

Top Ways that Legal Recruiters Manipulate Attorneys: Be Careful of these Legal Recruiter Tricks

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office Managing Director

Summary: Have you ever been manipulated by a legal recruiter? You may have been without even realizing it. Learn the various tricks recruiters use in this article.

Some attorneys have dim views of legal recruiters.

This might have to do with the fact these attorneys have been manipulated by their recruiters.

Learn the tricks of the trade that recruiters use and see how they can affect you.

I have been in this business long enough to have seen the many ways legal recruiters can manipulate you as they allegedly try to help you. These tricks and methods are well established and not much different from trickery used by car salesman, real estate agents, and others. You deserve to be informed about what is going on, as your future is at stake! While an unethical or substandard recruiter can harm your career, a solid legal recruiter can change your life and get you all sorts of opportunities you normally would not get. [In fact, the best part of the legal recruiting profession is doing it well and genuinely helping people.](#)

The goal of manipulative recruiters is for you to work with them (and only them) and for them to get paid commissions as quickly and easily as possible. Like Hollywood talent agents, sports agents and other agents, recruiters only get paid and get commissions if and when you accept an offer and the employer pays them. If the employer pays them, then they get commissions and they are happy. Everything that they do in their interactions with you will essentially be in service of getting commissions. They can do this in an ethical and above board way or they can manipulate you and cut corners. [Some recruiters see themselves in the service of the legal profession and you; others are out only for themselves.](#)

[Share your experience with legal recruiters. Has it been good or bad?](#)

Legal Recruiters Find Attorneys and Gather and Use Information for Your Advantage and for Their Advantage

At the heart of everything, legal recruiters are agents who (1) find people and (2) [gather and use information that they use for your advantage and for their advantage](#). How well the recruiter does each of these things will determine the recruiter's level of success (and yours). [The best \(and most well regarded\) legal recruiters are experts in finding the best people and in getting lots and lots of information.](#) Recruiters need lots of information about firms, jobs, trends, and more to be successful in placing you in the right firm.

One advantage of using good legal recruiters is that they are experts in finding and using information to your advantage. There is nothing more important because this information is how you find opportunities. A good recruiter (and recruiting firm) should spend just as much time gathering information as it does finding candidates. If the recruiting firm is doing more of the latter, this is a sign that the firm may not end up helping you in your search. You should be hearing from your legal recruiter at a minimum of once a week with [new jobs and opportunities](#). You should have no doubt that your legal recruiter is working behind the scenes to find new opportunities for you. If you are not hearing regularly from your recruiter (and with new information each time), then this is a sign that your recruiter does not have enough information and something is wrong.

A second advantage of using a good legal recruiter is that there is a lot of skill in getting both interviews and offers for attorneys. The [best legal recruiters](#) can make a difference when it comes to getting you

interviews and offers. Your positioning, how your resume is explained, how you are coached for interviews, and more, can make a huge difference. In fact, you are far better off using a good legal recruiter in your job search than in trying to do it on your own. Your recruiter should have a serious interest in the subject matter of legal recruiting and in people. The more engaged your legal recruiter is, the better you will do. A good legal recruiter is quite likable and makes things happen. If you do not like your legal recruiter, then the odds are that others do not like your legal recruiter either (including employers) and something is wrong.

Agents are everywhere: There are sports agents, Hollywood talent agents, and real estate agents. In fact, the use of agents is central to just about everything that gets done and has gotten done in history: They were used to build the pyramids and the railroads. They are used to hire and place the legions of programmers used by technology firms in Silicon Valley. There are agents for truck drivers, restaurant workers, maids, and nannies. There are even agents who specialize in recruiting illegal aliens to work in the construction industry. In virtually every industry, employers happily pay agents to bring them workers to do jobs.

Agents are not very "popular" in the legal industry: There are far more attorneys out there than there are jobs and this makes the job of an agent in the legal industry particularly difficult. But why anyone would be interested in going into such an unwelcoming profession where the odds are very good that he or she will be considered an "undesirable" is another story completely; for the purpose of this article, suffice it to say that recruiters are not interested in most attorneys because there is an overabundance of them.

In reality, less than 3% of attorneys will ever be qualified to be placed by a legal recruiter in a permanent law firm position. To add insult to injury, less than 1% of attorneys at any one time are ever going to be qualified to be placed by legal recruiters. The calculus is essentially this:

- You are in the 3% if you are an associate and (1) at a top (or very well-respected firm), (2) went to a good law school (or did exceptionally well at a lesser law school), (3) have one to five years of experience, (4) are interested in working in a market with other high-billing and significant firms (generally a large city), (5) have not moved firms too many times, and (6) are in a desirable practice area at the time where there are jobs (not an easy thing to do). After five years of practice--regardless of your background, you will only be marketable by a legal recruiter about 1% of the time.
- You are in the 3% if you are a partner if you have a significant roster of clients (generally more than \$500,000 in a smaller market and over \$2,000,000 in larger markets). If you do not have these things, you will be marketable about 1% of the time.
- The rest of attorneys have a "less-than-1%" chance of ever being placed - this amounts to most attorneys out there.

