

# Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Legal Recruiting Coordinators and Their Role in the Attorney and Law Student Hiring Process

By Harrison Barnes from Los Angeles Office CEO of BCG Attorney Search

Listen to This Podcast on: 

**Summary:** Learn why law firms use legal recruiting coordinators and the important part they play in the hiring process for big law firms.

Attorney recruiting coordinators are a central piece of the puzzle in achieving employment in a law firm. But despite their importance, the role that recruiting coordinators play is commonly misunderstood.

This article discusses the history of [legal recruiting coordinators](#), their roles in the hiring process, and the ways in which differences among firms may affect their roles. [This article also explores the ways in which firms can optimize their performance by hiring and supporting top-notch legal recruiting coordinators.](#)

## The History of the Legal Recruiting Coordinator Position and Its Development

Historically, law firms did not have [legal recruiting coordinators](#)--they had "hiring partners." Relative to the long-established legal profession, the legal recruiting coordinator is a relatively new phenomenon, and one that is by no means widespread. Most small and mid-sized law firms still do not have their own legal recruiting coordinators, and hiring such a person is for the most part only considered when a firm grows in size and stature.

Larger law firms did not start creating legal recruiting coordinator positions until the middle of the 1980s. Before this time, most law firms did not make many lateral hires, as it was uncommon for attorneys to move firms. Just as workers in other industries tended to stay put with the company they joined out of school, attorneys frequently worked for the firm they joined after law school for their entire careers. The limited hiring that was done - *i.e.*, of law school graduates - was done by attorneys in the firm.

Things began to change when law firms experienced a growth spurt in the mid-1980s that continued for several decades. As law firms gradually expanded in the last few decades of the 1900s, it became harder and harder to make partner. Attorneys continued to join large law firms, lured by high starting salaries, but came to realize that their partnership prospects were far from assured. Large law firms continued to hire large numbers of [top law school](#) graduates, rewarding them with high starting salaries. But most of these attorneys were expected to leave--hopefully, to join firm clients and continue to send work to the firm.

## Law Firms Started the Legal Recruiting Coordinator Position Because Legal Recruiters Were Recruiting Their Hiring Partners Away

As law firms began to expand in the 1980s and lateral movement became much more common, the legal recruiting profession came to fruition, starting in large urban markets. Attorneys and law students seeking high-paying jobs with the largest and best law firms consistently submitted their resumes to these large firms. Legal recruiters started recruiting attorneys, encouraging lateral moves, and wanted to speak with the hiring partners about their candidates each day. In some markets like New York and Los Angeles, the legal recruiting market started going "gangbusters" as law firms began growing through lateral attorney

acquisitions.

Early on in this transition era, hiring partners continued their traditional role of speaking with legal recruiters. However, law firms soon realized the dramatic productivity cost of having a top attorney tied up with administrative details on a day-in, day-out basis. Not only did this process take up a lot of the attorneys' time that was better-used billing clients, but it was also dangerous. Law firms started to notice that there was a lot of turnover for hiring partners who were easily recruited away from their firms by legal recruiters who spoke with them each day. Law firms realized that it was important to put up a wall between their attorneys and recruiters. They needed a person unlikely to be "recruited away" to assume the traditional tasks of the hiring partner. Thus, the legal recruiting coordinator role was created.

Instead of allowing recruiters, applicants to the firm, and others to pick up the phone and call the hiring partner, law firms started to direct these inquiries to the legal recruiting coordinator - usually a non-attorney or non-practicing attorney - instead. This practice persists in most large law firms to this day. Law firms do not want legal recruiters calling their hiring partners or people on their hiring committee. They want a wall between legal recruiters and those who can be recruited away.

**See [The Recruiter-Law Firm Relationship](#) for more information.**

**Law Firms Started Hiring More and More Legal Recruiting Coordinators to Do the Work of Hiring Partners as They Moved Away from Lockstep Compensation Systems to "Eat What You Kill" Compensation**

In smaller firms or during periods of slow movement, the role of hiring partner does not take a lot of time--and may even be a role that the attorney who has it is very proud of and enthusiastic about. However, depending on how attorneys in the firm are compensated, the position may not be one that is all that popular.

Beginning in the late 1970s, law firms began moving away from "lockstep" compensation systems - *i.e.* increasing their salary a certain amount each year - and started to pay attorneys based on the amount of

business they generated. This meant that tasks like reviewing resumes, scheduling interviews, and making hiring decisions became increasingly unattractive to attorneys under "eat what you kill" compensation arrangements. An attorney who is otherwise inclined to take on this position of hiring partner may be dissuaded from doing so due to the resultant impacts on his or her productivity, and therefore, advancement.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Law Firm Compensation Plans](#)**

**[The Top Two Different Ways Law Firm Partners Are Compensated](#)**

**[What Is the Best Partner Compensation System?](#)**

**[Do law firms pay legal recruiter?](#)**

The role of the legal recruiting coordinator also came about as hiring partners began giving a lot of the hiring work to their secretaries and other administrative people in the firm. Initially, these secretaries may not have had a lot of training and were in charge of mainly the administrative components of the work (scheduling interviews, sending out rejection letters, placing advertisements in newspapers and so forth). Many smaller law firms still rely on secretaries, assistants, and other "non-professionals" to do this sort of work to this day. It is for this reason that the profession of the legal recruiting coordinator tends to be very professional in larger law firms and smaller firms may often have their hiring done by people with less formal experience in the field.

**The Legal Recruiting Coordinator Has Evolved into a Role Where It Is Now a Profession**

Over time, many of these secretaries, assistants, and other non-professionals have become more and more specialized and have amassed a greater understanding of how to hire the right types of attorneys. Now, recruiting coordinators in the largest law firms often understand what the firm needs in an attorney better than the attorneys do. Today, the role of a legal recruiting coordinator has become an essential function in most large law firms and something that most large law firms take extremely seriously. The job of a legal recruiting coordinator has become a profession in every sense of the word and is populated by non-practicing attorneys (including former law firm partners) and other professionals who take their jobs just as seriously as the attorneys practicing law in the law firm. The job can have long hours, and in the largest law firms, the most senior recruiting personnel often have salaries that are compatible with income partners inside the law firm.

