

Real Estate Associate in the OC Lands at Elite Boutique Real Estate Firm in LA

Every candidate is different, and every candidate placement can teach us something about the marketability of certain candidates and / or what a candidate can do in order to maximize his or her chances of getting a great offer.

The candidate that I just placed teaches us a couple of lessons: 1) great academics and / or a great firm can sometimes make up for an overly niche practice area, 2) persistence on the part of the candidate and / or on the part of the Recruiter can really pay off and 3) really preparing for interviews can give a candidate a huge leg up and really maximize his or her chances of getting an offer.

But first, a summary of this candidate's background, experience and credentials. She is Class of 2014, went to a Top 25 law school, did decently well there, was on Law Review, participated in Moot Court, went to a strong UC undergraduate school, did a major in Math there (which I found impressive), was the President of her sorority and was a cheerleader. Her class year and law school were a definite plus, along with the fact that she was on Law Review and Moot Court. I personally found the Math major impressive, as it is difficult to find a lawyer, let alone a female lawyer, who completed an undergraduate degree in Mathematics. I also liked that she was the President of her sorority and was on the Dance Team in college, as both of these show leadership and commitment.

Now, for the downsides. This candidate started at a small firm post-graduation from law school, doing [general business litigation](#) (a very different practice area than her current one). She lateraled to her current firm, a well-respected firm in the OC, in May 2016, was able to break into Subdivisions Services, a particular niche of Real Estate (on the transactional side), and has been doing this type of work for the past 3+ years, almost 3 years when we began working together. The problem was that while my candidate's current practice is certainly related to general real estate transactional, my candidate doesn't currently draft real estate agreements - she does more compliance work, and although she does review these agreements, but she doesn't draft them herself. I knew that this would be our biggest challenge. Firms tends to be very cookie cutter in terms of class year and the type of experience that they're looking for, and neither this candidate's clear year nor her experience was a round peg fitting into a round hole.

To my candidate's credit, she was relatively open-minded about the types and sizes of firms that we were applying her to. She initially only wanted to apply to large firms, and we did get her an informational interview at a large national firm, but the interview was only a coffee interview with one Partner and the Partner ended up passing on her because her experience wasn't a good fit for what he was looking for. I knew that we were likeliest to get her traction with a smaller firm, as small firms tend to be much more open-minded in the type of experience that they're willing to entertain, they are more likely to be willing to train and it is harder for them to find good candidates.

This candidate ended up getting two offers at two boutique general real estate transactional firms, one in the OC (where she is currently based) and one in LA. Both firms liked her academics, credentials and her current firm, and both knew that they'd have to train (and were okay with this). One of the firms, the firm in LA, matched her current base, and even offered a \$5K relocation bonus, since she'd have to move from the OC. The other firm offered \$120K, with a lower billable hour requirement and generous bonus program, but my candidate preferred the certainty of a higher base.

In the end, even though my candidate won't be making more at her next firm, she knows that this is an amazing opportunity to expand and broaden her current practice, at a firm that is busy and has top-shelf

clients and deals. In a year or two, I think that she will be able to lateral to any of the Big Law firms that we were initially targeting, once she gets the right experience under her belt. She is very excited about this opportunity to broaden her practice at an elite boutique real estate transactional firm, and I couldn't be happier for her!