

Recruiters & your next job

What to expect






Often applicants feel recruiters are inattentive and unhelpful.

Many job seekers understandably expect to rely on the commitment and skills of Recruiters to find their next role. Many find a new role this way, but many are disappointed with their experience in dealing with recruiters. What can a job seeker expect and rely upon when responding to advertised opportunities through a recruiter? The answer is a varied one, depending on the nature and workplace culture of the employer and the nature and competence of the recruiter chosen by the employer. Recruiters configure their services to match their clients' (the employers') priorities.

As an illustration, usually the employer is willing to pay a high fee to find a candidate for a role that has high impact on an organisation, (C-suite, sales, HR). Therefore the recruiter will apply very careful and thorough assessment of track record, personality and overall potential.

An employer will likely want to expend a minimal amount on recruiting a candidate for a role that has a high turnover and low impact. Accordingly, the recruiter may apply less scrutiny to candidate suitability and may be focused more on how quickly the candidate can become productive in the new role. In addition, not all employers choose their external recruiter based on solely on merit; often considerations such as price, connections, existing relationships or serving other agendas play a significant role.

Executive Search Consultants have a different approach and skill set and are not the subject of this article.





Recruiters find people for roles, NOT roles for people.

So, different degrees of attention and different styles of recruiter and competence levels are required by the market due to the varying roles and disparate nature of the client organisations. From candidate feedback and our observations over 20 years in the Outplacement industry, recruiters' service and behaviour can range from:

- Courteous, to off-hand and inconsiderate, (do not return calls and messages).
- Helpful, to no advice at all.
- Well-resourced, to overworked, (swamped by unrealistic internal performance metrics)
- Honest, to dishonest, (falsely claiming or implying to have a remit, inaccurate statements on progress, submitting resumes of candidates they haven't met or spoken to).
- Competent to less incompetent, (poorly trained and inexperienced).
- Dedicated to disinterested, (Disengaged by their employer's demands and behaviour, communicate via assistants).

As with any service proposition, the individual consultant (recruiter) will dictate the service quality dependant on their experience, skill, commitment and personality.

There are a variety of reasons why clients engage a recruiter to conduct a campaign to find a suitable short list of candidates. These include:

- Enable the client to recruit anonymously, either for internal or external reasons.
- Apply a selection skill that the employer does not have in-house.
- Attract a broader range of candidates.
- Minimise its own efforts and time in the recruitment process.

The general approach is to advertise a role and its key requirements and then assess the applicants for capability to perform the role and suitability to the employer's culture

Some claim to undertake a search but that can often mean scanning LinkedIn. What is the general process?

1. The employer identifies a need and describes the role (Position Description)
2. The Recruiter compiles a strategy to seek candidates; this can be either advertising in a variety of ways, Search or both. It depends on the importance of the role.
3. Interested candidates respond with a letter of application, sometimes a Fit to Criteria response and a relevant resume.
4. The recruiter gathers a list of potential candidates who seem to be able to perform the role. Quite often this list accommodates diversity considerations and one or two "outliers".
5. The recruiter compiles a "short list" of 5-10 candidates for the client using one or more of:
 - a. computer scanning, (Applicant Tracking System)
 - b. telephone interviews, quite often a junior reading a list of questions.
 - c. Video interviews and prepared video responses to set questions
 - d. Personal meeting and interview,
6. Client reviews the list and selects 3-5 candidates for interviews.
7. Client interviews may be as few as 2 and as many as 6.
8. Selection based on the employer's impression of your potential, ability to settle in and become productive quickly and unconsciously or consciously, how well you fit with the team.
9. References are requested; usually 2 or 3 and interviewed.
10. Verbal offer is conveyed.
11. Formal written offer and employment contract submitted.
12. Negotiations and clarification discourse, revised contract submitted.
13. Written acceptance of final offer.
14. NOTE: If you are unsuccessful, you have every right to request all your documents be returned to you and all their records be erased.





Are you helping the recruiter to help you?

What are the traps and tricks in the system?