As most legal recruiting coordinators will tell you, in large law firms there is so much activity that the law firm could not recruit without the legal recruiting coordinator.

Without the legal recruiting coordinator, the hiring partner and others would not keep up with the volume of applications coming in, or be capable of dealing with the scheduling, offer letters, rejections and more. Attorneys practice law and make this, rather than recruiting, a priority. Moreover, most "eat what you kill" legal environments do not reward or compensate attorneys for the time they put into legal recruiting, and this makes keeping them motivated to do their jobs difficult. Unlike the professional legal recruiting coordinator, these attorneys do not have any incentive to stay engaged with the tasks that the legal recruiting coordinator is doing on a day-to-day basis.

For most law firms, a legal recruiting coordinator is an outstanding investment that can pay huge dividends for law firms. Having a good legal recruiter professionalizes the experience of applicants to the law firm and increases the stature of the law firm's brand in the legal community.

**See [How to Market Your Law Firm to Potential Lateral Hires](#) for more information.**

**What Do Legal Recruiting Coordinators Do?**

Attorney recruiting coordinators are responsible for many tasks. These tasks are so numerous that to do each of them well requires a single person's sole focus. Most law firms quickly realize the importance of having someone dedicated to these tasks if they expect to grow and maintain market presence. Some of these tasks

are as follows:

### **Work with Attorneys in the Firm to Decide on Their Needs**

One of the main jobs of a legal recruiting coordinator is to work with the law firm and its attorneys to decide on their needs.

The process of deciding the sorts of needs a law firm has can often be quite involved. Law firms are businesses. As such, their needs are dictated by the immediate long and short-term business needs of the law firm. Because most law firms bill their attorneys out hourly if the law firm has enough work to keep its attorneys busy, hiring can be very profitable--but also risky. If firms do not do enough hiring, the profitability of the law firm suffers. Hire too many attorneys and the profitability of the law firm suffers as well, as the firm is paying the salaries of more employees than they can keep busy. Under this scenario, morale may also suffer when there is not enough work.

As a central repository of information about a law firm's needs, a good legal recruiting coordinator reads all of the information coming in and helps the law firm prioritize and fulfill these needs.

Law firms may see they are growing in a certain practice area and choose to do hiring to beef up for future or current needs.

Law firms may have immediate needs based on a "gap" left by a departure of one or more attorneys and choose to hire for that.

A law firm may see certain practice areas of the law firms slowing and not hire in these areas.

A law firm may be refocusing and planning on staff reductions of partners and associates in certain unprofitable practice areas and not be interested in talent in these practice areas. For example, labor and employment and patent prosecution are two practice areas that are increasingly becoming commodified. They see downward pricing in the market, making them unattractive to many high-priced large law firms. Law firms may want certain partners to leave and not hire associates for them in order to get them to leave. Law firms may have too many attorneys at one level (senior associates, for example) and want to hire more junior attorneys to keep bills lower for firm clients and also so that partners can do more of the high billable hours work for these clients.

Law firms may believe it is more profitable to hire contract and staff attorneys for some positions where the law firm is not confident about long-term staffing.

Law firms may hire senior attorneys without business to staff work for institutional clients at the partner level--instead of high-priced lateral partners with business.

As a legal recruiting coordinator gains additional experience inside of a law firm, they will have institutional memories of mistakes and successes that law firms have made with their hiring and will assist attorneys in deciding whether or not to hire.

In short, deciding on the sorts of needs that a given law firm has is a complex process that relies on many variables. A good legal recruiting coordinator will often be involved in all of these discussions, will give business input, and will help the law firm become more profitable.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Steps to Take to Improve Law Firm Profitability](#)**

**[Has the Profitability of Your Law Firm Plateaued?](#)**

**[Advocate for Hiring Opportunistic Candidates That Are Rare and Difficult to Find in the Market--Regardless of the Firm's Needs](#)**

If a strong candidate presents itself, a legal recruiting coordinator may see the rarity of such a candidate and advocate for this candidate's recruitment. A legal recruiting coordinator will also be a strong advocate for candidates they like and can turn the tables regarding them getting hired as well.

Attorneys often do not realize the strong role the recruiting coordinator plays in these instances. Recruiting coordinators can turn the tide by highlighting various reasons the candidate is a good fit for the firm and important qualifications of the attorney, even when there is not an immediate business need for the recruitment of the attorney.

**See [How to Hire the Best Lateral Attorneys: 23 Types of Attorneys Prestigious Law Firms Avoid Hiring](#) for more information.**

**Advocate against Hiring Various Candidates When the Legal Recruiting Coordinator Believes the Law Firm Can Do Better**

When a law firm is very busy, it may make rash hiring decisions because it wants to generate more revenue. Legal recruiting coordinators have a good finger on the caliber necessary in each attorney if the law firm is to maintain its reputation and quality. Thus, recruiting coordinators will often advocate against hiring certain attorneys when the law firm can do better.

The role of the legal recruiting coordinator is so pronounced in many large law firms that their opinion on who to hire and who not to hire often carries the day. This can apply to both summer associates and lateral partner attorneys when the legal recruiting coordinator does not feel there is a good match. The role of the legal recruiting coordinator is often to act as a gatekeeper to prevent a watering down of the firm's brand in the eyes of clients and the public, and to prevent the firm from trying to over-hire at the expense of its reputation.

**Recognize Attorneys That Are Likely to Be Good and Bad Cultural Fits for the Law Firm**

While attorneys may not always realize it, every law firm has its own culture and way of doing things. It is very important for law firms that have good cultures to maintain them. The culture of a law firm is something that is reflected in the way the law firm is perceived by clients and the outside world, helps glue the attorneys together that are working there, and also helps the law firm gain a competitive advantage by creating a cohesive approach to problem-solving. Thus, a law firm culture is subtle but vital to the law firm's success.

