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# Dear Career Doctor

Recently I attended the Melbourne careers fair for law students. Many young lawyers and students asked similar questions, trying to better understand the role of a recruitment consultant and the benefits of using one when searching for a new position.

Here are some insights into the role of a recruitment consultant, your responsibility when looking for a new role, and how you can get the best from your recruitment consultant throughout the process.

## THE RECRUITMENT CONSULTANT'S ROLE

A recruitment consultant should be a trusted adviser on career and employment matters. In securing the right role for you, it is extremely helpful to have the right information at your fingertips and be in a position to access as many opportunities as possible.

Where possible, a good recruitment consultant will provide you with a wealth of information not easily accessible from websites and your own research. This may include information about the current legal market, knowledge about particular law firms or in-house legal teams that you are considering, the organisations' plans for the future, details relating to the different teams at the various organisations, and current and potential vacancies.

Your recruitment consultant should know which organisations will best suit you, given your skills, experience, personality and the way in which you like to operate. Where possible, they should be able to utilise their knowledge of – and relationships with – those organisations to secure you an interview and, hopefully, a new role.

Law firms and corporations have their own individual processes and procedures for recruitment. Your recruitment consultant will be able to provide you with information on the recruitment process for each organisation, advising you of timeframes and any particular requirements an organisation may have. In addition, they will be able to brief you on the general interview process, the position and any case study or aptitude test the organisation may require.

Make sure you are in complete control of the recruitment process, including where your resume is being sent and by whom. A good recruitment consultant should:

- plan approaches with you;
- discuss your options in detail;

- clearly establish where your resume will be forwarded;
- be honest about timeframes; and
- follow up all approaches made on your behalf.

The role of your recruitment consultant is to assist with administrative and strategic issues, from sending your resume and arranging interviews through to negotiating any offer made to you.

Negotiating your own salary and benefits has its pitfalls. Some people are uncomfortable asking for more money or a month's leave starting a week after commencing a new job. Your recruitment consultant is able to do this on your behalf, ensuring you remain at arm's length from the transaction.

Essentially your recruitment consultant can ask the "hard questions" where you may not feel so comfortable. In addition, your recruitment consultant can advise you on what is an appropriate salary package given your experience. They will guide you on what your prospective employer will pay, when your performance and salary review will take place, any bonuses and the firm's bonus system.

Finally, many young lawyers are unsure who pays for a recruitment agency's service. The law firms and corporations which engage a recruitment consultant to find a suitable lawyer for their role pay the agency's fee.

A good recruitment consultant is one who seeks to match the needs of a client and candidate so that the best outcome is reached for all – the organisation has a lawyer with the right experience who will be the right cultural fit, and the lawyer has a new job that will propel their career forward.

Not only can a good recruitment consultant secure the right role for you, but you can rely on them for career advice throughout your career.

## THE YOUNG LAWYER'S ROLE

It is important to work collaboratively with your recruitment consultant. Having your resume up to date is the starting point of the process. Also very useful is some idea of what type of role you want and what type of organisation you want to work for. You may not know the exact law firm or corporate business, but you may know, for example, that you want to work for a top-tier firm or a mid-tier firm with a particular practice area. Your recruitment consultant can guide and inform you of the organisations that would best suit your requirements.

Being available is critical. You need to access your emails regularly and respond to telephone calls promptly. Taking your time to respond could mean that you miss out on a great opportunity. If you are at work and are unable to talk, tell your recruitment consultant that you will call them back.

Being open and honest about who else you are working with and where your resume has gone can help your recruitment consultant immensely.

A consultant is precluded from approaching a firm on your behalf if your resume has been presented earlier. This is why it is so important to work with a consultant who has the right connections and knowledge. If they don't have that kind of relationship with an organisation, it could mean your resume is overlooked or not given due consideration.

Essentially a recruitment consultant's role is to ensure that you have the best opportunity to secure the right role for you. You work together as a team, keeping communication channels open and honest and responding in a timely manner. Getting the right assistance with market information, administration, logistics and financial matters will be a weight off your mind! ●

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