(As everyone knows, because it is so competitive to get the few, good jobs that exist, law firms expect the good attorneys they do hire to work inhumane hours and to work under the sort of stressful conditions that most people in other industries do not need to deal with.)

- [See How to Easily Determine the Best Attorneys and Law Firms: The Five Prestige Levels of Attorneys and Law Firms](#) for more information.

Because there are so many attorneys willing to work and not enough work to go around for permanent law firm attorney jobs, the "bar" is set much higher. Agents in the legal recruiting industry need to find a "top 3%"

or "top 1%" attorney (and not just any attorney) to place with law firms. This makes the legal recruiting industry much more competitive than many other recruiting-type industries because there are fewer good people to go around and fewer opportunities. Because there are fewer people and opportunities, the legal recruiting industry is particularly competitive and fierce. This explains why attorneys become so vulnerable to substandard and duplicitous recruiters--legal recruiters are trying to survive in a tough business without having the real know-how, connections, or resources to get the job done. The reality is that if you are dealing with smaller recruiters or those without a lot of resources, you will likely be manipulated.

Legal recruiters can manipulate attorneys at the following three stages: (a) initial recruitment, (b) getting the attorneys to use the recruiters (hopefully exclusively) to send their resumes to firms, and (c) working with them at the interview and offer stage. The tricks recruiters use at each of these stages are discussed below.

[Have you been manipulated by a legal recruiter? Share your experience below.](#)

How Legal Recruiters Manipulate You to Get Your Initial Interest

Recruiters do all sorts of things to get the interest of an attorney initially. The general ways are through: (1) advertising, (2) bribes, (3) branding their firms' experience, (4) cold calls, (5) emails or LinkedIn, and (6) networking.

The recruiter needs to use these devices to motivate you to call them or to express interest in working with them. They need to have jobs, reputations, and they need to make contact with you to get your interest initially. Like flies at a barbecue, legal recruiters will be quite ubiquitous for you if you are marketable:

- They will be in the online and offline material you read,
- They will call you on the phone,
- They will email you,
- They will contact you on LinkedIn,
- They will offer you bribes to work with them,
- They will walk up to you or sit next to you at various events.
- Some of your coworkers may even become legal recruiters and suddenly want to meet you for coffee or hang out.

Like an adolescent learning about the opposite sex, you may initially have some curiosity about these strange creatures. But be careful: Things will quickly escalate if you allow them to. You need to understand how the legal recruiter operates.

Advertising Is a Common Way to Get an Attorney's Interest

In general, this is the most common way to get your interest. In the past, newspapers were used. Now the majority of advertising is done online. This is now the most common way for recruiters to find you and to try to get you interested in their opportunities. They will post an advertisement online for various jobs to try and interest you in these jobs. They will use the jobs they are advertising to interest you in working with them.

There is nothing too nefarious about a job advertisement. Most legal recruiting firms need to advertise the positions that they have. In general, they have no incentive to lie about these positions either. If you are interested in a job that they have and send them your resume, they will try and speak with you about it. If you are qualified, they will try and get your permission to market your resume.

There are several tricks that recruiters use when they advertise jobs. These are the main tricks:

- **They will advertise nonexistent jobs.** This is done to get your interest. When you call them about the job, they may tell you that "it's filled" or something along those lines. They will then try and speak with you about other jobs that might fit. The job that you respond to may be something that sounds too good to be true. They may speak about "starting bonuses" (see the section about bribes below), low hours, a "true lifestyle firm," easy partnership potential, low billable hours requirements, and so forth. While this stuff may be true in some instances, it is often not. See [Why There Are No Lifestyle Law Firms](#) for more information.
- **They will advertise an "in-house" job as bait to get you interested in working with them - despite the fact that they do not have the in-house job, or that very few people will be qualified for the job.** They will then try and talk you into the law firm jobs that they do happen to have. Most legal recruiters make the substantial majority of their placements (over 90%) in law firms. Very few legal recruiters make many placements in-house. One of the largest legal placement firms in the United States was largely built upon this "bait and switch" game that goes on with many recruiting firms. In general, legal recruiters do not represent and place in-house jobs, as companies fill them on their own. (See our affiliate www.LawCrossing.com for in-house jobs, for example.)

