



Tips for Job Seekers

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Question: I am an associate in a small civil litigation firm. I have been practicing civil litigation for approximately a year and a half. I graduated in the top 50% of my law school class and went to a two-tier school. I am interested in leaving the firm that I am at to work for a larger firm. I want to make more money and handle more sophisticated cases. I have been trying to use recruiters, but they all keep rejecting me. Why do they keep rejecting me? Also, what should I do?

Answer: First of all don't get alarmed or feel bad that you're being rejected by recruiters. Only a small percentage of legal job seekers are placed into jobs by recruiters. Recruiters look for a particular type of candidate to market. If you don't fit into that category, there are still ways that you can take your job search forward.

Reasons why you may be rejected by a recruiter.

1. *Recruiters charge fees.*

Although a recruiter's services are free to the candidates, they are not free for the employers. Employers have to pay recruiters a fee for finding highly skilled attorneys to fill open positions. Employers therefore demand that the attorney they hire has the very best experience possible for their class year. A proactive attitude and a desire to excel in some new practice area is not enough for an employer to pay a recruiter's fee. You would expect the same if you were buying a service. Since employers have to make a substantial investment to recruit highly skilled attorneys, recruiters have to be selective with the candidates that they locate, screen, and market to employers.

2. *Recruiters usually consider only those with a strong academic record.*

A typical recruiter candidate has excellent grades from law school and graduated towards the top of their class. This usually means that a recruiter candidate graduated in the top 25% of their class. Many recruiter candidates were on law review and/or moot court, and had many accolades and accomplishments while in law school.

3. *Recruiters typically recruit those who attended a top school.*

Most candidates that are selected by recruiters have attended an ivy-league school or a top ranking school. Yes there are some anomalies, but these are the exception rather than the rule.



4. Recruiters prefer a candidate with several years of experience.

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Recruiters usually select candidates who have been practicing for some years. They look for attorneys who have good experience. If a firm is going to make a substantial investment into an attorney, generally, the market is such that the firm can be selective about who they choose. So, if you're a civil litigation attorney, you should have some years of experience in the area, and during this time made some positive contribution to your resume.

I know this seems unfair. You've worked so hard to get where you are now and all you need is a little help to find that ideal job.

What can you do if you don't fit the typical recruiter candidate mold?

1. Network.

If you do not fit the typical recruiter candidate mold, you can network. Never underestimate the value of networking. One of the easiest ways to network is through local city, county, and state bar associations. You can also network through social events and legal seminars. Also, don't forget to network through those you interact with everyday, such as your friends, colleagues, and classmates. A lot of legal professionals have gotten their current position by networking.

2. Choose firms carefully.

You should be realistic about which firms you are applying to. You want to make sure you are targeting firms where you are most marketable. If you have worked in civil litigation your entire career, you should target firms where they have a substantial litigation practice. Also, you should be realistic and target firms that hire someone with your type of background. You don't generally want to waste time targeting a top New York firm where everyone was in the top 15% and went to a top ranking school if you were only in the top 50% and went to a two-tier school.

3. Be persistent and utilize all your resources.

Be persistent in your job search. You can be persistent by checking all job boards, continuously networking, following up on job leads, and utilizing all your resources. Your resources are job boards like lawcrossing.com, monster.com, and careerbuilder.com. Additionally, there are targeting mailing services, like Legal Authority, out there that can help you target firms in your field.

In the end, if you can't obtain a recruiter, you shouldn't give up. You should rely on yourself. Be proactive, instead of reactive. The steps above can help you get started with that feat. It may not be as easy as you anticipate. However, just like anything else, with hard work and dedication you can do it.