

Effective Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Minority Attorneys

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Law firms and other legal employers are increasingly looking to recruit a more diverse pool of attorneys to reflect better the communities they serve and enhance their competitiveness in the legal industry. Yet many organizations struggle with how to identify and attract minority attorneys effectively. In this article, we will provide some tips on hiring diverse legal talent, retaining minority attorneys, and strategies for attracting top legal talent.

Do you actively recruit minority lawyers for positions at your firm? It could be a long wait if you're only waiting for them to reach out to you. With such a small number of minorities in the legal field, firms need to take the initiative. Examine your hiring practices and see where you can improve.

You need to be aware of your firm's tendencies when hiring new lawyers to ensure diversity. This means understanding how the hiring committee works and ensuring that it includes various perspectives. One of the best ways to do this is through the [summer clerkship program](#), which allows law firms to recruit minority law students. However, due to old habits and traditions, many firms' recruitment programs are not set up to appeal to these students. It's essential to break out of this mold to create a more diverse and inclusive environment.

Benefits of Recruiting Diverse Legal Talent

There are numerous benefits associated with recruiting a more diverse workforce, including:

A more diverse workforce can better reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

A more diverse workforce can bring different perspectives and experiences to bear on legal problems, leading to more creative and effective solutions.

A more diverse workforce can improve an organization's ability to recruit and retain top talent.

A more diverse workforce can improve an organization's public image and reputation.

Where to Look for Diverse Legal Talent

There are a number of ways to identify potential minority candidates for legal positions, including:

Recruiting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs).

Working with minority bar associations.

Developing relationships with diversity-focused legal organizations.

Posting job openings on diversity-focused job boards and websites.

It is also important to reach out to potential candidates directly to let them know about your organization and why it would be a great place to work. Many minority attorneys may not be aware of your organization or may not think that your firm is interested in hiring them.

How to Recruit Minority Attorneys

Do you find yourself hiring the first candidate who seems like a good fit instead of taking your time to find the perfect match? This is not the best practice and should be avoided by regularly interviewing strong candidates.

Once you have identified potential candidates, there are many steps you can take to hire them, including:

Reaching out to candidates directly.

Hosting information sessions and events specifically for minority attorneys.
 Creating targeted marketing materials.
 Working with diversity-focused legal organizations and mentorships.
 Offering flexible work arrangements.

How to Retain Minority Attorneys

Once you have recruited minority attorneys, it is crucial to take steps to retain them. This includes:

- Providing mentorship and sponsorship opportunities.
- Investing in professional development.
- Promoting a culture of inclusion.
- Fostering a sense of community.
- Offering flexible work arrangements.

The next generation and millennial lawyers are more diverse than before. If your firm wants to stay ahead of the curve, it's time to start thinking about effectively recruiting and retaining minority attorneys.

Cutting-edge technology is a key requirement for millennials and zoomers when considering where to work. As these generations begin to take on leadership positions within firms, the demand and focus on modern technology will only grow. To create a culture that is appealing to millennials and zoomers--and therefore maintain a competitive edge--it is essential to have advanced technology that is easy to use. Providing training and support for this technology is also crucial to ensure success. Firms will be better equipped to attract and retain top candidates by investing in these areas.

Strategies for Attracting Minority Talent for Your Law Firm

[Seek input from hiring committee members in selecting resumes for on-campus interviews.](#) A diverse recruitment committee is an invaluable resource in selecting a diverse group of law school students to interview.

Broaden the scope of your talent search. [Use legal recruiters like BCG Attorney Search](#), and [post jobs on sites like LawCrossing](#) (that distribute your jobs to 1,000+ sites), guaranteeing massive coverage.

Do not fixate on grades. Recognize that grades are arbitrary, especially when comparing law schools. While grades are important, they should not be the sole basis for accepting or rejecting a law student's rsum. Consider factors other than law school grades. [Recognize other indicators of success: Phi Beta Kappa membership, good grades at a strong undergraduate institution](#); military service; volunteer work; writing ability/writing awards; law journal experience; and involvement in student bar activities.