[Have you responded to a legal recruiter job ad? What happened?](#)

Many Recruiters Will Simply Offer Outright Bribes to Get You Interested

Since the goal is to get your resume, the bribe can be a low-hanging fruit that gets you interested in moving. The goal behind this tactic is to get your resume. The recruiter will then promise you a portion of the recruiter's fee for placing you. This technique is also used in the human trafficking business.

- **See [Corruption and Human Trafficking](#) for more information.**

Bribes are offered by recruiting firms without the resources do traditional advertising, or without the research capabilities required to get jobs. Many of these recruiters simply work from home and do not have a lot of resources.

- **See [Should You Work with Recruiters Who Offer You Bribes or Kickbacks to Take Jobs](#) for more information.**

Recruiters who do not have significant resources will typically use funds that would otherwise be used for learning about the market and other tasks. Legal recruiters who do not have confidence in their services will typically do this as well. In general, if a recruiter is offering you a bribe, you should ask the recruiter where you are talking to them from. In most cases, you will find that the recruiter is at home and not even working in an office. In fact, the firm may not even have a physical office. Legal recruiting at a high level is a very sophisticated business, and recruiters who are good at it spend a lot of money and time operating the business. Profit margins at the high level are pretty slim--and certainly slim enough such that recruiters cannot afford to give fees away.

[Do you feel using a bribe or kickback is OK for legal recruiters to do?](#)

Recruiters Will Get You Interested by Telling You about Their Legal ("Not Recruiting") Experience

This is extremely common in the legal recruiting industry. The idea is that the recruiter will brand the fact they went to a good law school, or worked in a good law firm, and use this information to impress you--and trick you into assuming that it must make the recruiter a good [legal recruiter](#). Sadly, such credentials impress many attorneys (even though they do not demonstrate how good a recruiter is at recruiting) and many attorneys fall for this.

While our legal recruiting firm tends to hire recruiters from strong legal backgrounds, this is not what makes them good legal recruiters. However, as a general rule, the fact that a recruiter has good qualifications and has left the practice of law at a large law firm to become a legal recruiter should be a warning sign: The person may not have been good at the work or may have had problems. While this is not always the case, it most often is, and the same issues that caused the person to fail in a law firm environment may plague the person in the legal recruiting environment as well. It is very common for legal recruiters to enter the business and leave because they are unsuccessful. You should not be taking chances with your future with someone who is trying something out.

Of course, a legal recruiter with a strong legal background can be a good thing because he or she can recognize your skills and talents and the two of you can also communicate about shared law firm experiences. That is it, though.

In general, because legal recruiting has a strong sales component, the best legal recruiters do not always have the best "legal" qualifications. They need to be able to get you interested in jobs, get law firms interested in you, use research effectively, and not be afraid to pick up the phone and call anyone. They also need to be able to bond with a variety of people.

The problems that arise when law firm dropouts do this work are numerous: They do not have sales ability, they are not very passionate about anything, and they are trying to "coast" by surrounding themselves with a bunch of other people who may have gone to good law schools or worked in good law firms but are not [practicing law](#) in a stressful environment. This does nothing to help you and ultimately may harm you. Having practiced law does not make anyone a good legal recruiter by any means. In fact, it is not even a requirement of the profession (but it does help).

[Do you prefer a legal recruiter that is also an attorney? Why or why not?](#)

See the following articles for more information:

- [How to Choose a Recruiter That Is Right for You](#)
- [How to Choose a Good Attorney Recruiter](#)
- [Non-attorneys as Legal Recruiters](#)
- [What Makes a World Class Recruiter](#)

They Will Call You on the Phone

Most attorneys who have marketable experience have received countless cold calls from legal recruiters. In New York and other large cities, there are large operations that are set up with many phones where recruiters are calling attorneys all day, every day, trying to see if they are interested in moving. Some of these recruiters may be "commission only" and paid just for the placements that they make. Other "recruiters" may be students, or others, who do nothing but make calls all day for \$15 an hour or so and then pass your resume off to someone else in their firm (or try and place you themselves).

Legal recruiters do this to find candidates, and it can be extremely effective for them if they are trying to fill various jobs. In general, there is not a lot wrong with legal recruiters doing this if you have exceptional skills and they are trying to interest you in a specific job. Legal recruiters provide this service to their clients to fill jobs.

More often than not, however, legal recruiters will do this as a "fishing expedition." They are making "general calls" to try and assess whether you are interested in moving "generally." At this point, the call can become somewhat problematical because the person you are working with is likely to have very little idea what he or she is doing and is likely not to understand how to market you at all. This "recruiter's" expertise is making phone calls and not placing you.

