

## **Recruiters Are Your Friend: Why and How to Work with a Professional Recruiter**

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As an executive, professional recruiter, I have heard all the less than flattering ways in which our ranks have been described, from the tame ó headhunters ó to the not so tame óslave traders, people pushers, flesh peddlers. Regardless of what you call us, a professional recruiter can provide you with a wealth of career value, at no cost to you. Developing a good relationship with a professional recruiter in your industry can pay big dividends throughout your career.

A professional recruiter will never ask you, the candidate, for any money. Our fees are paid by our clients ó companies that engage us to help them find the best possible candidates for their human resource needs. While a good recruiter will provide you with professional guidance and help you put your best foot forward, never forget that we have been hired by your potential employer. We are only successful when our clients make a good hire that provides value to their organization, which is our primary goal. Finding you a (better) job is an important added benefit.

Our clients engage the services of a professional recruiter for many reasons. Most often, organizations engage the services of a professional recruiter because we can provide them access to the best possible, A-list candidates. A professional recruiter will invest dozens of hours in a search for the best candidates the market has to offer. Of course we will use traditional job boards to advertise for qualified candidates, but we will also access proprietary candidate databases, scour similar companies and organizations for interested candidates, and most importantly, we will make hundreds of networking calls to reach passive candidates. Passive candidates are those exceptional people that may be currently employed, but are open to discussing new positions that may offer more personal satisfaction and value than their current job. Our clients don't have the time or resources to conduct such a search. In today's ódo more with less" culture, their hiring managers are already over-extended doing their day to day jobs.

Another reason our clients use our services is to allow them to search for new employees confidentially. There are many reasons a company does not want to advertise their staffing needs publically. Perhaps they don't want to alert their competitors to expansion plans. They may have a key employee that is leaving or will be replaced ó news of upcoming personnel changes can often have a negative or unsettling effect on current staff members. Or they may just prefer to have very little contact with potential applicants, with the exception of those that are considered finalists for the position. Regardless of their reasons, our clients expect and receive complete confidentiality from their recruiters. We only reveal their identity to those candidates we expect will be seriously considered for hire. We do this to respect both their time and yours.

In working with potential candidates to fulfill our job orders, we work closely with hundreds of candidates over the course of our career. Because of this experience, we can offer valuable professional advice to candidates as we work with them. While our clients pay for our services, we are only successful when we have excellent candidates to present to them. This means we need *you* in order to be successful. In exchange for your willingness to work with us, we offer you our expertise in assessing your current career situation, identifying your career goals, updating or even creating your resume, positioning yourself within the job market, and helping you determine your market value.

A professional recruiter knows the job market better than you do. We are immersed in our niche industry every day. We know how readily available new positions are, who is expanding, often we know who is planning

layoffs, and which companies have the most to offer their employees. After reviewing your career history, we can tell you if your career goals are realistic or if your expectations need to be reexamined. Most candidates come to us with a resume that is not acceptable for presentation to a client; we edit and revise as needed to make the most of your career experiences and ensure the client's interest in meeting you face-to-face to learn more. After reviewing your current employment situation and goals, there are times when we advise a potential candidate to stay where they are. After reviewing the current market conditions, your compensation package, and your current responsibilities, we can often help you see that you are doing very well where you are and that the risks of taking a new position don't outweigh the realistic gains to be had.

If a job change is the right move for you, a significant benefit of working with a recruiter is that it will allow you to be presented for positions that will never be advertised in the general market. We are the exclusive path to employment for many of the positions we work on. The positions we work on for our clients are most often unadvertised by the company and are not available to direct candidates for many of the reasons outlined above. But when we present you to a client, you have a true advocate in your corner. We believe you are a good fit for the position or we would not present you to our client. Our clients trust our hiring experience and our judgment so they listen to what we think about the candidates we present. We will lobby so hard so you to get the job. We are your "insider" to the hiring company. We will also provide you with a better picture of the position and the company when you receive a job offer. We have an insider's view of the company, their culture, the experiences of current and past employees, and your new manager. Finally, we can be a career-long associate and contact that will work with you again and again as you move into a position to make your own hiring decisions.

What do we want in exchange for the time we will invest in furthering your career? In a couple of words, brutal honesty. Tell us what you've done (the good and the bad), what you want to do, and what you are willing to do. Don't contact us or agree to work with us unless you are truly open to making a job change. It is both unprofessional and unethical to use us to get a job offer to use as leverage with your current employer. If you want more money or benefits from your current employer, we can help coach you on how to ask for it and on your chances of being successful. But pursuing another job that you have no intention of accepting ensures two things: 1) the prospective employer will not extend an offer in the future should you really need to make a job change, and 2) you will be looking for a new recruiter when you really need to make a job change.

Next, be honest with us about what you really will accept in a new position without focusing on just salary. If you have special healthcare coverage concerns, tell us that. If you have great vacation time or flex time benefits at your current position, a new employer may have to match those perks to bring you on board. We need to know this sooner rather than at the job offer stage of negotiation. Our expertise is in helping you know what is important to share with a potential employer and more importantly, when to share it.

Your investment will equal our investment. If you are half-hearted in your communications and relationship building with us, we will move on to candidates with a sense of urgency and cooperation. We're human and will revert to the human tendency to work harder for those people that return our calls, follow-up on commitments such as sending resumes or references, and seem to be genuinely interested in working with us to get a new job. If you show anything less than complete professionalism in the early stages of our relationship, we won't risk putting you in front of our client. We expect you to follow our rules of engagement - the most important being that you work through us to communicate with our client. As outlined above, one reason clients engage our services is to handle the tedious details of briefing candidates, scheduling interviews, negotiating employment offers, and saying no to candidates that are not selected. If you have questions, ask us and we will get you the answers. But do not contact our clients directly.

Finally, if you enjoy and benefit from the experience of working with us, share the news with your friends and colleagues. A great deal of our business comes from word-of-mouth, and we appreciate the good public relations a successful placement can bring.

If you are convinced you could benefit from the services of a professional recruiter, the best way to find one is to (discreetly) ask other professionals that have the career or job that you want who they've worked with and would work with again. A good referral is always best. But another good source is job postings or use job boards and summary sites like [www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com), which compile online job postings to search for the types of positions that you are interested in or companies you would like to work with. Then look for the recruiting firms or specific recruiters that have multiple jobs posted in your field. It is likely that they specialize in working in the area that interests you. Your college career placement office can also often refer you to recruiters that have been successful in working with similar graduates to find employment.

As you look for recruiters, keep in mind that you are looking for someone that specializes in your industry. There are many good general placement recruiters, but the more specialized your profession, the more you need a recruiter that focuses on your specific industry. Finally, I believe that a local recruiter often does a better job for their clients and their potential employees because they know and understand the client's environment. Local recruiters can provide a different perspective to candidates that may be relocating, they understand the local business climate and their client's role in it, and they have a vested interest in the growth of the community where they do most of their business. They often have a more extensive professional network and can provide both parties with professional staffing services and advice.

Speaking as a self-professed "people-pusher", recruiting is a rewarding experience that allows us to match great people with great, often life-changing opportunities for professional growth. And I'll push that any day.

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