

A Recruiter's Inside Secrets: Assistance in Your Job Search

My Background

Since 1996 I have been in the staffing industry as a salesman, recruiter, and agency owner. I am what can be considered a “generalist” with industry experience in permanent placements as well as temporary and contract. My placements have included: shop from floor to plant managers, skilled trades, engineers, office support, title industry specialists, non-clinical medical, financial, sales, and “C” level.

My purpose is assist you in your current search or prepare for your next search. You should not dwell on the “doom and gloom” of employment statistics and understand that there are jobs available. If there is 15% unemployment, it means that employment is at 85%. In my own opinion (and having been unemployed), as long as there is rush hour, both in the early morning and later in the evening, it means people are employed and employment is continuing. However, looking for work is not for the faint of heart, and you must understand one thing: your efforts will be like a job – 40 hours of work. You will have to: network, search, submit, and **keep track of those submissions**. If you do not embrace all of those activities, you do so at your own peril, as there are others – your competitors/job seekers – doing so.

The most important concept to embrace: the very next employer you contact could be the employer to hire you. So, **every personal presentation must be your very best effort. There are NO second chances at a “first” impression.**

Overview of the Recruiting Industry

Recruiters come in a variety of “packages.”

In-House: companies that hire for their own open positions. Typically have their own Human Resource Department whose employees are paid directly by that company and dedicated to: recruiting employees, discharging employees, documenting employment-related activities, being knowledgeable about government regulations and compliance, record keeping, payroll and benefits, etc.

Contract: Recruiters that are specialists in talent acquisition (usually in specific industries) that are brought in to find specific types of skill sets, and typically can be utilized when a company is relocating or starting a new division. They are known for their industry knowledge as well as their “Rolodex” of contacts. Once all positions are filled, their assignment is done. You would never know their status with the company unless they reveal their position.

Independent: Work on contingency and work with a number of agencies, or companies, because they are very knowledgeable in recruiting. They know how to “source” candidates very efficiently, but usually considered a generalist: they know a lot about many skill sets. They are independent because they can work when they want and usually don’t like the discipline of reporting to an office on a daily basis.

Agency/Staffing Company: There is the visible; you may see their signs everywhere: on buildings, in newspapers, Internet postings, job fairs, and advertising. The invisible: those that do none of the above because they can be very industry specific and are known only to those industries that use their services. They know/understand the industry they serve and know many of the people that work in it – meaning rarely, if ever, post or advertise, for an opening and usually conduct a “search.”

Fascinating Facts About Recruiters

The Typical Recruiter:

Does not deliberately plan to become a recruiter (industry sources suggest that figure is as high as 90%)

Does not typically remain in the industry for more than two years

Will actually read 10%, or less, of resumes received

Colleges do not offer degrees in recruiting

Does not necessarily endorse job fairs

If posting for an opening, receives thousands of resumes in a given week and 95% are unqualified

Can utilize software that scans resumes and reads only the resumes the software extracts from submitted resumes

Typically has a very structured day, broken down into specific blocks of time

Can devote hours of searching to find candidates with specific skill sets

Works for you for “free” to find you a job

If you understand the whole function of recruiting, either by an agency or by an actual company that is hiring, you will know how to structure your search. You will know how to contact, who to contact and how to read a “posting” ad so that you ONLY respond to those which require your skill set or education.

Function of a Recruiter

To find qualified candidates for the position, or positions, within a company by using the criteria given by an HR department or hiring manager.

Types of Agencies: Give Examples

Generalists

Offer a broad range of positions

Specialist

Can focus on strictly one industry and offer support personnel

Search

Industry specific, very specialized, and will contact you

Rules of Thumb for Skill Sets

Generalists

Can typically place industrial through “C” level

Specialist

Medical: office (receptionist or billers) thru clinical (nurse, radiologist)

Search

Difficult to find skill sets or very high “C” level - Banking COO

Hospital Administrators

Scope

Local

Regional

National

International

Typical Agencies Encountered

Franchise

Express Personnel, Manpower, Spherion

Independent (with single or multiple locations)