One thing that I've noticed in my career as a legal recruiter is that many law firms sacrifice their culture for profit. They bring in attorneys without regard to culture, to simply do work, or for the business that the attorneys have. When this happens, the law firm tends to end up with a variety of "silos" of attorneys doing the work without regard to the overall culture of the firm. Without any loyalty to the culture of the law firm's way of doing things, many of these attorneys are unhappy, end up leaving, and the law firm will often go out of business. An important role of a legal recruiting coordinator is to guard against people coming in that can threaten the law firm's culture.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Firm Culture Matters Most](#)**

**[Zen, Gestalt & Law Firm Culture](#)**

**[Write Job Descriptions for the Firm Website, Job Boards They Advertise On, and Recruiters](#)**

Once the law firm has decided on its needs, it is often the role of the legal recruiting coordinator to write job descriptions for the positions that the law firm has. This requires the legal recruiting coordinator to have a good understanding of the type of work that attorneys in different practice areas do, the sorts of educational and work qualifications the law firm is seeking, and how to make the firm and the position sound appealing to lateral applicants. Because the law firm is competing with other large law firms for the same applicants, it is important that it be able to distinguish itself in its appearance to lateral applicants. The quality of the writing of the legal recruiting coordinator will often determine whether or not the law firm will receive applicants from the sorts of attorneys it wants.

**See [The Legal Job Postings That Always Work!](#) for more information.**

**[Stay in Touch with Promising Past Applicants to the Firm](#)**



The legal recruiting coordinator will often be tasked with keeping numerous past applicants "warm" in case they later become the answer to the law firm's future needs. In other words, a law firm decision not to hire someone is not always a permanent "no." As such, the legal recruiting coordinator may often check-in with past applicants and see how things are going, indirectly encouraging the applicants to try applying to the firm in the future. This important networking function means that the best legal recruiting coordinators may quickly and easily fill positions by drawing upon their extensive networks of past applicants, minimizing the need to widely publicize the position, saving both time and money.

See [The Importance of Networking and Your Legal Career](#) for more information.

### **Balance Political Needs of the Law Firm and Keep Attorney Confidences**

The position of a legal recruiting coordinator involves a tremendous amount of politics. Not only will a legal recruiting coordinator learn secrets about individual applicants and attorneys working in the firm, but they will also be aware of factors that go into various hiring decisions that the firm may not want others to know.

For example, a law firm may hire the child of a client even if this attorney is not as qualified as other applicants. Or a law firm may even avoid hiring someone because they are not a good fit for the law firm due to political or ideological beliefs.

The legal recruiting coordinator needs to be able to keep this information secret and not share it under any circumstance--even if they are no longer working at the firm. The job of a legal recruiting coordinator is political in the sense that they need to pick up social cues between what is said and not said by the attorneys and understand how to avoid hires that might be problematical.

A legal recruiting coordinator may also be tasked with recruiting attorneys to replace those who will soon be asked to leave the firm. In many instances, the legal recruiting coordinator will know who is on the way out and who is not. This sort of information is something that the legal recruiting coordinator simply cannot talk about publicly, despite the need to plan for this eventuality.

### **They May Contact and Solicit Candidates on Their Own by Actively Recruiting Candidates through Cold Calls**

Using online firm directories and other sources, it is not uncommon for legal recruiting coordinators to cold call potential candidates or to solicit them via email. In many firms, the legal recruiting coordinator position has evolved from a passive role to one that is more active.

Given the volume of applicants at many law firms, it has not been the norm for legal recruiting coordinators to do active legal recruiting, but this is changing. This is occurring with increasing frequency, especially when a law firm has a niche opening in a certain area. For example, if a law firm in Nevada is seeking someone that formerly worked at the FDA there may only be a few potential people they could contact that are admitted and working in Nevada. In cases such as this, the legal recruiting coordinator is often called upon to reach out to attorneys with these hard-to-find qualifications, and encourage them to apply.

### **Decide How to Promote the Needs of the Law Firm (Through Recruiters, Advertising on Job Boards, Doing General Branding Work, and More)**

Law firms have numerous options. They can have recruiters promote the job, and they can advertise it on job sites, legal publications, through banner ads on various websites, and on firm career pages.

While it might make sense for law firms to promote jobs widely, in many cases, it does not. For example, law firms may not want others to know that they have needs--including their current attorneys (in cases where the law firm may be planning on letting someone go, for example). The recruiting coordinator has the option to get as aggressive or non-aggressive as they want in promoting their firm's jobs and openings.

See the following articles for more information:

[How to Hire the Best for Your Law Firm in 6 Steps](#)

[Learn How to Achieve Greater Success in Your Law Firm by Changing the Way You Hire Attorneys May Write Recruiting Brochures and Content for the Firm Website about the Firm and Why People Should Work There](#)

Legal recruiting coordinators are often responsible for firm brochures, as well as content on the firm website that is viewed by applicants. At a minimum, where law firms have marketing departments, the legal recruiting coordinator will be consulted about selling points of the firm and asked to weigh-in on and review these brochures and website content.

### **Review Attorney Applications and Decide Who Is and Is Not a Good Fit for the Law Firm**

It is important that every applicant to most major law firms understands that applications will go directly to the legal recruiting coordinator, who acts as a gatekeeper, determining whether an applicant will progress any farther in the process. In fact, in many law firms, the recruiting coordinators are given so much discretion that attorneys may never see applications of attorneys who have not "made the cut" in the eyes of the recruiting coordinator.

The screening process usually progresses as follows. The legal recruiting coordinator will receive the application, review it and decide which ones to send for further review and which to immediately reject. Across firms, legal recruiting coordinators have varying degrees of discretion in rejecting applications, in some cases having almost absolute initial authority. It is for this reason that it is extremely important for applicants and others to have the best relationships possible with legal recruiting coordinators.

Also, it is important for all applicants to be candid about their experience, the position for which they are applying, and their interest in a particular law firm. The role of a legal recruiting coordinator is to act as a gatekeeper and to protect the law firm from wasting its time with bad applicants. How you interact with the legal recruiting coordinator and how well you explain your experience effectively in your resume and cover letter will often determine whether or not your resume makes it to the next stage.