1. Advertisements

- a. Assess whether you should apply; if you can say, "That is what I have been doing," then you should apply, BUT if you say, "I can do that," then don't bother to apply, you will not be considered. Advertising is a risk averse approach and "outliers" will be very unlikely to be considered. The exception is when the advertisement states clearly, "No experience required".**
- b. When considering making an application, you should always attempt to contact the recruiter to:**

- i. Obtain a full Position Description so that your application uses the correct phraseology and is correctly targeted on the core needs of the role.
- ii. Learn about factors that are not included in the advertisement.
- iii. Ask for the salary range to ensure you are pitching for a suitable level role.
- iv. Establish a connection with the recruiter.
- v. Be alerted to information that cancels your interest e.g. pay level, location.
- vi. Learn of unstated requirements. The advert may be obscure to mask the employer and their motives, or to avoid controversy by not publishing certain requirements.
- vii. **DO NOT USE THE RECRUITER AS A THERAPIST;** that is not their role nor training. Their role is primarily to judge, not counsel.
- viii. If you cannot obtain a PD or the recruiter/employer refuses to engage, then think about what that is signalling about their attitudes to employees and workplace conditions.

- c. Not all advertisements are accurate or well-intentioned from a candidate perspective:**

- i. It may be out of date.
- ii. It may be inaccurate due to clerical error.
- iii. It may be not be a confirmed remit.
 - 1. Sometimes recruiters advertise roles that do not exist as they booked more slots than opportunities or remits.
 - 2. The recruiter doesn't have the remit but wants to present some resumes to the potential client in order to win the remit.
 - 3. The recruiter may be just checking what the market offers before arranging an internal move that has been already decided.
 - 4. The role is notionally filled but procedure requires public announcement of the vacancy.
- iv. It may be very general to attract a large number of responses for marketing purposes.

The tricks (continued...)

2. Application

- a. An application letter should be succinct and explain why you are a good candidate for the role.
- b. A resume should use the Employer's jargon and be focussed on the employer's needs and reason for the role. It should contain relevant skills, context and outcomes.
- c. Fit to Criteria should be no more than about 250 words for each criterion using real examples, not claims and cliches.
- d. You must fully comply with on-line instructions or your documents will not be sighted.

3. Recruiter

a. Communication

- i. After the initial contact to obtain more information, keep in touch with the recruiter on an agreed time basis to demonstrate your interest, stay informed on delays (reduces anxiety) and enable you to submit additional information as it becomes evident. Contact every day is not required. Find a balance that conveys your interest without giving the impression that you are desperate.
- ii. Always maintain the initiative on making contact. The recruiter is likely to be time-poor and juggling many candidates, so you need to maintain the momentum.
- iii. If you find that the recruiter is unable or unwilling to communicate any information, then you may want to review what that is conveying about the employer's culture and systems.

b. Interviews

i. Preparation for each interview is incredibly important.

1. Initially you should research the employer organisation, website, news articles, annual reports and check your network to see what it knows.
2. Prepare your responses to the likely questions for the particular interview using examples relevant to the role. Your response needs examples of your work and achievements, evidence, not claims and cliches. Ask the recruiter before each meeting about the purpose and focus of the meeting and the name, role and focus of each person attending the meeting.
3. Prepare a list of questions relevant to the stage of the process to ensure you do not leave with uncertainties, demonstrate you are interested in and thinking about the role and that you are a skilled and engaged prospective employee.

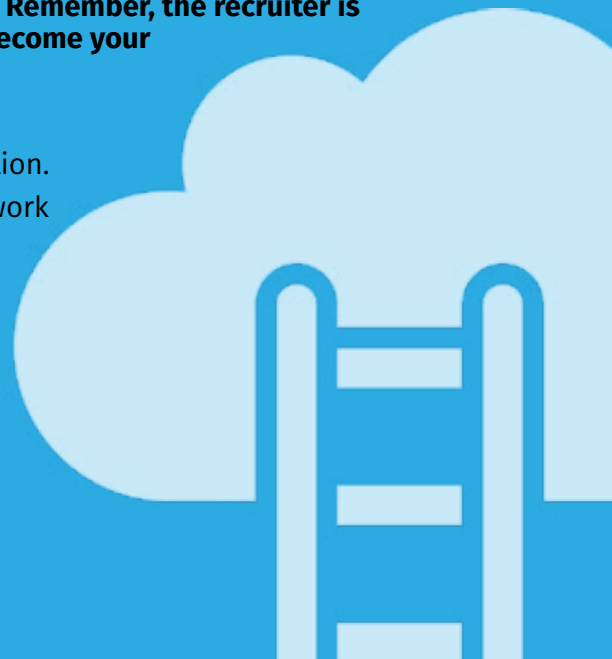
ii. After each meeting, contact the recruiter and convey your impressions, your level of interest and your key attributes that seem to be relevant from each meeting. The potential employer will ask the recruiter for your feedback. Make sure you give the recruiter positive and useful information for them to use on your behalf. Remember, the recruiter is looking for a quick, uncomplicated outcome and can become your advocate, so help them.

iii. During the interview.

