology assisting them with tracking down jobs, learning about the market and so forth.



One reason that technology is so important to legal placement professionals is that law firms tend to hire the people who apply to jobs the earliest. When a typical law firm has an opening, the firm will get qualified resumes within the first day or so of the opening coming along. Once the firm has scheduled interviews with one or two candidates, the firms tend to not pay as much attention to resumes that come later. They also often end

up hiring one of the attorneys who applied early. Law firms are comprised of people, and when they like and bond with an early candidate, they tend to feel as if interviewing others for the same job would be disloyal in some way.

Technology plays other roles as well. At our company, we use highly customized databases to track and see who would be most viable for a given position. For example, we keep a huge database of our positions from the past 15+ years. Using this information, we can see patterns of law firms in every region of the country that have a consistent, recurring need for given types of attorneys. For example:

- We know that certain firms tend to need midlevel ERISA attorneys every few years, and have for over a decade.
- We know that certain firms tend to always interview attorneys from certain law schools.
- We know that certain firms consistently interview attorneys from certain law firms.

Many of these firms may be good targets for our candidates regardless of whether or not they are currently hiring. Using data science, we can “zero in” and understand legal markets in a profound way that goes beyond hunches and other things that more average recruiters use to make decisions. As such, and incredibly, the majority of placements we make are with firms that do not even have openings.

The significance of this statement cannot be overemphasized. If we know a firm is likely to be interested in someone it gives us a huge competitive advantage. This means that our candidates will not be competing with other

candidates and may be the only people the firm is considering. This gives our candidates a massive advantage that is unparalleled.

When you are working with a legal recruiter and not a placement professional, your resume is going to be among many seen by firms. They are being sent resumes left and right from recruiters like crazy. The only way you are going to get one of these jobs is if you are the best attorney for the position. If someone has significantly better qualifications than you, interviews better, has a connection, is younger, is more attractive, is coming from a better firm, went to a better law school, did better in law school... who knows... that other candidate is more likely to get the job than you.

At BCG, we also maintain internal lists for firms that show the size of different practice areas and we maintain a data bank of articles about firms that have appeared in legal publications. This information allows us to understand firms in a great deal of depth. We know when law firms are growing and hiring laterally in various practice areas and we know which practice areas are weak (and strong) at all times. This collection of information about law firms, combined with data-science related information, gives us an even more profound understanding of various firms.

Sixth, a placement professional emphasizes work product differently. Instead of being concerned with soliciting resumes and sending them to firms, a placement professional takes the time to get an in-depth understanding of the market and his or her candidate, and to communicate this effectively to law firms with solid, well-written work product that would be the same quality that

would go out of a top law firm. A placement professional believes that his or her work product reflects on how well a candidate is viewed and makes every effort to be as professional as possible regarding presenting candidates. A placement professional believes that the credibility of a candidate is related to how professionally they are represented.

At BCG Attorney Search, our recruiters not only produce excellent work product, but their work is closely reviewed before leaving our offices. This makes a good impression on firms and we are always able to provide clear

and reasoned statements about the attorney and what makes the attorney a unique and good fit for each firm. This makes our candidates more likely to stand out and make connections with law firms before they even interview there. In addition to information about candidates, we also provide law firms considerable amounts of in-depth information about the market, which helps to educate them about how to hire more effectively. We are partners with law firms and not just people pitching resumes.

Seventh, the emphasis of a placement professional is on building strong relationships with every law firm and not just a few firms. Most traditional legal recruiters have firms they pull people out of (via calling) and firms they put people in. This means that they typically are always in the process of “raiding” the same firms and then doing

nothing with the others. Because a placement professional wants to keep the entire market open for the professional’s candidates, he or she will not be raiding any firms. Instead, a placement professional will spend his or her time and effort trying to attract people through his or her strong presence in the market and reputation. Very few “recruiters” have reputations that drive candidates to them and, as a consequence, they often have no reputation at all.