The best legal recruiting coordinators understand how to carefully review resumes, with an eye toward the special set of skills that the law firm values. Given the unique skill sets valued by different firms (in which firm culture plays a large role), there can be a chance even for applicants who might feel they are not sufficiently qualified for a given firm. I have seen exceptional legal recruiting coordinators hire candidates that would not at first blush appear qualified for the firm but are a good cultural fit. The best legal recruiting coordinators are also able to anticipate which people will succeed in their environments. In short, recruiting coordinators need to look beyond the surface qualifications of a resume in making their holistic evaluations.

In large law firms, legal recruiting coordinators may review hundreds of resumes per week. They need to be able to whittle these down to an acceptable number to send for further review by attorneys. Or in many, they may decide who the law firm is to interview on their own. Legal recruiting coordinators-- many of whom are non-practicing attorneys--are experts at understanding the sorts of attorneys in whom the law firm would be interested.

[See The Only Three Questions Law Firms Evaluate Applicants By](#) for more information.  
**Liaise with Law Schools and Promising Students**

Legal recruiting coordinators are frequently involved in outreach to law schools. They may schedule the interviews with summer associates and communicate with law schools regarding hiring additional experienced attorneys as well. The legal recruiting coordinator reviews resumes from the schools that law firm includes in its on-campus interviewing, and then decides which applicants to interview.

Additionally, legal recruiting coordinators review unsolicited resumes that come in from law schools with whom the law firm does not routinely interact. Leveraging their weighty discretion, coordinators may choose to bring in some of these applicants as well.

### **Schedule and Coordinate Trips for Out-of-Town Attorneys and Law Students to Visit the Firm**

When a law firm does choose to interview an attorney, the legal recruiting coordinator will often be responsible for scheduling flight and hotel reservations for candidates. Also, the legal recruiting coordinator may arrange lunches or dinners for the candidates with attorneys from the firm when they are visiting. In many cases, the legal recruiting coordinator will also come along for these lunches or dinners, and ensure the applicant receives the best possible impression of the firm.

**See [If a Firm Doesn't Offer to Pay for My Interview Flight Should I Still Go?](#) for more information.**

### **Plan Recruiting-Related Events at Law Schools, Out-of-Town, and during the Summers for Summer Associates**

[When law firms visit law schools, and when law firms hire summer associates, various events often need to be organized such as receptions, activities, and the like.](#) The legal recruiting coordinator will often be responsible for organizing this and making sure that attorneys and summer associates have a good time, maintaining excitement about the potential of working full time at the firm.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Top 10 Reasons Why Getting a Summer Associate Job with a Large Law Firm is Crucial to Your Legal Career](#)**

**[38 Tips of Advice for Summer Associates \(and Summer Law Clerks\) That No One Ever Gives You: How to Be a Good Summer Associate and Not Get in Trouble](#)**

**[Summer Associating Gone Right: Tips for Turning a Summer Associate Job into a Career](#)**

**[Network and Speak with Other Recruiting Coordinators about Issues Related to Legal Recruitment](#)**

Legal recruiting coordinators are often members of local and national legal recruiting societies. In such forums, legal recruiting coordinators network and discuss various developments in the field. These developments could include diversity initiatives, challenges, preferred vendors, and other relevant topics.

[A key part of excelling as a legal recruiting coordinator is maintaining an understanding of what other law firms are doing regarding legal recruitment and hiring trends.](#) Such a birds-eye-view is imperative to maintaining a firm's place in a competitive market. Some of the best legal recruiters are consummate networkers who have lots of contacts in the industry and use these contacts to help their law firms grow in stature and profitability.

It is important to understand as well that legal recruiting coordinators also talk about attorneys they work with (or have worked with in the past). While legal recruiters are very good at keeping firm confidences and exercising discretion, they are also the "eyes and ears" of their law firms in the market and can easily learn about the reputation of attorneys both at other firms and in their own.

Anyone who upsets a legal recruiting coordinator does so at their peril because they are often the best source of intelligence about attorneys through their informal networks at other law firms.

### **Work the Public Relations Angle by Promoting a Positive External Image of the Firm**

The face of the law firm to law school applicants and other lateral applicants is most often the legal recruiting coordinator--that is the person with whom they primarily interact when they send applications and also when they call the firm with questions. The professionalism and tone of the legal recruiting coordinator will often determine how the law firm's brand is perceived by attorneys in the market and their evaluation of the firm as



a potential destination. The legal recruiting coordinator will also interact with other legal recruiting coordinators and legal recruiters in the market, and they all collectively will influence the law firm's brand.

If a legal recruiting coordinator is personable and professional, this will reflect positively on the firm. If a legal recruiting coordinator is difficult to get along with and unprofessional, this may not reflect positively on the firm. When a law firm hires a legal recruiting coordinator, they are hiring someone whose expertise is not only related to legal recruiting but who also has expertise in an important public relations function for the firm.

**See [Creating a Positive Image of Your Brand](#) for more information.**

### **Respond to, Document, and Track the Myriad of Phone Calls the Firm Receives about Attorney Applicants from Attorneys, Recruiters, and Others**

The number of applicants that a law firm receives can border from minimal to overwhelming. During a recession, for example, a law firm may be inundated with a huge number of applicants from attorneys seeking positions in a dead market. The largest law firms often receive the most, and these applicants represent a continual influx.

Because there are so many applications coming in, the recruiting coordinator will not only need to review these applications and forward the most qualified ones to attorneys in the firm for further review. They will also need to reject those who are not qualified. Different law firms do things in different ways, but some law firms will want to print and send letters to people that they reject, and others will not. Regardless, this is ongoing work keeps recruiting coordinators very busy.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Why Law Firms Reject You](#)**

**[Why an Attorney Should Never Give Up after Being Rejected from a Few \(or Many\) Law Firms](#)**

### **Respond to, Document, and Track the Myriad of Phone Calls the Firm Receives about Attorney Applicants from Attorneys, Recruiters and Others**

In addition to receiving resumes and having to respond to these, legal recruiting coordinators also receive constant phone calls from attorneys seeking jobs, recruiters seeking jobs for their candidates, and others. The legal recruiting coordinator needs to respond to all these inquiries, a frequently overwhelming task.