1. This a meeting between two parties, not an interrogation.
2. Focus on assessing the people and whether you can work successfully with them. Can you thrive with these people?
3. Ask for clarification on any aspects of the role.

c. Salary discussions

These can be tricky and awkward. The recruiter is engaged by the employer who will often (not always) be looking to engage someone at the minimum pay rate possible. Different tactics arise depending on the recruiter and employer's approach.



The tactics (continued...)

- i. Be knowledgeable about your worth in the market (in the particular industry segment), through desk research and networking. Be aware that different industries have different pay scales for roles, so be clear about your minimum acceptable pay.
 - ii. Find out early what the anticipated pay range is and assume that, if you are offered the role, it will be at a rate either below or at the lower end of the stated range. Decide whether this is a satisfactory pay for the role.
 - iii. If an employer wants to know your salary expectations and won't divulge what their budget or anticipated range is, then think about what this is conveying about their attitude to employees. You can state you want a pay rate commensurate with the role and responsibilities equitably positioned within the framework of the organisation.
 - iv. Offer and acceptance; a verbal offer is usually made to indicate the outcome but always wait for the written offer and employment contract before commencing negotiations as there may be issues in the document that are not to your liking or need explanation.
- d. Negotiations can cover a variety of issues including:**
- i. Salary, fixed component; you may be offered a lower salary than you expected. Explain that you think the role is more senior or demanding than what they envisage. Suggest a reasonable amount based on your research. Only try this once. If they refuse to change, then attempt other angles described below, or accept or do not proceed.
 - ii. Salary; variable component (short and long-term incentives); gain an understanding of the determination mechanism and the degree of control you will have over it. This may be an area in which you have more freedom to negotiate a higher component. You may need to consult your tax advisor on any of these schemes so that you understand actualisation risks, cashflow and taxation implications.
 - iii. Non salary benefits may be easier to negotiate such as:
 1. Workplace location(s), frequency of attendance and where.
 2. Extra annual leave
 3. Study leave
 4. Reduced hours per week.
 5. Reduced days per week (e.g. 4x9 hour days)
 6. Provision of required tools such as laptop, phone, printer and internet.
 7. Essential technical equipment.
 8. Motor vehicle or motor vehicle expenses.
 9. Professional Development courses.
 10. Club Memberships
 11. Industry Association memberships
 12. Professional Accreditation costs.
 13. Internal promotions or new roles in a given timeframe (which should be included in the employment contract if possible).
 - iv. Employment contract: generally, the clauses that should be scrutinised, and don't hesitate to get qualified legal advice on this, include:
 1. Confidentiality
 2. Restraint of Trade; most important to obtain legal advice as these are enforceable.
 3. Dismissal clauses
 4. Period of notice
 5. Retrenchment conditions



The tactics (continued...)

4. Choosing the right role.

A good role, one in which you can thrive, requires three key features to be aligned with your employer, partner or clients. These are illustrated in **the VRF© diagram**.



Values:

Your values must match those displayed by the employer, not those claimed by the employer. Otherwise, you cannot maintain commitment.

Role:

- Your suitability for the role must be supported by:
- Your “commercial offer” or Personal Value Proposition; evidenced by your track record embodied in your resume and interview responses.
- Your aspirations: the next role should serve an identified purpose for you.
- Your style: you must be suited to the type of role and work environment.

Fit:

The nature and style of the key people in your immediate workspace and reporting chain must be compatible with your personality, otherwise success is unlikely.

It is imperative that you spend considerable time and effort in assessing the employer for suitability to your needs as you cannot rely on the employer or the recruiter performing this task competently.

If you are being interviewed for the role, then chances are good that you can do the role so you should focus on whether you can thrive with this employer and its key people.

Other job search channels

Recruiters are not the only avenue for finding a new role, do not ignore direct marketing, responding to organisation websites and networking.

When you respond to an advertisement, your application and resume will be matched against the employer’s list of requirements and any unspoken “vision” they have of the person taking the role. That is, capability and skills are assessed first, then “fit” or suitability to the culture of the organisation, second.

Networking operates a little differently. Generally, it is your suitability to the employer’s culture that is assessed first, with considerations as to how can the employer ensure you become productive quickly, second.