Because recruiting is sales to a great extent, you should not discount a recruiter for calling you. You should, however, be aware of some of these warning signs:

- **If the recruiter is just making "general calls," the recruiter is likely doing so because he or she does not have any other work.** The recruiter does this to "build a pipeline" of "leads" (i.e., placeable candidates) he or she can market. There is nothing wrong with this, but recruiters (like attorneys) who have the least amount of work are the ones making cold calls. You do not find the best attorneys cold calling (because they have work) and the same goes for legal recruiters.
- **If the recruiter does not appear to understand the market (or your skills very well), then the recruiter is likely to be someone who does not know what he or she is doing.** If the recruiter does not know what he or she is doing, the recruiter is not someone you should be trusting with your career and search. This is dangerous.
- **Most recruiters who are doing lots of cold calls do so because their firms are small and do not have the money for market research or advertising to attract clients.** Most established recruiting firms get the majority of their clients from advertising or from existing contacts. If you are cold called by a legal recruiter, the first thing you should do is check out the recruiter and get a sense of how much effort the legal recruiter seems to put into his or her business to understand if the recruiter seems worth working with. Look at the recruiter's website, their profile, and so forth.
- **Many legal recruiters who cold call you may overpromise, and you may never hear from a recruiter again after sending your resume to the recruiter.** It is extremely common in most markets for an attorney to get called by a legal recruiter, send the recruiter his or her resume, and then never hear from the recruiter again. What this means is that the legal recruiter has sent your resume and has been unable to get you an interview. The recruiter then never contacts you again because the recruiter does not know what else to do. The best legal recruiters will work with you for as long as it takes to find a position. They will do whatever they can to find you a position and continue working with you until you find one.
- **See [Why You Should Never Use a Legal Recruiter](#) for more information.**

[Have you received a cold call from a recruiter? Share your experience.](#)

Legal Recruiters Will Try and Get Your Interest by Email or InMails on LinkedIn

Most attorneys get emails and InMails from legal recruiters. In general, like cold calling, there is not a ton wrong with this. Legal recruiters are paid to track down and find people to [work in law firms](#) and need to let you know about the positions. There is not a huge cause for concern if a legal recruiter is reaching out to you via email.

The problems with this are similar to those that come from attorneys being contacted by phone, or responding to advertisements: You often have no idea who is behind the emails or phone calls. You need to understand if the jobs the recruiters are emailing you are about are even real.

[Have you received an email or InMail from a recruiter? Was the message relevant? What did you do with it?](#)

Recruiters Will Often Show Up at [Legal Networking Events](#) to Interest You in Their Services

Many recruiters will show up at various networking events. Almost comically, they might participate in networking functions in practice areas they have nothing to do with - patent law, real estate, corporate law; you name it. The recruiters who are the busiest and have the most work do not have the time for this sort of nonsense. They are too busy working with people who have been referred to them, or are interested in their specific jobs, to go trolling in this fashion.

In general, there is nothing wrong with meeting a legal recruiter at an event and working with that recruiter. The only danger is if the recruiter improperly misleads you that he or she has some special insight into you or your practice area because he or she is at the event. If you meet a recruiter this way and are impressed with the recruiter, then it might make sense to work with the recruiter. Also, a talented recruiter may consciously ingratiate him or herself with the community of attorneys he or she wishes to recruit by attending these sorts of events.

Finally, it is a good sign if your recruiter is genuinely interested in the subject matter (i.e., the law) and what you do specifically.

[Have you run into a legal recruiter at a legal networking event? What happened?](#)

- [See Finding the Right Recruiter for You for more information.](#)

How the Legal Recruiter Will Manipulate You to Use the Recruiter to Send Your Information to Firms

Once the recruiter has gotten your "initial" interest through advertising, or otherwise, the real games begin. At this point, the recruiter needs to get you interested in allowing the recruiter to tell his or her law firm clients about you. The recruiter needs your permission to send your resume to firms. To make placements, legal recruiters need to ensure that your resume is submitted to firms and that you allow them to do this.

The Legal Recruiter Will Represent That They Are the Best Legal Recruiter for You

To sell themselves and make you trust them, most legal recruiters have various "pitches" they use.

- **The recruiter working out of the recruiter's home on his or her laptop will say that being small allows the recruiter to give you more personal attention.** Possibly true, but it also means the recruiter has access to less job information, less support to find jobs, and will be more likely to pressure you to accept opportunities. The recruiter is not part of an institution that will watch the recruiter and make sure he or she is not cutting corners.