**See [How to Stand Out in an Interview - Tips from a Harvard Business Review Editor](#) for more information.**

### **Interview Applicants**

The legal recruiting coordinator may also be asked to interview applicants to the law firm and may be the first person to interview the candidate. When a legal recruiting coordinator receives a qualified application, they may contact the candidate and ask him or her several questions to prequalify them for further interviews with the firm. In many cases, because the legal recruiting coordinator understands the firm so well, they may be able to save the law firm a great deal of time in interviewing candidates that are not necessarily qualified to work in the law firm. Many other law firms will not only have the legal recruiting coordinator prequalify the candidate, but they will have them do a formal interview with the candidate when they come into the office.

**See [Off-Limits Interview Questions: What Should Never Be Discussed between a Hiring Manager and a Job Candidate](#) for more information.**

### **Review Information about Applicants**

When an application comes in that the legal recruiting coordinator thinks could potentially be a good fit, the coordinator will do due diligence on the candidate before setting up interviews. They will make sure that what is on their resume matches the records the legal recruiting coordinator can find about the candidate. Some of the most common issues involve things such as whether or not the attorney is admitted to the bar they claim

admittance to, if they are still listed on the law firm website of the "current" firm on their resume, and whether or not an attorney's online profiles matches the experience section on their resume. If there are partners in the law firm who previously worked with the applicant, the legal recruiting coordinator may also solicit opinions from them about the attorney before scheduling formal interviews.

**See [The Definitive Due Diligence Guide in Lateral Attorney Law Firm Partner and Associate Hiring: How Law Firms and Search Firms Can Collaborate](#) for more information.**

### **Coordinate Interview Schedules with Candidates and Make Sure There Are People to Speak with Each Attorney**

The legal recruiting coordinator is responsible for finding attorneys in the firm to interview candidates and setting up the schedule of these interviews. As part of this, the legal recruiting coordinator will also try to select attorneys to interview candidates that are a good reflection of the firm and also are likely to make the candidate want to accept if an offer is extended.

To effectively select attorneys to interview applicants, the legal recruiting coordinator will often need to consult with attorneys in the firm so they can understand who is on the way up or who may be on the way out. The recruiting coordinator wants to avoid the situation in which an attorney who has a negative opinion of the firm is conducting an interview with an applicant. Instead, they want to select attorneys to interview who are going to have good things to say about the firm.

### **Solicit Feedback from Attorneys Who Interview Applicants and Summarize This Feedback to Partners and Recruiting Committees**

Once the interviews have occurred, the legal recruiting coordinator then needs to gather ensuing feedback and summarize it for partners and others who make hiring decisions. It is often more difficult than one might expect for the legal recruiting coordinators to obtain the all-important feedback from interviewers, as these interviewers frequently become busy with other things, such as billable work. This can result in a cat and mouse game where a legal recruiting coordinator is often faced with having to leave numerous messages and send countless emails to attorneys asking for their feedback.

### **Attend or Lead Hiring Committee Meetings and Provide Input in These Meetings and Help Firms Reach Consensuses on Who to Hire**

Most law firms with recruiting committees meet every few weeks to every month. These committees will discuss their hiring needs and also make decisions about who should be hired. The legal recruiting coordinator will almost always be present during these meetings--often leading them--and will give feedback in these meetings based on his or her understanding of each applicant and the firm's needs.

### **Do Research for the Firm about Who Would Be a Good Fit for the Firm in the Market**

The best legal recruiting coordinators make it a practice to actively research the market, preemptively gaining a knowledge of the best candidates should the firm develop a particular need. This research often includes online research, speaking with attorneys in the firm about people they may know in the market, speaking with other recruiting coordinators and other firms about who they may know in the market, and speaking with independent recruiters about who they may know as well. The best legal recruiting coordinators leverage their networking and research skills to anticipate and prepare for the firm's future needs.

**See [How Attorneys Destroy Their Careers by Choosing the Wrong Law Firms](#) for more information.**  
**[Do In-Depth Reference Checks for New and Potential Hires to Make Sure That the Law Firm Is Making the Best Hiring Decisions Possible](#)**

Once a hiring decision has been made, the legal recruiting coordinator will often do additional reference checks to ensure the attorney is truly suitable for the firm. They may call and speak with references and even hire outside companies to do additional background checks. This is necessary because the attorney that is hired will reflect upon the brand and integrity of the law firm. They want to avoid hiring attorneys that might

cause problems.

## **Do "Onboarding" for New Hires**

Many legal recruiting coordinators are also responsible for "onboarding" new hires. This means that the legal recruiting coordinator will take the new attorneys around, introducing them to key people and explaining to them how the law firm functions. [\(In many law this is an HR function that is handled by others. However, in other firms this falls to the legal recruiting coordinators.\)](#)

**See [Guide to Law Firm Associate Hiring, Training, and Promotion](#) for more information.**

## **Develop Recruiting Budgets for the Hiring of New Attorneys**

Legal recruiting coordinators often have the responsibility of developing budgets for the recruiting and hiring of new attorneys. The management of a law firm will often ask their legal recruiting coordinators about the expected volume of hiring and funds needed for this and also for summer associate programs. The legal recruiting coordinator is then responsible for making sure that the recruiting work comes in on-budget.

## **Create and Work on Initiatives Such as Increasing Diversity within the Firm Through Lateral and Entry-Level Hires**

Legal recruiting coordinators are also often responsible for working on diversity-related initiatives at the law firm. As part of this, they will do outreach to schools and various organizations seeking to increase the number of diversity hires in the firm.

