

Effectively Working With Recruiters To Complete A Successful Job Search Campaign

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The relationship that exists between the recruiting industry and the candidates it serves is characteristic of a love-hate relationship. When both sides are cooperating and are able to successfully complete a search, they love each other. When either side breaks down, there is a great deal of animosity and mistrust. One of the most important things to remember, however, is that neither side can exist without the other. A recruiting firm can have thousands of open positions, however, they are useless without a qualified candidate pool. Conversely, a candidate may have the greatest relationship with a search firm. If that firm does not have positions available, they are worthless. Having made that startling statement, let us explore the various facets of the industry, and discuss a few tips in order to enhance the value of the recruitment firm/candidate relationship.

There are a number of terms utilized when referring to the recruitment industry, for example, executive search, professional recruiters, headhunters, employment agency, personnel agency, temporary services, interim staffing, staffing firm, etc.. There are differences among the various types of firms, although some terms are used interchangeably or concurrently. Nevertheless, all provide a useful service if they utilized properly. The primary difference amongst the various types of firms has to do with the fee structure and whom the firm represents.

Terms Used to Describe Segments of the Industry

Employment Agency (Personnel Agency):

A less commonly utilized term in today's marketplace. Usually refers to those firms placing lower level, staff positions, possibly some unskilled or semi-skilled candidates. Tend to not specialize in a particular function or industry. Fees are paid by employer on a contingency basis upon the successful completion of a placement. There exists in certain markets a very small percentage of firms known as APF (Applicant Paid Fees), most commonly with regard to unskilled labor type positions (Drivers, cooks, machinists, etc.)

Contingency Recruiter/Search Firm:

More commonly utilized term today.. Refers to those firms involved with placing candidates in mid- to senior level positions. These firms tend to be either industry or functionally specialized. Fees are paid by client company on a contingency basis upon the successful completion of placement/search, although some sort of retainer is not uncommon, (particularly for more senior positions).

Executive Search/Retained Search:

Refers to those firms that work exclusively on a retained basis, generally for very senior positions. Fees are paid on a retainer basis, usually in increments of one third up front, one third after thirty days and balance upon successful completion of assignment. Fees are paid regardless of outcome of search.

Temporary Staffing/Interim Staffing/Consulting Firm:

Refers to those firms that provide staff on a temporary or project basis. While used interchangeably, there are a number of firms that have integrated temporary services as a total staffing solution to their clients. Variations are interim management, consulting firms, etc. It is quite commonplace today for many clients to engage a candidate on a temporary or project basis prior to being hired or considered for a full time position.

Outplacement Firm:

Refers to a segment of the industry that provides career guidance and job search assistance to candidates who have been the victim of a corporate restructuring. Generally will provide resume assistance, secretarial and office support, etc. Fees are almost always paid by the former employer

Executive/Career Marketing Firm:

Not to be confused with Outplacement or Executive Search, these firms provide career marketing and resume assistance, generally for executives. Fees are usually paid by the candidate

Tips on Effectively Working with the Recruiting Industry

1. Develop relationships with several recruiting firms BEFORE you need them. Offer to provide leads or referrals for positions that they are seeking to fill. Become a resource to them. While every candidate is important to a professional recruiter (particularly if they fit an open search), they will certainly remember those candidates who respected them before they needed them. Also, by becoming visible to the recruiters, it increases your chances of being "recruited" for that fabulous position before you actually need one. There is no better time to evaluate your career than when you are under no pressure to do so. Be responsive to the recruiters calls, even after you have located a suitable position. Recruiter's THRIVE on information...be available to answer questions about what is going on in your industry.

Conversely, remember those recruiters who failed to return your telephone calls. It is a two way street.

2. Research the industry to determine which recruiters specialize in your industry or function. Check via the Internet, professional associations, recruiting associations, help wanted ads (New York Times, Industry publications, etc.). Ask for referrals from industry colleagues.

There is nothing more time wasteful for both you and the recruiter than sending resumes to a dozen recruiters who will never handle a position in your field.

3. Once you have identified several suitable recruiting firms, call and find out how they work. Do they have e mail capability? Do they prefer a fax or mailed resume? Will they accept an appointment without first seeing the resume? Request a brief telephone discussion to discuss your background and their operating procedures.