Implement a first-year summer clerkship program. Because 1Ls typically do not have grades available in December and January, decisions to hire 1Ls must be made on criteria other than grades.

Participate in minority job fairs. Job fairs allow you to interview many minority law students from various law schools in one day.

[Include a female attorney and a minority attorney when interviewing on campus.](#) Whom you send -- and don't send -- to interview on campus sends a message to law students. Additionally, women and minority law students will feel more comfortable with the recruitment process if a woman or a minority attorney interviews them.

Delete grades/GPAs from rsums of students coming in for in-office interviews. Despite their interviews, students with high GPAs tend to get rave reviews, and students with lower GPAs tend to get lukewarm reviews. Taking grades and GPAs off rsums forces interviewing attorneys to judge an interviewee on attributes other than grades. (The theory here is that the hiring committee has already seen the student's grades and determined that the student is worth interviewing.)

Include minority attorneys when conducting in-office interviews. Minority law students may ask questions of minority lawyers at your firm that they would not otherwise ask.

When pairing law students with attorney "mentors" or "liaisons," do not automatically pair minority students

with minority lawyers. Work to pair minority law students with lawyers who share a common interest or work specialty rather than pairing solely on ethnicity.

During the clerkship, pick restaurants and activities that are less formal, at least at first. Law firms are intimidating enough for minority law students without the added pressure of an unfamiliar social setting, such as lunch at the country club, golfing, or a seven-course meal at a four-star restaurant. Opt for the more informal restaurants and activities at the beginning of the summer clerkship.

Include minority attorneys in summer clerk activities. Again, it sends a message of inclusion.

[Use fall and spring clerkships to hire minority law students.](#) Good work can lead to a permanent offer despite lower grades than those in the top 10 percent.

Get your firm and the attorneys in your firm to participate in minority student bar activities. Most law schools in California have active chapters of minority student bar associations. These groups often host banquets, mock interviews, mentoring opportunities, and parties during the year. [Involvement by attorneys in your firm will help you identify law students worth interviewing for the summer clerkship program.](#)

Companies can deter potential employees when they have extensive qualifications that the candidate must meet to be considered for the position. For example, a particular career trajectory may be desirable, but the company may want to be less rigid in its hiring process in a tight job market.

How Recruiters Can Tap into the Minority Attorney Market

Most recruiters would agree that the legal profession is a lagging indicator of diversity. Even though people of color make up approximately 36 percent of the U.S. population, they only represent around 15 percent of attorneys, according to the National Association for Law Placement.

The good news is that there are opportunities for recruiters willing to think outside the box when recruiting minority attorneys. Chief Executive Officer of BCG Attorney Search, Harrison Barnes, says that the key is to develop relationships with diverse law schools and legal organizations.

"There are many ways to get involved with these groups," says Barnes. "You can attend their career fairs, become a member of their organization, or sponsor one of their events. The key is to show that you're invested in diversity and committed to recruiting minority attorneys."

Another way to reach out to minority attorneys is to partner with organizations that focus on diversity in the legal profession. These organizations can help you connect with diverse talent who might not otherwise be on your radar.

When looking to recruit top candidates, utilizing the right strategies and working with an experienced attorney recruiter can make all the difference. By taking advantage of these resources, law firms can improve their chances of attracting the right people - even in a competitive market.

There is no single solution to guarantee a law firm hires more minority attorneys, but specific changes can be made that may help increase diversity. These include being more intentional in recruiting from a broader range of schools, connecting with potential candidates from underrepresented groups, and taking active steps to create a more inclusive environment within the firm. A genuine commitment to diversity can produce positive results for the law firm and its employees.

Conclusion

There is no surefire way to hire minority lawyers. Like all other lawyers, they are attracted to things like good pay, the potential for advancement, and the opportunity to do meaningful work. However, because minority lawyers and law students often don't fit the traditional profile of lawyers and law students, law firms have to put in extra effort to recruit them. By following the suggestions above, you should be able to recruit minority

lawyers successfully.