The legal recruiting coordinator may also meet with the law firm's diversity committee and develop targets and address issues flagged by the committee. The legal recruiting coordinator may also work with diverse attorneys in the firm for assistance with recruiting more diverse attorneys. The legal recruiting coordinator may also develop a diversity policy for the firm and seek feedback from others in the firm regarding the policy.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Diversity in the Legal World - The Big Picture](#)**

**[How Law Firm Websites Influence Retention of Diverse Attorneys](#)**

**[Law Firms' Continued Lack of Diversity: Scholars Provide Insight on Reasons and Solutions](#)**

**[Top 14 Ways Law Firms Can Recruit and Retain Minority Attorneys](#)**

**[Helpful Diversity Resources](#)**

**[Write Articles and Give Presentations about Legal Recruiting-Related Issues at Conferences and Internally to the Firm's Attorneys](#)**

Legal recruiting coordinators may also write articles and give presentations at various events about legal recruiting-related topics. These activities help the brand of the firm in the marketplace and can reflect positively on the law firm. Most legal recruiting coordinators are involved in various legal-recruiting-related organizations and share information at these organizations.

## **Make Decisions about Vendors to Use**

There are numerous vendors that legal recruiting coordinators can make use of in their various tasks. There is recruiting software, companies that do recruiting, companies that assist with travel arrangements and more. The legal recruiting coordinator will often be responsible for choosing the vendors who will represent the most value-add to the firm.

In many law firms, applicants are not reviewed by attorneys. If the recruiting coordinator does not like a given applicant, the law firm will never see him or her. The quality of interaction that attorneys have with legal recruiting coordinators will often determine whether or not the attorney is ever hired or moves forward in the hiring process.

At most law firms, the legal recruiting coordinator may have more input on whether or not an attorney is hired than the attorneys doing the official, formal hiring. Given their massive amount of responsibility in the hiring of attorneys, law firms are more than happy to give legal recruiting coordinators this input because they know so much of what is going on.

Due to their public role and direct impact on recruiting the only product a law firm sells (attorneys), the quality of a legal recruiting coordinator is one of the most important determinants of a law firm's success. If a legal recruiting coordinator does his or her job well, the law firm has the best chance of thriving. If the recruiting coordinator performs poorly, problems will often result for the law firm on a larger level. I have watched many law firms become very successful under talented legal recruiters--and have seen the opposite as well. The strength and attitude of the legal recruiting coordinator is often a reflection of the culture of the law firm itself.

As someone who has been in the [legal hiring](#) market for most of my career, I firmly believe that the legal recruiting coordinator is the most important non-legal job inside of a law firm. For this reason, the most successful law firms tend to have the best legal recruiting coordinators. The retention of a high-quality, knowledgeable, and experienced legal recruiting coordinator is one of the best investments a law firm can make. A good legal recruiting coordinator knows the types of attorneys that are likely to be the best fits for a given law firm. This means those that are likely to stick around, to look good to the law firm's clients, and to help create and maintain a positive environment inside of a law firm. In contrast, a poor legal recruiting coordinator may not understand any of these things and may hinder the advancement of a given law firm.

**See also: [The Top Three Qualities Warren Buffett Looks for When Hiring Attorneys, Managers, and Others--and Why This Is All You Need to Know to Hire, Get Hired, and Be a Great Employee](#)**

I have seen some law firms grow and become extremely successful under certain legal recruiting coordinators, and as they moved from firm to firm, the same thing continued to happen at each firm. In contrast, I have also seen the opposite occur. A good legal recruiting coordinator tends to be selfless and sees their job about always advancing the needs of their firm and makes the job about the organization. The legal recruiting departments of the best law firms make the job about the firm and not them. There are so many tasks that a good legal recruiting coordinator needs to do to be effective in advancing the interests of the firm--and many of these tasks are difficult to quantify or monitor by firm management. Thus, good legal recruiters are often dedicated, self-disciplined, and altruistic people.

Depending on the size of the firm, a legal recruiting coordinator may have more attorney hiring expertise than hiring partners themselves, or than attorneys interviewing potential recruits within the law firm. As professionals who do nothing but legal recruiting, legal recruiting coordinators are often the best suited to understand what a firm does and does not need. A legal recruiting coordinator that does nothing but legal-recruiting-related tasks will tend to have a much better understanding of how to hire attorneys.

**See [How Attorneys Choose Law Firms](#) for more information.**

### **What Sorts of Law Firms Need Legal Recruiting Coordinators?**

As discussed above, the role of legal recruiting coordinator was created because large law firms needed professionals to (1) interface with independent legal recruiters, (2) prevent legal recruiters from poaching their attorneys, (3) respond to the increase in applications that occurred with firms' growth, and (4) ensure a cost-effective division of labor, by allowing attorneys to focus on billable matters. A role originally given to secretaries, assistants, and others has grown to be an extremely serious role inside of most big law firms.

Still, retaining a legal recruiting coordinator is neither necessary nor cost-effective at many mid-sized firms and smaller firms. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of law firms in the United States, which are mainly smaller firms, do not have legal recruiting coordinators, yet still manage all the recruiting functions.

Law firms that have legal recruiting coordinators generally are (1) made up of at least 50 attorneys, (2) bill clients hourly, (3) rely on recruiting partners with large books of business, (4) are concerned about attracting attorneys with the best pedigrees, (5) use legal recruiters to fill positions, (6) do work for large corporations that will allow virtually "limitless" legal work to occur, (7) have summer associate programs, and (8) pay "high market" salaries.

### **Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Most Often Have More Than 50 Attorneys in an Office**

In smaller law firms, the attorneys may wear many hats. Small law firms often do not have large budgets for hiring professional human resources personnel. The small law firm may even be unsure about its long-term survival. Thus, a small law firm will traditionally appoint someone who has the title of "hiring partner," to whom resumes are directed and who does the majority of the work of reviewing resumes and so forth. Many hiring partners in small law firms will have secretaries or legal assistants who will assist them with administrative tasks. These secretaries might be professionals when it comes to reviewing resumes and knowing what to look for--but most often they are not.

If a given law firm grows, it will become increasingly counterproductive for all of the work of reviewing and responding to applicants to continue to be handled by a hiring partner. If there is too much work involved, the hiring partner may not do the job well because he or she will feel his or her efforts are best utilized practicing law. Phone calls and various administrative responsibilities will become overwhelming for an attorney simultaneously trying to practice law, and they will soon demand support in the form of a legal recruiting coordinator if the applicant volume and work is sufficient enough.