Conversely, DO NOT FAX YOUR RESUME 8 TIMES A DAY, to every name you can identify at the recruiting firm. I can assure you, this will not endear you to the recruiter, nor will they take you seriously. In fact, it will give the appearance of desperation. Most recruiters will prefer to review a resume before scheduling an appointment with a candidate.

Please do not be offended if you are not contacted immediately. There is a limited amount of time in a recruiter's day. Most recruiters respond to resumes in the following order:

First Priority - Those resumes that appear to be a "fit" with a current open position.

Second Priority - Resumes that appear to fit anticipated positions based on the needs of

their client base.

Third Priority - Resumes that fall within their practice area, but do not fit an immediate or anticipated need.

Somewhere between the First and Second priorities are those resumes that are referred to the firm, or are those candidates who have previous relationships with the recruiter.

Point to bear in mind-regarding confidentiality - Most professional recruiting firms will NOT randomly send out your resume. Ask what their policy is.

4. Provide as much information as possible in your initial contact, i.e., salary information, current employment status, career desires, etc. However, please do not feel that you must include a complete biographical history in your cover letter or resume. Your cover letter should indicate what type of position you are seeking, salary history and brief summary of qualifications.
5. Ask the recruiter what your next step shall be. Do not assume that you should call twice a day, five days a week. Rest assured, if you are right for a position, and your resume is in the recruiters' data base, THEY WILL FIND YOU. On the other hand, do not completely drop out of sight. A gentle follow up call on a periodic basis, (or a brief note) is not unappreciated or improper.
6. Recruiters by nature are creative, however, they cannot CREATE. Do not blame the recruiter for a lack of activity or interviews. Recruiters can uncover positions that may fit your background, however if you are changing careers, or, have skills that are generally not in demand, there is little that the recruiter can do. Similarly, if you have flooded the marketplace with your resume, you have pretty much tied the recruiters' hands in terms of where they can refer you. Recruiters are paid by their corporate clients to identify and introduce candidates with specific backgrounds and skills. If your skills and background are not even close to what the client is looking for, please do not blame the recruiter for not considering you. They are given a mandate. They are have a professional duty to not waste their corporate clients or candidate's time.

If you really feel that you fit a specific position, and the recruiter does not agree, MAKE YOUR CASE. Show evidence of how and why you fit the position. They cannot effectively represent you to their client unless they can back up why they are presenting specific candidates.

Point to Remember - Recruiters, whether on retainer or contingency are successful when they complete assignments. It is in the best interest of both you and the recruiter for them to accomplish this task.

Recruiters - Myths & Realities

Myth: All recruiting firms are alike

Reality: Due to differences in operating practices, areas of specialization and individual business style, almost no two recruiting firms operate in exactly the same manner.

Myth: All recruiting firms are interested in is in closing the deal.

Reality: While there may be an element in truth to this, the objective of most professional recruiters is to provide a valuable service to their clients and candidates that will result in a successful placement.

Myth: The employees of all recruiting firms are all has-beens, working on a straight commission. All they will do is send my resume out to every client they know, in an attempt to earn a fee.

Reality: Nothing could be further from the truth. The professional recruiting industry today is a multi-billion dollar industry consisting of well trained, ethical practitioners. As in any industry, there may exist a few "bad apples", however, typically, the marketplace tends to weed out the "good" from the "bad". No purpose is served by the indiscriminate mailing of resumes.

Myth: My compensation will be lower if I accept a position through a recruiting firm, in order to make up the fee.

Reality: As a rule, if a company is using the services of a professional recruiting firm, it is because they recognize the value of the service. It is not likely that this will have any impact on salary negotiations. As a matter of fact, it is quite probable that a recruiting firm will provide guidance in this regard, generally resulting in the candidate receiving an offer that is line with the marketplace.

What to Expect from a Recruiting Firm

- Courtesy, professional and ethical treatment, before, during and after the search process.
- Detailed information regarding specific positions prior to resume being sent out.
- Detailed information regarding the company, compensation, interview process, etc., prior to first interview.
- Feedback- good or bad, as it is received from their client subsequent to an interview.
- Assistance and guidance in compensation negotiation.

What Does a Recruiting Firm Expect from Candidates

- Courtesy and professional treatment before, during and after the search process.
- Detailed and honest information regarding experience, background, references and compensation.
- Feedback, good or bad, after the interview process.