- **The recruiter at a big firm will say that being at a [big firm](#) allows the recruiter to have more resources.**
Possibly true, but is the legal recruiter even using these resources? Many legal recruiters join other legal recruiting firms just because this makes it easier for them to get candidates. Also, larger legal recruiting firms often do a variety of things - in-house, law firm, temporary placement. They are not experts in anything and this can hurt you.
- **The legal recruiter at a local, regional firm will say being at a regional firm makes the recruiter better.**
This may be true, but this means that the legal recruiting firm has not grown and there is a reason for this. It may be a "lifestyle business" for the legal recruiters there, and they may not be particularly dedicated or serious about the work that they do. The regional legal recruiter may also not have made a serious investment in technology and other things to service you properly.
- **The recruiter at a firm with a bunch of people who went to good law schools and worked at big law firms will say this makes the recruiter better.** The recruiter may understand your qualifications - but little else. A good legal recruiter is likable, resourceful, and not afraid of rejection. A good recruiter does the work because he or she is attracted to it and likes it and not because he or she failed at something else. If the legal recruiter has failed with his or her legal career--especially after having gone to a top law school and worked at a top firm--this may not be a good sign. The best legal recruiters have a profound interest in other people and the subject matter of legal recruiting. They are likable, resourceful, natural salespeople, and are not afraid of rejection.
- **The recruiter who has been a legal recruiter a long time will say this makes the recruiter better.** The recruiter's experience may give the recruiter a history in the profession, but that may not be a good thing. Older legal recruiters may not use databases, may be tired, may think they know everything, and may no longer be all that hungry. Two of the best attributes of a good legal recruiter are inquisitiveness and an eagerness to try new things.

Do not be misled by any of the above statements without understanding the full picture.

[Have you been misled by any of these statements by a legal recruiter?](#)

See the following articles for more information:

- [How to Select the Best Legal Recruiter and Maximize the Effectiveness of Working with One](#)
- [Rules of Engagement: Tips for Working with a Legal Recruiter](#)

The Recruiter Will Tell You They Will Make a "Blind" Submission

The recruiter will often offer to make a "blind" submission to a firm to see if the firm is interested in someone with your background. In principal, there is nothing wrong with this. If you have good qualifications, however, the law firm is almost always going to at least be interested in seeing your resume. The purpose, then, of the

"blind" submission is to get you to take a "first step" that then allows the legal recruiter to come back and declare that the recruiter has "good news" because the recruiter was able to get the law firm interested in seeing your resume! You presume that because this has occurred that the recruiter must be good, and then you will allow the recruiter to submit your resume. This practice is a bit manipulative, but not the worst of what a legal recruiter will do to manipulate you.

[Have you ever had a legal recruiter use this technique on you?](#)

The Recruiter Will Send Your Information without Your Permission

Legal recruiters do this all the time: Especially those recruiters who are working on their own and are not accountable to others or do not have resources. They do this because (1) they do not have the resources to research jobs so they just send your resume everywhere and/or (2) they would rather talk you into going on an interview than applying to the law firm. Both of these are incredibly dangerous. When a legal recruiter does this the recruiter will call you after getting you an interview and tell you that he or she "knows someone" and can get you an interview if you let him or her send you there - unbeknownst to you that your resume has already been sent. This is a scam. This scam also ends up upsetting a lot of law firms because (1) candidates often do not interview when sent by the particular recruiter (because they are not interested and never authorized the recruiter to send them to the law firm to begin with) and (2) many firms have specific rules that they do not want to see candidates unless there is an opening. Smaller, less-established recruiting firms tend to do a lot of this.

[Has your information ever been sent without your permission to a law firm? How did this make you feel?](#)

- [See What Should I Do if a Recruiter Sent My Resume to a Firm without My Consent? for more information.](#)

The Recruiter Will Tell You the Opportunity Is Exclusive

There are very few law firms that have "exclusive" opportunities. It is incredibly rare - I have seen it, but very few law firms ever do this. There are simple reasons for this: Law firms are businesses and they want to get the best candidates they possibly can for each position. For this reason, the law firms will never be exclusive with any recruiter. Law firms are in the business of trying to service their clients with the best people possible and view the concept of "exclusivity" as bad business. Why would a good law firm trust a single legal recruiting firm for filling its openings, or a particular opening? Does this make sense? I have seen it happen, but it is incredibly rare and just about unheard of for any law firm that is of any significance.

[Have you ever been misled into thinking a position was exclusive? What happened?](#)

- [See Don't Believe the Hype about "Exclusive" Job Openings for more information.](#)

The Recruiter Will Represent That They Have a Special Relationship with the Firm and Inside Information.

Legal recruiters will also represent that they have "special" relationships with certain law firms. They will tell you they have (1) made placements there, (2) know people there and so forth. You should view this information as "interesting", but relatively meaningless. Law firms are efficient business institutions and interested in hiring the very best people they can find. Just because one person came through one recruiter and not another does not give one person a better chance. This would be the case if the law firm was not efficient and was choosing to do business in a mixed up, crooked, or nonsensical way - but this is not the case. They want the best people they can find. Good relationship or not, they are looking out for their self-interest. If it is the case that the quality of the candidate matters less than the recruiter's relationship with the firm, then the law firm is likely one that is in trouble.

