

In Unique Placement of Exceptional Diverse Candidate, Client Becomes Attorney at AmLaw Firm

This highly unusual placement involved a candidate who was able to make the almost-never-seen transition from being an investment banker to being an attorney servicing investment bankers. To be clear, this was not a case of an in-house attorney simply re-joining outside counsel (which is very difficult to do as well, because firms tend to believe that once you leave the firm environment it is very difficult to fully integrate back into it and succeed there). This was a case of someone who had been working as an investment banker - and who had never even practiced law before - being able to join a law firm for the very first time. Moreover, it was an AmLaw firm that gave him this chance, and the firm brought him in as a mid-level, giving him credit for some of his non-legal work experience. Amazing!

I believed in this candidate from the get-go, even though I knew it was going to be an extremely difficult project to place him. After talking to him at length about his background and goals, and coming to believe that he had unique experience I felt the right firm could benefit from, I committed to doing everything I could to help.

Like everyone's trajectory, his was unique. He had graduated with highest honors from a leading HBCU and had been the first person in his family to graduate from college, which speaks volumes about his intelligence, motivation, and grit. He had earned his J.D. from a top law school. He always knew that he wanted to practice law, but he was also gifted and intrigued by finance, and in between college and law school he had worked for a leading investment bank. One thing led to another and he landed back at this investment bank - again as a banker - after graduating from law school.

Significantly, even though he was headed in a different direction, he wisely passed the bar exam and become admitted, so he could switch back to law in the future. This was a very prescient decision, because I am not sure we would have been successful if he had not "had the bar."

He remained with the investment bank firm for several years, rising up through the ranks to the level of vice president. He specialized in a very sophisticated area of finance and loved the work. He loved the complexity of the transactions, the high-energy process of "doing deals," the interfacing with his international clientele, and the whole milieu in which the work went down.

Even as he was happy where he was, at a prestigious investment bank with a titled position, he had a lingering desire to contribute to the world of high finance as an attorney. This dream had been simmering for a long time and suddenly it began to burn, and he knew it was time to contact BCG. We got right down to work, each of us determined to do what we could to close the deal and get him into a law firm.

On my advice, we cast a wide net, reaching out to firms large and small, with and without formal openings, and opening up our search to include additional markets. He approved virtually all firms I sent him. He also was very responsive when I asked for supporting documents. One of the things I appreciated was the way he described the deals he worked on. Instead of a dry formal list, he described his clients and their deals just like a banker or trader would, using banker lingo and speaking as if he was talking to another trader or banker. This would prove critical in the end, because it turned out that his ability to really understand the inside workings of the investment banking space - and think like a banker because he was a banker - was what the firm he eventually landed at was in need of.

I explained his story in the cover letter and made sure to highlight his significant real-world experience in high finance, just as he had explained it to me, using his lingo. That turned out to be key, as an AmLaw firm

that represents investment bankers in the world's financial capital saw the potential in this candidate. The firm did not have a formal opening, but it was interested in possibly bringing him on board as an "opportunistic" hire.

Firms of this caliber have their pick of highly-credentialed attorney candidates to choose from - but they went with this candidate because he brought something to the table that other candidates did not - unique expertise regarding the deals they were putting together that simply could not be gained by law firm experience alone, no matter how high-level. Added to that, this candidate demonstrated the required level of raw intelligence, scholastic achievement, motivation, follow through and all-around commitment to excellence the best firms demand of their attorneys.