"We also provide law firms considerable amounts of in-depth information about the market, which helps to educate them about how to hire more effectively. We are partners with law firms and not just people pitching resumes."

At BCG Attorney Search, almost all of our recruiters are kept busy and engaged simply based on top attorneys who have approached them, or

our company. We do not have time for “legal recruiting” because we are sought out, and constantly occupied doing legal placement. Legal recruiting is “raw,” street level stuff. It is like the difference between being an attorney handing out business cards to people charged with petty crimes at the courthouse and being a partner in a major American law firm. Who would you want to use? Incredibly, despite being in major American law firms, most legal recruiters choose the guy handing out cards at the courthouse when it comes to choosing the person who will represent them in their search for a new position.

Moreover, because we are not raiding law firms, our placement professionals have plenty going on and do not need to play games with law firms or candidates and, in general, are far more effective. We concentrate on building relationships and working with the people

we have most effectively—not on handing out business cards to petty criminals at the courthouse.

Eighth, a placement professional has a genuine interest in the subject matter and is doing the work because he or she loves it—and is not there simply to make money.

Recruiters, in contrast, are interested in following the money. They do not care where the money comes from and would just as soon be recruiting doctors as attorneys if they saw more money in it. Recruiters are driven by money, while placement professionals are driven by the work. They treat the legal placement profession just as seriously as lawyers treat the legal profession.

Our legal recruiters spend a great deal of time writing articles, studying the market and more to understand all the dynamics affecting attorneys. It is not about simply making placements for our recruiters. They are proud to be part of a profession that is deep, profound and important.

Ninth, a placement professional is constantly striving to evolve and become better. A typical recruiter may go to sales seminars and work on “closings” and other techniques to manipulate people to do things that may or may not be in their best interest. In contrast, a placement professional is constantly undergoing training in another direction—learning about markets, firms, trends and how to find the best opportunities for attorneys.

BCG Attorney Search recruiters train with me each week. We train our recruiters in weekly group calls as well as in weekly individual and small group calls. Everything BCG recruiters

do is measured and critiqued—from how often they are reaching out to candidates, to whether they are finding the most and best job possibilities for candidates and more. The goal of this sort of oversight and aggressive management is to cultivate placement professionals who are accountable to their candidates and the profession as a whole. Every BCG recruiter is accountable for providing a World Class level of placement assistance to his or her candidates. Exceptionalism pervades our culture and we are all committed to being the very best legal placement professionals in the world.

Many of our best recruiters may spend years with an attorney before they find the attorney an ideal job—and this is what placement is all about. Placement means you work with a person and give that person everything you have until that person finds a position that suits his or her interests, talents, and goals. By doing good, caring about our candidates and making a difference, BCG recruiters make far, far more placements than recruiters at other firms.

Our methods of search and placement are so rigorous at BCG that they are too much for the average recruiter to handle. We are highly committed to the profession and take our role in the legal system extremely seriously. We typically receive hundreds of applicants for each placement professional we hire and we end up hiring our new recruiters more on personality, interest in learning, and ability to commit than we do on the quality of law firms where they worked, the law schools they attended or on other “surface” measures. Despite this, we have tended to attract and hire extremely qualified people who almost

always have experience with top law firms and have been high achievers in school and in everything else they have ever done.

Instead of “one shot” recruiters who submit people to a firm or two and then try and make things work, BCG recruiters are trained to stick continually with people, understand opportunities in the market and ultimately place their candidates. They are placement professionals and not recruiters.

CONCLUSIONS

The legal recruiting business is a vacuous business that often has little substance and attracts people interested in making fast money and who may or may not be in the business in the future. In contrast, the

business of legal placement is at a different level altogether and it is a career that demands attention to the smallest details and biggest trends to ensure that each attorney finds the placement he or she has worked so hard for and is suited for.

Legal placement is not the same thing as legal recruiting. Legal placement requires a long-term view, an understanding of people, respect for the profession and a commitment to stand behind people and help them get the sorts of positions they want and deserve. Legal placement is about improving careers and lives. It is about investing money in people, research, data, technology and training to get outstanding results for attorneys. This is what the profession needs and what BCG Attorney Search provides.