Our firm has former legal recruiters who were once with us, but are now heads of recruiting at [major American law firms](#), and some of our recruiters are close friends with them and other people in important

legal recruiting roles inside of law firms. I have placed several attorneys who are the hiring partners inside of law firms. All of these "connections" are valuable from the perspective that the connections trust our recruiters and may even give us a bit of a "heads up" about a new position they are about to tell other legal recruiting firms about, but that is it. At the end of the day, they are working inside of businesses that succeed based on the quality of the people they attract. They certainly would not be willing to ignore better candidates than mine unless they were engaging in self-destructive behavior.

[Have you been told that your legal recruiter had a special relationship with a law firm before? What happened?](#)

The Recruiter Will Attack Other Recruiters

If a legal recruiter finds out you are working with another recruiter or if a recruiter is intimidated by another recruiting firm, the recruiter will sometimes make underhanded remarks about that firm. The recruiter may find some negative "reviews" online (that may have been written by the recruiter--or another recruiting firm posing as a candidate) and forward them to you. The recruiter may tell you horror stories about other legal recruiters. The recruiter may tell you that he or she has better connections. The recruiter may just flat out tell you that the recruiter will work harder for you if you use him or her exclusively. Who knows? If a recruiter is attacking other legal recruiters, it is a sign of the recruiter's insecurity. If the recruiter is doing a good job for you and you are impressed with the recruiter and the quality of his or her service, you will be loyal anyway. Any attempt to intimidate you, or pressure you to use only a single recruiter, is something that is likely to make you uncomfortable and only demonstrates the recruiter's own lack of confidence.

The recruiter may criticize the way a former recruiter has handled your file, or the way another recruiter is handling it at the moment. The recruiter should not care. The recruiter should be confident enough about what he or she is doing that what someone else did or is doing does not matter.

[Have you seen a recruiter attack other recruiters? How were you affected by this?](#)

- [See Being Nice Makes Good Business Sense](#) for more information.

The Recruiter Will Say Bad Things about Your Current Firm

To get you interested in moving and create "unhappiness," the recruiter will find all sorts of negative things to say about your existing law firm--despite the fact that the law firm may be the recruiter's client.

This is not generally proper, either. At the same time the recruiter is saying negative things about your firm, the recruiter may be sending people there. Most legal recruiters also value their relationships with law firms and should not be talking behind a law firm's back on the one hand and being the law firm's friend on the other.

While there is nothing wrong with a recruiter sympathizing with your situation if you are unhappy, the recruiter generally should not try and exacerbate the situation. Recruiters will do this in the following ways:

- They will tell you lots of people at your firm are looking.
- They will tell you that they have heard your firm is having problems.
- They will tell you past negative things that have happened at your firm.
- They will tell you that "no one is happy" at your firm.
- They will tell you that no one makes partner at your firm.

The lists of tricks and artifices that are used are virtually endless. Your decision to leave, or be unhappy,

should be your own and should not be manipulated by a legal recruiter.

[Has a recruiter said bad things about your current firm? How did this make you feel?](#)

The Recruiter Will Pretend to Be Your Friend

In general, if a recruiter starts telling you that (1) the recruiter cares about you or (2) is your friend, watch out. The recruiter is an agent and is trying to make a placement. There is not much else going on. If the recruiter is talking like this and telling you to take an [offer from](#) someone else--then the recruiter might be your friend. Be careful though, as this sort of talk often occurs when the legal recruiter is trying to get you to do something that is in the recruiter's best interest instead of your own.

Do not be manipulated by someone masquerading as your friend. While I have heard of legal recruiters becoming friends with their candidates, it is exceedingly rare. The two of you are working together to accomplish something, but friendship is not what makes it work. You need to make the best decisions you can for your future without being "guilted" by someone pretending to be your friend while he or she is gunning for a commission.

[Has a recruiter ever pretended to be your friend before \(or have you actually become friends with one of your recruiters\)? Share your experience.](#)

- [See The Danger of Getting Legal Jobs Through Friends for more information.](#)

How the Legal Recruiter Will Manipulate You at the Interview and Offer Stage

Once you start getting interviews and offers, an entirely different sort of manipulation may begin. The recruiter will want you to go on interviews and do well there, and the recruiter will want you to take every job offer that you get.

While many of the techniques that recruiters use to get you to take offers are not good, it is important also to understand that unless you are an attorney with a great deal of business--it is not easy at the lateral level for attorneys to get interviews and offers. Even the best-qualified attorneys may only get a few interviews, and each offer may be difficult to get. Most law firms will not make an offer to an attorney unless they feel they are going to take it. Also, law firms do not like to waste their time interviewing people. At the lateral level, law firms have a lot of people to choose from, and they can easily choose someone else. Therefore, despite the games legal recruiters will play to manipulate you, there is often some truth behind this as well.

