

Working With a Recruiter

By Robert Half International

As any professional who has ever been out of work knows, finding a job is no small feat. Locating positions of interest and convincing employers you are the one to hire appears simple. In reality, it can be unnerving and frustrating, particularly if the search has been a lengthy one. Enlisting the assistance of a specialized recruiter can ease some of the pressure and help you target your efforts to only the most promising opportunities.

Sometimes it is about who you know

Professional recruiters have deep networks of business contacts within a wide range of companies and industries. While you are diligently scouring newspaper and Internet ads, they can uncover leads and vacancies that have not been advertised or even announced, thus giving you an advantage over job seekers who rely solely on information that is posted in the public domain.

Recruiters also can serve as career advisors. For example, a recruiter with Robert Half International recently partnered with an information technology professional who, despite years of relevant industry experience, had been unable to generate any employment interviews of note. The recruiter helped the individual rewrite his resume to better highlight the candidate's experience with servers and the .NET platform, leading to immediate interest from employers.

In addition to working with you to refine your application materials, a skilled recruiting professional can offer guidance on everything from answering tough interview questions to negotiating the best compensation package to how to dress for your first day of work. They also can help you navigate career crossroads and explore new fields.

Not all recruiters are created equal

When selecting a recruiter, it's important that the individual is an expert in his or her field. For example, if you are hoping to find work as an accountant, someone who has experience in the accounting and finance field will be better able to understand your needs and the expectations of potential employers. Ask friends and colleagues for referrals. Also consider contacting a few recruiting professionals in your area to gauge the level of rapport you have with each. Above all, you must be comfortable with the person with whom you have partnered and confident that he or she has your best interests at heart.

In addition, remember that you should receive a recruiter's assistance free of charge. These individuals are paid a fee by companies to locate qualified candidates, so view with suspicion any recruiter who asks you to pay for job-search services.

The more information, the better

When meeting with a recruiter for the first time, be open and honest about your background, experience and career aspirations. He or she needs to know as much about your professional life as possible to find the right position for you. Are you looking for a tax accountant role in a corporate or public setting? What are your salary requirements?

Do you prefer working for a large or small firm? Are you willing to travel? The information you provide may prompt the recruiting professional to suggest promising positions or career paths that you had not previously considered.

You also should disclose to your recruiter any aspects of your work history that may generate concern from prospective employers, such as a long period of unemployment or termination. The more upfront you are, the easier it will be for a recruiter to assist you.

Follow up, follow up, follow up

After each employment interview your recruiter arranges, call to let him or her know how the meeting went. Your feedback can provide information that can be leveraged in follow-up communication with the employer. This could pave the way to a second or final interview. By following up, you also may receive valuable insight into your interview skills and learn about any concerns expressed by the hiring manager.

Throughout the relationship, be forthright in communicating any changes in your career needs or availability. If you're interviewing for other jobs that you've set up on your own, let your recruiting manager know. He or she may have contacts at the company and be able to help you secure the position.

Patience

Although using the services of a skilled recruiter can significantly improve your odds of locating employment, even the most successful recruiting professionals need time to find the perfect position for the job seekers they represent. So, don't get discouraged.

Recruiters continually mine their sources for job leads and may suddenly discover an opportunity that is right for you. If you'd like a status update, don't be afraid to call your recruiter with questions. Checking in with him or her on a regular basis ensures both of you remain focused on the best opportunities for you.

A skilled recruiting professional can help you find the right job faster and open doors to new opportunities. By researching firms and maintaining communication, you'll be in the best position to locate and secure your next position.

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