Working With Recruiters: 7 Insider Secrets That You Must Know During Your Job Search
For most job seekers, conducting a comprehensive **job search** includes—at least to some degree—interfacing with recruiters (a.k.a., headhunters). But, for many people, this is also one of the most misunderstood aspects of a job search.

Here are some quick tips and “must-knows” to demystify the process of contacting and working with recruiters, and to help you build relationships that ensure you are top-of-mind when the ideal position for you comes across a recruiter's desk.

1) **There are two types of recruiting firms and the distinctions are crucial to understand.** Retained recruiting firms work directly for client companies and are paid to screen candidates based on very specific criteria. Retained firms often handle recruitment searches for the most senior and highest paying positions.
Contingency firms sometimes work in competition with each other and only get paid if they find the winning candidate for an open position. **IMPORTANT:** Note that in both these cases, the company pays the fee to the recruiter, not the job seeker. It is not customary for a job seeker to pay the recruiting fee, so if you are being asked to do that, be very cautious.

2) **Remember that recruiters work for the company, not for you!** This is the most common misperception. The company is their “client” and you are the candidate—essentially the “product” that the recruiter is offering to their client. Because of the way the recruiting industry is structured, most recruiters will be seeking to work with the candidate most likely to get hired (the candidate who fits a very specific profile provided by the client).
'Most likely to get hired’ does not necessarily translate to ‘most likely to succeed,’ so if you find you are not the perfect fit for a position, don’t take it personally. For this reason, if you are trying to make a career change of any sort, recruiters will not be your best source as you will rarely fit the profile provided to them by the client. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t contact them. But, do keep your expectations in check.

3) Recruiters will often tell you that you (the job seeker) should cultivate an exclusive relationship with just one or two recruiters. In an ideal world this would be great, but I disagree with this advice. Recruiters don’t necessarily share information about searches that they are working on. So, if you only contact a couple of firms and 20 others have an assignment that matches your qualifications, you would never know about those assignments.
That is why I recommend contacting as many recruiting firms that specialize in your industry or profession as is practical. If you have provided your resume, most recruiters will place it in their proprietary database, and if a future search calls you up as a perfect candidate, they will contact you, even if you haven’t had the opportunity to build a truly personal relationship.

4) Related to point #3, once you have contacted recruiters and have begun to establish rapport with at least a few, your goal is to begin to build personal relationships. Treat recruiters no differently than you would treat any other contact in your network. While the initial contact is generally made via email, now is the time to pick up the phone and start to build a dialogue. The best networkers know that effective networking involves some degree of reciprocity.
Do you have a lead that would help the recruiter fill a position assignment they are working on? Make a quick phone call. Did you see something important in the news related to an industry specialty of the recruiter? Send a quick email. By being helpful, you ensure the recruiter remembers you the next time they have a position that is a match for your background and interests.

5) Again, related to point #3, do your research. There are presently well over 15,000 recruiting offices in just the United States alone. It is impractical and a waste of everyone’s time to contact all of them indiscriminately. Do a little research and determine which firms specialize in your industry of choice or positions like you are seeking. This small, segmented list is the one you should focus your time and attention on. This is called taking the “rifle” approach versus the “shotgun” approach.
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