To Get You to Go on Interviews (and Take Offers) the Legal Recruiter May Not Tell You Negative Information about the Law Firm You Are Interviewing With

The law firm that is interviewing you and hiring you is doing so for a reason. In most instances, there is nothing to be all that concerned with--law firms interview and hire people in most instances because there is work they need to get done. In other instances, though, there are things you should be worried about and that your recruiter (if he or she knows) should be telling you. The most serious issues to look out for (and there are more than I could list here) are:

- Difficult partners to work for in your practice area that creates conditions where people leave all the time.
- A firm that is notorious for letting people go immediately when work slows down.
- A firm that lets people go as soon as they have more than six or seven years of experience.
- A firm that has a "bad reputation" on the street, or among legal recruiters, for being a bad place to work.
- A firm about which people are constantly complaining.

These are some things that legal recruiters will know about--and that they should tell you if they know. If the legal recruiter is painting a rosy picture of a law firm you know to be notoriously problematic, this should be a clear warning sign. You would be well served to be cautious of the legal recruiter and not trust everything he or she says.

[Do you trust the legal recruiter or recruiters you use? How do you know if they can be trusted?](#)

To Get You to Take Offers, the Legal Recruiter May Not Assist You in Adequately Evaluating the Pros and Cons of Your Existing Job and Situation

In many instances, the position the legal recruiter gets you may not offer many advantages over your existing situation. When you realize this and bring this up to your legal recruiter, it is best to watch how the recruiter reacts. If the legal recruiter does not marshal any arguments in defense of your existing position, this is not a good sign at all. If you are going to accept another position, you need to understand the drawbacks of doing so. The new position may not be better than the one you are leaving, and it is never a good idea to move just for the sake of moving. You need to move to something that is better and offers more of what you are seeking. Recruiters can become incredibly hostile in pursuit of their commissions, and you should always watch to ensure that they have your best interest at heart.

- [See There Are Only Three Reasons an Attorney Should Ever Switch Law Firms](#) for more information.

[How can you make sure your legal recruiter has your best interest at heart?](#)

To Get You to Take Offers, the Legal Recruiter May Tell You Such an Opportunity May "Never Come Around Again"

When a legal recruiter says this it could be true. Alternatively, it may not be. You can get a sense of the veracity of this statement by investigating what the market looks like and seeing the number of jobs in your practice area online and being promoted by other legal recruiting firms. Other indicators to look at are the amount of time you have been searching and the number of interviews you have received.

[Has a recruiter ever told you that an opportunity like this would never come around again? What happened?](#)

To Get You to Take Offers, the Legal Recruiter May Even Complain about the Amount of Work That Was Involved to Make You Feel Guilty

You need to look out for yourself. The recruiter can make you feel guilty all he or she wants; however, you do not owe the recruiter anything. You need to make sure that you do what is best for you.

[Have you ever been made to feel guilty by a legal recruiter?](#)

If You Get an Offer Not Through Your Current Legal Recruiter, the Legal Recruiter Will Often Attack Your Other Offer.

If you are weighing an offer you did not get through your legal recruiter; the recruiter will often attack the other offer and share all sorts of negative information with you about the other employer. The recruiter will use every piece of negative information he or she can find. You should listen to this sort of information, of course, but it is often an act of desperation and a sign that the recruiter does not have a lot going on, or better things to do. Manipulating candidates should not be something that is high on a recruiter's priority list.

[Have you ever seen a recruiter attack another offer you have received? What did you do?](#)

The Legal Recruiter Will Often Tell You That You Have a Nonexistent Deadline in Which to Accept an Offer and That You Will Lose the Offer If You Do Not Accept It

I've seen this trick many times - in fact; I've seen it a few times in the past year alone. When another legal

recruiter tried this trick with one of my candidates, the candidate called the firm. The firm had no idea what he was talking about, and the candidate was upset that the other legal recruiter did this to him. This sort of behavior, however, occurs with regularity.

Law firms will revoke offers if you let too much time pass (more than two weeks). It is best to accept the offer on the spot if you are comfortable with it. Nevertheless, if you do need to think about the offer the better thing to do is to be in communication with the firm about all deadlines. You need to look out for yourself, and if there are issues for you with accepting the offer, you should not be manipulated into accepting it by a legal recruiter.

[Have you ever been given a deadline to accept an offer by a legal recruiter that you think was made up?](#) **The Legal Recruiter Will Tell You the Recruiter Put His or Her Reputation on the Line to Get You an Interview or an Offer**

Not your concern. You need to look out for yourself. While you should tell the legal recruiter you appreciate his or her help, do not be manipulated into going on an interview or accepting an offer if it is not in your best interest.