Roles with Business

Assists HR Departments

Assists companies without a formal HR department

Why Does Business Use an Agency

Their efforts have not produced a viable candidate

Do not want to expend internal resources (use the nugget that 95% of submitted resumes do not have all of the requirements of a given job)

Specialized position that an agency would have a database of candidates

Recruiter's Methodology of Finding Candidates

- Postings
 - Job Boards: Monster, Dice, Career Builder
- Trade Publications
- Networking within an Industry Group
- Friends and Family Plan, Commonly Called "Referral"
- Industry Recognition
- Random Submissions
- Walk-In Traffic
- A Search is Conducted

Insider's Tip: If given a choice, an employer would hire from the recommendation of a current employee, an employee's friend or referral from an industry source. It has been said that employers would have used 85% of these methods before ever contacting a recruiter or before posting the position.

In Conclusion

It is very UNUSUAL to find an agency that does every type of placement unless you are dealing with a VERY LARGE company that can devote specific divisions to each specialty. Examples that come to mind: Kelly Services, Bartech or Manpower. That being said, and from the owner of an independent agency, any company is only as good as the recruiter that represents them. A rule of thumb: the better the recruiter, the longer he/she will be both in the industry and considerable tenure at any given company.

The Search

As a candidate looking for work, you must decide if your skill set would be better represented by a specialist or a generalist. If you have been an IT specialist for five years, then submit your resume to agencies serving that industry. If you've worked as a junior accountant, a generalist and a specialist may serve your needs better. If you are not sure, contact different agencies and ask to speak to someone that can offer guidance.

Personal Assessment

It is important to do a personal inventory of your capabilities, interests, experience, talents and education to help you create a professional profile. This profile will then offer direction in your job search and clearly present your best attributes. It is not uncommon to have multiple versions of your resume to highlight different skills and experience.

Insider's Tip: Ignore the urge to send your resume to every company that you can find and do not submit repeatedly. By doing so, you devalue your "brand," and it does not leave a positive impression with potential employers

Targeting Employers

Agencies, or recruiters, typically have occupations in which they specialize (examples: accounting, finance, IT, medical, engineering and sales). Some agencies are generalists and offer placements across a broad spectrum of occupations. Your focus should be on companies that have a track record of placement in your industry or skill set. Use any online directory, and type the term: Employment Agencies, with your city and state, and a list of companies will be shown. Many of the companies listed will have a link to their website, which will show their areas of specialty. Using my website as an example, here is what you will learn about FirstChoice Staffing Company.

Insider's Tip: Crain's Detroit Business has an annual publication (distributed in December) that lists the top companies for just about every sector of industry, including staffing companies. This list will give you the top 25 companies as well as the focus of their business. A good place to look.

FIRSTCHOICE STAFFING COMPANY – PLACEMENT SPECIALTIES

FirstChoice is a client's best source for assistance in a broad variety of both blue- and white-collar assignments, including, but not limited to:

Office (including Medical Office)

- Administrative Assistants
- Customer Service Personnel
- Filing Clerks
- Receptionists

Industrial

- Assembly Line Workers
- Skilled & Unskilled Labor
- Logistics Workers
- Machine Operators
- Packagers
- Shipping & Receiving Personnel

Professional

- Controllers
- Engineers
- Plant Managers
- Sales Managers

Finance & Accounting

- General Accountants
- Auditors
- Bookkeepers
- AP/AR Personnel

Real Estate

- Escrow Officers
- Loan Officers
- Loan Processors
- Property Managers
- Title Examiners

If you are an IT professional looking for work, your specialty is not listed and this agency would not be a good company to contact. The probability of being placed by this company is less than 1%. Conversely, if you have experience as an auditor or title examiner, then it would be a good decision to submit your resume. You should be looking for an agency that has the ability to place many people within your specialty and is working with companies that utilize your skill set and experience. This can be the fastest route to finding employment with a staffing company.

Types of Placements

Permanent

The employer is looking to hire directly and have you start immediately on their payroll.

Temporary

The employer has an opening that does not require the services of a full-time employee and usually has a reasonable timeline for completion

Contract

The employer has a project that requires specialized experience but does not require retaining the services of a full-time employee. Information Technology typically offers this type of employment

Are You Flexible?