Legal recruiting coordinators are almost always found in the largest cities and markets. As you go outside of major cities and into smaller markets, it is rarer and rarer to have law firms of more than 50 attorneys. Consequently, for the most part, the legal recruiting coordinator is a profession that exists mainly in the largest cities and with the largest law firms. And consequently, in smaller markets, many applicants' resumes will be going directly to someone in charge of hiring inside of the law firm.

**See [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?](#) for more information.**

### **Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Bill Clients Hourly and at High Billable Rates**

Most law firms that utilize legal recruiting coordinators bill their clients hourly. The billable hour creates an easily calculable trade-off of the value of an attorney's time spent sorting through and reviewing resumes compared to other administrative tasks. Law firms are bastions of strategic thinking, and the powers that be are eager to put their attorneys' time to the highest and best use. If an attorney's time can be sold on the open market for \$1,000 an hour and a legal recruiting coordinator can do this work for a small fraction of this amount, most smart law firms conclude they are better off giving this work to someone else rather than an attorney.

It is precisely for this reason that most consumer-facing law firms (family law, bankruptcy, for example), personal injury law firms, law firms that do work on a "flat fee basis" (many patent law firms) and law firms that bill at low hourly rates (insurance defense law firms, construction law firms) do not use legal recruiting coordinators - even when they have more than 50 attorneys in an office.

Legal recruiting coordinators are largely the domain of the most prestigious law firms.

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

### **Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Rely on Recruiting Partners with Large Books of Business**



The largest and most prestigious law firms survive and thrive by attracting attorneys with large books of business. To do this, they make a good investment by hiring legal recruiting coordinators to be their eyes and ears for finding these sorts of attorneys.

At the outset, it is important to understand the importance of having someone who is always there to take inquiries from legal recruiters and attorneys with books of business. Most professional legal recruiters understand the importance of responding quickly when an attorney with a book of business or a legal recruiter representing one approaches them. In the case where this responsibility falls to an attorney (who may be too busy to return a call from a legal recruiter) or a nonprofessional secretary or other person assisting the hiring partner, applications and inquiries may not be responded to in a sufficiently quick fashion, or appropriately.

For example, it is common for attorneys with substantial books of business to send applications to law firms without saying anything about how much business they have. Legal recruiters also make the same mistake with their candidates. When this information is not disclosed the application may be ignored or rejected without ever investigating this information. In cases where this information is disclosed, the law firm may also not move quickly enough, and by the time it does react the candidate may have already been hired, or be well on their way to having bonded with another firm where they are in advanced hiring discussions.

Knowing what to look for, the questions to ask and how quickly to ask these questions can give law firms a major advantage with hiring. Even one missed opportunity every five years could cost the law firm what a good legal recruiting coordinator would cost in lost profits.

In my career, I've worked with numerous partners with multimillion-dollar books of business and received calls from law firms expressing interest in seeing them months after an initial submission and follow up. While I have no way of knowing the reasons for this, in most cases where this occurred the law firm had the submission go directly to the hiring partner or the legal recruiting coordinator was someone who did this role while also doing other roles (such as legal secretary, receptionist and so forth).

An additional factor that is quite important is that when a law firm is bringing on an attorney with a lot of business, that attorney is going to be paying the law firm a large part of their collections for outstanding administrative support. They will be paying the law firm for assisting them with recruiting their talent, recruiting attorneys, and more. When a law firm does this well, this shows the sort of support they too will be receiving, and it is meaningful to that attorney.

The case for a professional legal recruiting coordinator is profoundly important for most major law firms if they want to hire attorneys with large books of business.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Top 9 Ways for Any Attorney to Generate a Ton of Business](#)**

**[30 Ways to Generate Business as an Attorney](#)**

**[Partner Business Plans: Key Elements](#)**

**[Five Effective Strategies for Law Firm Partners to Get Business and Clients](#)**

**[Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Are Concerned with Attracting Attorneys with the Best Pedigrees to Impress Their Clients and Maintain Their Image](#)**

If a law firm has a legal recruiting coordinator, it will almost always be the sort of firm that is concerned with attracting attorneys with the best possible pedigrees. Law firms that are seeking attorneys from the best law firms, best law schools, with business and the most in-demand qualifications almost always have legal recruiting coordinators.

In most cases, shortly after receiving a desirable application, these recruiting coordinators will jump into high gear and get in touch with the desirable applicant. These law firms have formalized processes in place to ensure that they bring on the best talent they possibly can and do not miss this talent.

The reason that law firms concerned with attracting attorneys with the best pedigrees tend to have legal recruiting coordinators is that these law firms are more highly developed and profitable businesses than law firms that do not have legal recruiting coordinators.

Law firms with legal recruiting coordinators realize the value of their attorneys' time, they tend to be quite stable (they know they have income consistently coming in), their clients demand the best legal talent, they use legal recruiters to fill positions, and they want to move fast on applications so as not to miss out to other firms on the best applicants.

Legal recruiting coordinators also have an important public relations role inside of law firms. When attorneys are applying to law firms, a professional legal recruiting coordinator ensures that the candidate has the best experience possible.

The recruiting coordinator will make the candidate feel welcome at the firm and interact with them in a professional way. Most have pleasing personalities and are likable, and this also reflects on the law firm as well. They respond quickly to emails, assist with scheduling, answering questions and helping applicants with the sorts of questions and issues they have during the application process and after receiving offers.

They are, in short, the representatives of the law firm. The law firm wants to do what it can to professionalize this role. Law firms that are concerned with attracting the very best possible talent take the role of their recruiting coordinators quite seriously. As stated above, this is one of the most important roles in most large law firms.

In many respects, the legal recruiting coordinator is most likely to be working inside of a law firm that is elite rather than average. Law firms that use legal recruiting coordinators are always on the lookout for the very best talent, and it is important to them to ensure they are bringing in the best people at all times. They are also run as professional organizations and put people in place to ensure that attorneys have the best experience possible when applying to them.