[Has a recruiter ever told you they put their reputation on the line to get you an interview or offer?](#) **The Legal Recruiter Will Paint Horror Stories of What Will Happen to Your Legal Career If You Do Not Accept the Offer**

You should listen to this, of course, and it may be true. Again, it may not be. I have seen attorneys make horrible, life-altering mistakes by not accepting certain offers - but this is rare. In most cases, you will be just fine if you do not accept an offer for whatever reason. Your first obligation needs to be to yourself and what is important to you.

[Has a recruiter ever tried to scare you into accepting an offer?](#) **The Legal Recruiter Will Often Make You Think That the Offer Is More Special Than It Is by Representing That You Beat Out Numerous Other Qualified Applicants for the Job**

It is probably true. Nevertheless, this is not a good reason to accept an offer either. You need to look out for yourself.

[Have you ever accepted an offer based on the fact that you beat other qualified applicants for the job?](#) **The Legal Recruiter Will Discourage You from Any Negotiation of Offer Terms or Conditions, So You Hurry Up and Accept the Offer, and They Do Not Risk Losing Their Commissions.**

If this is the legal recruiter's stance, then the recruiter may not know what he or she is doing. While salaries are fixed at the largest law firms, there are terms you can negotiate. Whether it is your start date, lost bonuses from starting before receiving your bonus at your existing firm, moving expenses, a bar exam stipend and more - it is all on the table (especially with smaller firms). There is nothing wrong with trying to negotiate certain terms of your offer, and your recruiter should be trying to do this for you if it is appropriate.

[Have you ever used your recruiter to help negotiate terms with a law firm before accepting an offer?](#)

Conclusions

These are some of the main ways that legal recruiters will manipulate you. They have all sorts of tricks and games up their sleeves for doing so. The main thing you need to understand with all of these tricks and games is that you always need to look out for yourself. Do not be manipulated by anyone and understand

with whom you are dealing at all times: An agent.

See the following articles for more information about working with legal recruiters:

- [What Happens When You Work with a BCG Attorney Search Legal Placement Professional?](#)
- [How to Know If You Are Marketable by a Legal Recruiter](#)
- [What Should I Do If the Recruiter I'm Working with Is Not Following Up with Firms They Have Submitted Me To?](#)
- [How Do Headhunters Get the Names of People They Contact?](#)
- [Would I Be Better Off Contacting Law Firms Directly or Using an Online Legal Recruiter?](#)
- [A Comprehensive Guide to Working with a Legal Recruiter](#)
- [Everything You Need to Know about Working with Legal Recruiters](#)
- [What Makes a World Class Recruiter](#)
- [Choosing the Best Legal Recruiter](#)
- [How to Get Your Recruiter to Work for You](#)
- [What Makes BCG Attorney Search the Greatest Legal Recruiting Firm in the World](#)
- [Why Aren't Legal Recruiters Interested in Recent Law School Graduates?](#)
- [Should I Work with Multiple Recruiters?](#)
- [How Many Recruiters Should I Use?](#)
- [Can I Use More Than One Legal Recruiter in My Job Search?](#)
- [I'm Working with a Recruiter That Has Submitted Me to Firms But I Don't Have Any Results. Should I Switch Recruiters?](#)
- [I Am Looking to Go to Another Firm. Should I Reach Out to My Contacts at Other Firms to See If the Firms Are Interested?](#)
- [Do I Really Need a Recruiter?](#)
- [Summary of Law Firm Recruiting Process](#)
- [Is Telling a Headhunter That You Are About to Be Laid-off a Good Move?](#)
- [Should You Apply to the Same Firm Through Different Recruiters?](#)
- [Skeptical Partner Considers Working with a Recruiter](#)
- [How to Find the Right Headhunter?](#)
- [Recruiting a Recruiter](#)
- [Why You Should Be Talking to a Legal Recruiter Right Now](#)
- [Help Me, Help You - Tips on How to Maximize the Benefits of Your Recruiter/Associate Candidate Relationship](#)

- [Is Telling a Headhunter That You Are About to Be Laid-off a Good Move?](#)
- [Recruiters as Agents: What Should You Look for in an Agent?](#)
- [FAQ about Legal Recruiting](#)
- [Beyond the Listings: Why Use a Search Firm?](#)
- [Behind the Scenes of How the Most Effective Recruiters Work](#)
- [The Costs of Running a Recruiting Business](#)
- [Should I Use a Legal Recruiter? Top 10 Reasons to Use a Legal Recruiter](#)

Share Your Thoughts

Have you ever been manipulated by a legal recruiter? How did this affect you?

Why are so many legal recruiters prone to manipulation?

What are some positive experiences you have had with legal recruiters?

[Share your answers to the above questions by commenting below.](#)