Share Your Thoughts

- Why is it so important to find a legal placement professional instead of a legal recruiter for your career?
- How would the legal market be different if legal placement professionals were more common than legal recruiters?
- What has your experience been with legal recruiters?
- Have you been manipulated or mistreated by a legal recruiter? How?
- What kind of recruiter do you want representing you and your needs?

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- Have you dealt with legal placement professionals and recruiters? How were your experiences?
- What are the reasons you and your placement professional are concerned with which firm fits you? How will these make a difference in the long-term?
- What are some ways that working with a placement professional that uses data science could make a difference in your legal career?
- Why is the ability to stick with a candidate for years an important trait for a legal placement professional to have?

COMPARISON CHART	
LEGAL RECRUITERS	LEGAL PLACEMENT PROFESSIONALS
Motivated by quick and easy commissions	Motivated by personal relationships and a desire to improve lives
About filling job orders	About finding suitable placements
Salespeople who follow the money	Professionals who respect attorneys
Opportunistic and defined by short-term thinking	Noble and defined by long-term thinking
Lack depth and substance	Have deep and textured understanding of the legal industry, market trends, and each candidate's interests, talents and goals
Know about a few jobs in a limited region	Knows about all the jobs in every geographic area
Manipulative and chase resumes	Earnest and pursue excellence
Talk a good game and use tricks and games to get people to do things they should not do	Rely on hard work, diligence, and data science to make meaningful placements
Produce poor quality work, including written work riddled with misspellings	Produce high quality work, including written work that reflects thoroughness and insight and of the caliber produced by top law firms
Lack interest in candidates and do the work because they think it will lead to easy money	Have a genuine interest in candidates and the subject matter and do the work because they have passion for it

COMPARISON CHART, CONTINUED

LEGAL RECRUITERS	LEGAL PLACEMENT PROFESSIONALS
Forget candidates when placements do not work out and fail to return phone calls	Remain committed to candidates and repeatedly check in with candidates to discuss possible new opportunities
Often work from home with limited technological resources	Have access to extensive resources and cutting edge technology that allows them to know about the most legal job opportunities at the earliest possible time
Unaccountable to anyone	Accountable to candidates and the legal industry
Fail to accomplish much of anything	Make placements that change lives and careers

Additional Article & Book Resources

Please see the following articles for more information:

60 Nontraditional Jobs You Can Do with a Law Degree (and Should Strongly Consider Doing)

How to Select the Best Legal Recruiter and Maximize the Effectiveness of Working with One

Why You Should (and Should Not) Quit the Practice of Law

Should I Use a Legal Recruiter? Top 10 Reasons to Use a Legal Recruiter

15 Reasons You Should Not Quit the Practice of Law

Which Type of Law Firm Is Best for You and Your Career: Main Offices of Large National Firms, Branch Offices of Large National Firms, Midsized Firms, Boutiques, or Newer Fast-Growing Firms?

Twelve Sexy Things You Can Do With a Law Degree That (1) May Make You Famous and (2) Do Not Require Practicing Law

The Only Way to Be Happy Practicing Law

LawCrossing's Guide to Alternative Careers

Practicing Law Not the Only Option for Attorneys

Why You Should Find Your “Tribe” and Not Just Focus on Money in Making Law Firm Job Decisions

What Makes BCG Attorney Search the Greatest Legal Recruiting Firm in the World

How a Good Legal Recruiter Finds the Best in You and Communicates It to Employers: How to Define Your Unique Selling Proposition

What Makes a World Class Recruiter

The Costs of Running a Recruiting Business

Three Types of Recruiting

Should You Become a Legal Recruiter and If So Where?

10 Things That Most Legal Recruiters Will Not Tell You

A Comprehensive Guide to Working with a Legal Recruiter

What Characteristics Should I Look for in a Legal Recruiter?

Why and How to Work with a Legal Recruiter for Your Lateral Move