

BUSINESS & CAREERS

Keeping a finger on the job market pulse



THE HEADHUNTER

WARREN SMITH

As a recruiter, I'm often asked what distinguishes top-performing firms from their peers, and what steps a firm can take to emulate those atop the market. While not the sole determinant of success, a recurring theme is the existence of a managing partner who is focused on lateral talent recruitment.

These leaders recognize the importance of constantly recruiting in the market.

Growth opportunity

Lateral recruitment offers an efficient way to add immediately to the firm's overall market offering, team dynamic, revenue and profitability.

While organic growth through articling/associate development is a long-term solution, lateral recruitment offers the ability to enhance practice areas and team depth to a firm looking to bridge up in the market. The key for managing partners is to identify the right talent; hence, it is critical that a managing partner remain focused on recruitment at all times.

A commitment to recruitment not only ensures a manag-

ing partner understands what talent is available, it also requires them to be aware of where the firm's existing (and future) needs lie.

Your firm's story, on your terms

Actively recruiting in the market provides your firm with the opportunity to tell your story, on your terms. One of the great challenges firms face when recruiting partners is the market may have a static and/or dated impression of the firm's market position.

All too frequently, partners' perceptions of other firms are set from years ago, often from when they were an associate and more frequently discussing platform and culture with their colleagues from law school. As the market evolves, so too does your story.

A managing partner who is committed to recruitment can enlighten the market on the firm's success, accomplishments, and its vision.

Market intelligence

Active recruitment can provide real-time data on market competitors. By speaking with potential lateral hires, managing partners can probe market perception of their firm, as well as obtain a better understanding of how their competitors stack up in the market.

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While managing partners can use recruiters to assist their firm in fulfilling recruitment mandates, it is critical they stay involved from inception to completion in setting the tone, direction, and priorities of the firm's lateral talent acquisition.

Warren Smith,
The Counsel Network

This can prove invaluable in determining how best to position the firm's various practice groups, not only for future recruitment efforts, but in terms of how best to approach current and potential clients.

Going beyond status quo

To be effective, recruitment efforts must go beyond status quo, or “reactive” recruitment. For many managing partners who juggle a multitude of firm obligations, it is all too easy to think about recruitment in purely reactionary terms, rather than set an agenda and proactively pursue it in the market. To be successful, it is critical a managing partner sets a vision for the firm's recruitment and strategic growth objectives, and help hold the firm to account in accomplishing these goals.

Leading managing partners recognize recruitment is not a delegated activity. As lawyers, it may be tempting for managing partners to delegate recruitment, as it can be expensive (as a time cost) to undertake. Don't.

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That said, managing partners equally recognize recruitment remains a team effort — the key here is to ensure the managing partner remains the leader of that team, and does not succumb to the temptation to delegate this activity to others inside (or outside) the firm.

For example, when engaging

an external recruiter, it is critical to be specific on what your expectations are in the market. Managing partners may work collaboratively with a recruiter in determining the reasonable objectives in sourcing talent in the market, using the recruiter's market intelligence to assess their realistic options to meet talent acquisition goals.

However, the best managing partners recognize they need to still push their recruiters, their partners and themselves to seek out not just what the market might be offering in terms of available talent, but to engage the market directly, to maximize their potential in landing talent that might not be seen as “immediately available.”

In the end, the key factor for managing partners is to recognize recruitment is a valuable tool in achieving the firm's broader objectives.

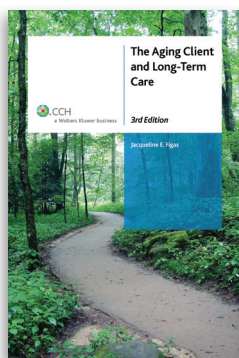
For those firms whose managing partners embrace recruitment as a priority, the market has clearly indicated such activity will be met with higher overall firm success. ■

Warren Smith is a managing director of The Counsel Network and is the only Canadian elected to the board of directors for the National Association of Legal Search Consultants. Twitter: @lawheadhunter.

The Aging Client and Long-Term Care

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Personal connections come first

Research

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in person. It allows you to connect with more people over a greater geographic area, which is why it's important to know your audience and what motivates them. You may find it's beneficial to write for shorter attention spans (for example, Twitter only allows 140 characters).

“Ultimately, it is still the human element that matters most,” Borins says. “The order should always be to establish a personal connection first, followed by a virtual connection online.”

“Efforts at online networking can prove useless if you never even meet the people that you are connecting with. Although a person may have over 500 contacts online through social media, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are as well connected in the business world.”

More importantly, the same content should be shared across all channels, so your message is consistent and credible.

“When other lawyers ask for insight on what to do about social media, I always advise them to use it as a marketing tool. And to

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Morgan Borins,
Miller Thomson LLP

use it wisely,” Grant says. “It won't replace real relationships but it will certainly increase your electronic impressions.”

Lerners LLP recently launched its Facebook page as a way to increase its electronic impressions. To encourage online traffic and stimulate activity, the firm will select a charity each month, and for every visitor who “likes” the page, Lerners will donate \$1 to the featured charity. The goal is to engage colleagues and clients (existing and potential), and to give back to the community.

Grant believes social media goes hand-in-hand with traditional networking, but can't replace it.

“When someone says that they have 620 friends on Facebook, it is different from 620 friends who will refer business to you,” said Grant. “Social media has the ability to expose you to more people. But, it may depend upon the services you provide. As a plaintiff personal injury lawyer, like myself, social media may drive an injured person or their family to me. But I don't think that is the case when more complex decision making is involved, such as commercial litigation.”

It's a new world in client development and although social media doesn't build relationships, it certainly reminds friends and contacts of what you do and how you do it. Conversely, traditional relationships are no longer enough to bring new clients to your doorstep. So, what to do as a lawyer with limited time to spend on client development? It's important to integrate both traditional networking techniques with innovative social networking. ■

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