Law firms with legal recruiting coordinators will most often do work for clients that are concerned with the pedigree of their attorneys as well. The competitive advantage that the largest and best law firms have in the market is most often the quality of their attorneys. Clients paying high hourly rates for the work that a law firm is doing are often paying these rates because the law firm is consistently able to recruit and maintain an impressive roster of attorneys with excellent qualifications. The law firm gets pricing power in the market and differentiates itself in the market based on the quality of its attorneys.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[How Mid-Sized Law Firms Stay Competitive and Attract the Best Attorneys](#)**

**[How to Keep and Attract the Best and Brightest Talent](#)**

**[Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Use Legal Recruiters to Fill Positions](#)**

The majority of law firms with legal recruiting coordinators use legal recruiters to fill positions. Law firms use legal recruiters for a variety of reasons, but the main reason they use them is that they want to attract the best talent possible--regardless of whether a recruiter is involved. Attracting top talent and presenting a professional image to that talent is so important to law firms that they almost all use legal recruiters. Law firms that are not concerned with attracting the best talent often will not use legal recruiters.

Law firms that use legal recruiters also typically attract a far greater number of candidates than those that do not. This means that the law firm faces additional administrative work that they need to do to stay on top of the applicants that are coming in, the additional phone calls, and the heightened activity, as compared to law firms that do not rely on legal recruiters. This additional workload in their search for talent means that these law firms will almost always have legal recruiting coordinators.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[How to Hire a Legal Recruiter for Your Law Firm: How Law Firms Recruit Attorneys Using Legal Recruiters](#)**

**[How to Get Great Results from Your Legal Recruiter](#)**

**[A Comprehensive Guide to Working with a Legal Recruiter](#)**

**[Everything You Need to Know about Working with Legal Recruiters](#)**

**[How to Choose a Good Attorney Recruiter](#)**

**[Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Do the Majority of Their Work for Large Corporations That Will Allow Virtually "Limitless" Legal Work to Occur on Open Matters](#)**

Most law firms with legal recruiting coordinators do work on behalf of large corporations. Large corporations will typically give trusted law firms matters where the law firm can use its discretion to get these matters done. In most cases, "discretion" means that the law firm is trusted to do the amount of work it needs to do the matter as well as it can be done. This translates into lots of hours and large bills to clients.

When law firms get clients that provide them this sort of latitude they end up growing and hiring more (good) attorneys to ensure the work is done in the best possible way. This also means that these same law firms begin to get more comfortable hiring additional administrative support (legal recruiting coordinators) who may not do work that does not directly translate into billable hours.

There is a level of confidence that law firms get when they start doing work for large clients. The prospect of recurring revenue and the availability of lots of endless work encourages law firms to hire more administrative staff with confidence. Law firms with large clients become comfortable with the idea that they will always be hiring and always need assistance with hiring the best attorneys for the matters they work in..

**See [Top 30 Factors Large Law Firms Consider When Hiring Lateral Attorneys](#) for more information.**  
**[Almost All Law Firms with Legal Recruiting Coordinators Have Summer Associate Programs](#)**

Most law firms with legal recruiting coordinators have summer associate programs. The most serious and stable law firms have summer associate programs because they believe in the future, want to "home grow" future talent, and want to ensure that they do not miss out on the best prospects for their firm.

The summer associate program is a lot of work for law firms. Law firms need to organize and participate in on-campus recruiting. They need to have an organized program for interviewing people in the law firm. They need someone to help orient the summer associates once they arrive and coordinate their activities, performance reviews, and other tasks as well. This is a lot of work, and there are very few firms I know of that can coordinate summer associate programs with more than a few attorneys without legal recruiting coordinators.

**See [What Your Summers Say about You](#) for more information.**

**[Almost All Law Firms That Pay "High Market" Will Have Legal Recruiting Coordinators](#)**

Law firms that pay "high market" almost always have legal recruiting coordinators. These law firms have legal recruiting coordinators because they care about the sort of impression they make on applicants and are

constantly vigilant about hiring the very best talent for their firms. These law firms will almost always have legal recruiting coordinators.

### Why Law Firms Need Good Legal Recruiters

Law firms are profitable, have good brands in the legal community, and work to the extent they can to effectively recruit good attorneys. The importance of the role of recruiting the best attorneys is an essential function for growing law firms, especially large ones.

Law firms need professionals in a position to manage this growth and who can effectively recruit the best talent. While the sort of legal recruiting coordinator that works best for each firm will depend on the firm, it should be no surprise that the best firms have the best people in these roles.

The most effective legal recruiting coordinators in large law firms are paid very well, given a lot of latitude to make their own decisions and have a respected role within their law firms. A very good legal recruiting coordinator can get things done, recruit the right talent, and improve the brand of the firm in the market. This is one role where law firms should not cut corners and where they should hire the best person they can find. It is also the intangibles of what the best legal recruiting coordinators do that matters. These are the seemingly small things that legal recruiting coordinators do on a daily basis to improve the brand of the firm in the eyes of other attorneys, the networking they do, and how the firm seems to consistently improve with them around.

### Conclusions

The role of the legal recruiting coordinator has evolved from a position that was seen as tangential to the success of the law firm to one that has emerged as one of the most important roles in the law firm. While attorneys may come and go in a law firm, the legal recruiting coordinator stands out as one of the few forces of stability in a firm, making sure the firm keeps up momentum by attracting and retaining the right talent. The best legal recruiters do not get involved in politics within and outside the firm. They realize that their role is to make sure the best applicants keep coming into their firm and see themselves as guardians that continually attract the best talent they can to their firms.

**See the following articles for more information:**

**[Top 10 Ways to Get Your First Job after Law School](#)**

**[How the "Invisible Hand" Operates in Law Firm Employment Decisions: The Top 12 Most Important Factors Firms Consider When Hiring \(and Firing\) Attorneys](#)**

**[How to Rapidly Get Law Firm Offers \(Even When Firms Have No Openings\)](#)**

**[Coping with the Process of Applying for a Position in a Law Firm: Don't Let Silence, Delay, Ambiguity, or Rejection Get You Down!](#)**