Many agencies specialize in permanent placements and do not offer contract or temporary assignments. These agencies work with professional placements that require specific skill sets, experience, and education, and in which candidates have carefully invested in their career development as well as direction. There are agencies that place similar candidates in contracts and with some potential of permanent employment.

Temporary and contract work can give the opportunity to expand your skills, showcase your talents, and keep your resume updated, as well as possibly offer a permanent position. Any temporary/contract agency will confirm that short- and long-term assignments have transitioned into permanent employment because the employer had the ability to determine the value of that temporary/contract employee. In this economy, a “possibility thinker” has the definite advantage of a pessimist, and, with jobs at premium, could offer an opportunity beyond what it seems on the surface.

Job Opening

Openings occur through employees: quitting, being promoted, leaving the organization, or through the company’s growth and positions being created. However the opening was created, one thing is constant: a job description, whether formal or not, comes with the opening.

Job Description

Title

Provides the skill sets and a synopsis of the activities associated

Experience required and desired

Duties of the position

Depending on the level, reports to some senior level of management

Travel

Education

Must have or not

Experience in lieu of Education

How to Apply

The most important concept (that you must take with you): Every employee that is hired comes with the expectation that they will bring some value to the company’s collective “bottom line,” or revenue. So, it leads to...

The most important criteria for every employer (as it relates to any employee) will this position:

Make money

Save money

Make the company more efficient (increase production, make the payment of invoices more quickly to take advantage of discounts)

It is important to know what employers look for:

- Related experience
- Related education (if required)
- A record of achievement
- Stability in Job Choices
 - Do you have a career – same industry with progression
 - Change jobs with various duties
- Length of employment with each employer

You must decide if you are going to use the services of a recruiter and/or look for yourself by contacting employers directly. If you have spent a career in an industry and have a strong work history, along with documentable accomplishments, a recruiter could be in your best interest. If you don't, using a recruiter could assist in your own direct search efforts.

In Conducting Your Search, you should understand what a recruiter looks for:

- Related experience
- Related education, if required (sound familiar?)
- A record of achievement (in a specific career)
- Stability in Job Choice
 - Do you have a career – same industry with progression of duties
 - Change jobs with various duties
- Length of employment with each employer

THE MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE: THEY ARE LOOKING FOR CAREER PROFESSIONALS THAT WILL WORK *EXCLUSIVELY WITH THEM, OR THEIR AGENCY. WHICH MEANS: LETTING THE RECRUITER CONTACT EMPLOYERS DIRECTLY TO REPRESENT YOU.*

This typically means that they specialize in an industry, and know of clients that would be interested in your skill set. The caveat: you must not post your resume for a requisite period of time, which is different with each recruiter and the industry in which he/she works. Why? Exclusivity allows for the recruiter to present “fresh” candidates (or people who cannot be found by the employer) and the recruiter knows specific companies that utilizes those skill sets, thus speeding the hiring process (which is very good for you).

It then follows, and it is up to you:

- Do you have a skill set that can utilize the services of a recruiter with a specialty?
- Or
- Do you combine the skills of a recruiter in combination with your efforts?

Understand one thing: you have to make a choice and be able to stick by that choice.

Understanding a Recruiter

Depending on the company, a recruiter does what is called (in the industry) “Running a Desk,” with a very strong focus on a daily calendar, or very structured. The recruiter has specific times of the day when time is devoted to reviewing resumes or talking to potential candidates, contacting clients, presenting candidates, and marketing candidates to companies within an industry, having references/education verified, and testing, if necessary.

The Search

What to do? Back in the “day” (or before the Internet), looking for a job was rather simple: look in the paper or follow the “help wanted” sign in front of a building. Today? Job boards, websites, walk-ins, job fairs, recruiters, networking, and classified ads (yes, the dinosaur still exists), and what is a job seeker to do? You must understand that each has its value and, depending on your skill set, can all assist or should be used selectively.

My Personal Opinion:

In Person: Dropping off your resume, or just blindly sending your resume, offers among the least effective method of a search.

Job Fair: Cattle call and very impersonal – how can you stand out amongst thousands of job seekers? I have always felt that the job seekers are short-changed in having a personal interest expressed in their situation. Good things can happen for people but not in the quantity that can typically attend.

