

Expert offers tips for recruiting a recruiter

By Lisa Chenofsky Singer

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As a follow-up to my previous article on selecting the right recruiter for your job search, this piece focuses on the next phase in that process.

After speaking with clients and friends, including Steven A. Weissman, Ph.D., a pharmaceutical process chemist and social media enthusiast whose insights are incorporated throughout this article, I offer the following tips on working with recruiters:

- Select recruiters who understand your specialty and chosen industry. Find out who the key recruiters are by speaking to colleagues and by data mining on LinkedIn. If a particular recruiter continually pops up as a second- or third-degree connection to you or respected individuals in your field, they are worth engaging.
- Select a recruiter with outstanding listening skills and who understands your needs and career goals. As the candidate, you need to tell your story well — stressing your accomplishments and selling what differentiating skills and expertise you bring to the employer — making it easy for the recruiter to retell your story and sell your candidacy to the hiring manager. According to Maxine Lang, president of Bernax Corp., "The key is to look at the recruiter the same way you would look at them if you were the hiring manager on a particular job. Is that recruiter going to represent you the way you want to be represented in the marketplace? Do they have the skills and personality to get the job done?"
- When speaking with recruiters, be sure to spend time vetting them as well. Ask about their relationships in your particular field and the names of clients they have worked with in the past.
- Be sure you know how your recruiter will handle your résumé. It is essential you are contacted before your résumé is ever sent to a company. The reputable ones will never submit your resume without your consent. Also, ask them what role, if any, they will play in compensation negotiations. Keep in mind they will not always negotiate the best deal for you as they may have conflicting allegiances.
- Note that most recruiters will often refer more than one candidate to a hiring company. Retained search firms will present a short list of targeted candidates who have been thoroughly screened, while contingency recruiters will present multiple candidates. The corporate recruiter will either provide an initial or secondary screening after receiving candidates from external recruiters, but typically grants interviews for candidates referred internally or by a respected colleague.
- Most recruiters will do a phone screen to review your résumé and to get a better understanding of your career goals. You should treat these as you would any other phone screen — be prepared and use your professional objective to guide them. Highlight your accomplishments, identify any geographic preferences, and if you're working with a retained recruiter — one who has exclusivity over the position to be

filled — share your list of targeted companies. This will help them immediately identify you when a search in one of these companies arises.

- Recruiters can comment on your résumé to help refine it. They know the market, understand what skills are in demand and have relationships with companies.
- Don't spend a disproportionate amount of time with recruiters. If only 20 percent of the job leads are being landed via this route, don't spend more than that amount of time working with them. Pick a handful and keep track of when you spoke to them, what jobs you discussed, their contact information and their website. The majority of your time is best spent networking.
- After you get a job, inform the recruiters you worked with of your success. Refer others to the recruiters to leverage yourself as a resource for the future.

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