Job Boards: Very accessible and you can be one of a “million” submitting a resume and unless you have the qualifications required, you can easily be overlooked or easily found. You can also post your resume for potential employers. But beware: if you have a very specialized skill set, you can dilute your value by posting your resume.

School Job Placement Office: Can be very effective and can offer leads that the boards do not offer and should be utilized no matter how distant your graduation.

Networking: Contacting people that you worked with to let them know you are available and the type of work you want. They can be co-workers or people that you interacted with while on your job.

Competitors: Calling the companies who were competitors to your current, or former, employer. If you do not know them, find out the SIC code of your employer and conduct your search. In this local area, many libraries carry software, or publications, that provide specific information on any business.

Research: Be a “possibility thinker.” Are there companies that you would ideally like to work for? Make a list, and check their websites.

Note: The official NAICS website can help you find NAICS codes and subsequent SIC code. Through OSHA, the U.S. Dept. of Labor also has a list of SIC codes and can be found online.

Submit and No Response

Ever send your resume to a company and you are never contacted? Larger companies can utilize ATS (Applicant Tracking System) software. What is it? It automatically enters resumes into a database and searches them for relevance. When a job description is developed, there are specific words used to describe the skills necessary for the job. The key words are entered and resumes are scanned for those “key” words.” Each word is weighted, given a score on how often the word(s) appear in the context of the resume, and those resumes meeting the stated criteria will be presented for recruiters to call.

For the majority of other candidates (not you), they’ve used a “shotgun” approach and sent their resume in response to any posting they’ve read with the expectation that someone will find a fit for them. This technique usually has a 95% failure rate.

Your Tool Kit for Success

Computer

Contact manager software

- Microsoft Outlook
- ACT!

Filing system to track the ads/companies for submitted resume

- Using the title of the posting with date
- You can copy and paste into a folder
- You print and put into folder

The reason? **You don’t sound professional if your answer to a recruiter’s call is:**
“Can you tell me which job this is, as I’ve sent out so many resumes.”

Professional e-mail address

Imagine what a recruiter thinks, when an e-mail is received with this address:
Bigsexymanforlife@e-mail.com
Billysdaddy@e-mail.com
Luciouslover@e-mail.com
Dukesmydawg@e-mail.com

More than one version of your resume

- Resumes highlighting different skill sets

Contact numbers where you will access your messages

You should always include a number that will never, or has never, changed in case you change your primary contact number. Recruiters have been known to initiate contact a year, or years, after receiving the resume of a strong candidate.

Your Resume

In submitting a resume, you are either responding to an opening or presenting your information for a position that would potentially require your skill set(s.) This is like a blind date: you get one chance to make a good first impression; and if you don't do it, someone else will.

In developing your resume, keeping a simple, easy-to-read, informative format is the best policy and it must contain the following information:

Your full name, address and contact information

If you decide to use ONLY an e-mail address, you do so at the risk of not being contacted.

An Objective, but must be clearly focused

Some resumes use "Snapshot" and list their professional accomplishments

Dates of employment (with month/year) starting with most recent, and in order

Gaps must be explained

Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar

Education should include degree

Note: When submitting a resume, NEVER include copies of certificates, licenses or degrees, as the appropriate time is at the interview.

How a Recruiter Reviews a Resume

The Hard Facts: you have about 10 seconds to present your information (books, articles can provide a template on how to create a functional resume) and that "scan" looks for:

Complete contact information

Employment history in reverse-sequential order (last to first)

Dates (month/year) for each employer

Required experience (and education, where required) and employers

Credibility of duties

Clean and easy to read

Any omissions? ADIOS! On to the next resume! Nothing personal, as your competitors will present the information because they've done their homework on resume construction.

Hint: Take your time and write a good resume, and have more than one to highlight different skill sets, duties and experience. When you change jobs, update your resume(s) immediately while all of the information is fresh.

In Conclusion: Experienced recruiters will review resumes similarly, with some variation to reflect their preferences or training. They must maximize their time as efficiently as possible and are looking for more reasons to eliminate a candidate than work through a complicated reading or insufficient information.

In presenting a good resume, you increase your odds in becoming a candidate for the position that you want or any other positions open.