

The first and perhaps most important thing to keep in mind any time that you're working with a recruiting company is the fact that you're dealing with individual human beings. Just as some companies are better to work with than others, individuals within a given business can vary to great extremes. Some are honest while others are unscrupulous, and though you may encounter those who rank among the clueless, you'll also find bright and inspired souls.

If you're to get the most out of the experience, be prepared to adjust your approach to best fit the person on the other end of the phone. What's productive with one may prove a waste of time with another.

### Running the Numbers

Recruiters -- whether they are independent or an employee of the hiring company -- are sales people. In the world of sales, success revolves around running the numbers. What this means is that you'll have a much greater chance of success talking to a hundred people than you will if you speak with only five. There are two things to learn from this.

First, with many recruiters you are little more than a number, whether they called you or the other way around. More important, however, is the second point. What works for them will work just as well for you. Building relationships with recruiters can help put you ahead of the competition. Consider the following strategy.

How many recruiting companies do you currently work with? With even a little research, you'll find that there are many more out there. It is important to focus on those that specialize in your functional expertise, i.e. accounting, finance, operations, marketing, sales etc., AND your industry or the industries you are targeting for your search. So, don't sit on your hands and wait for the phone to ring. Call each and every one of them, discuss the market for your skills, and get a resume into their hands. If you currently have three companies who know you exist, bump that up to thirty. Keep in mind that each recruiter will have jobs that others won't be aware of.

### Details, Details

It's easy to understand the value of increasing your reach in the recruiting community. However, along with these larger numbers comes a greater need for good record keeping. The right tools will help you stay on top of opportunities and avoid looking clueless yourself. Search the web for "contact management software" and pick one that fits your style and budget.

There are several things you'll want to track diligently. First, never expect the recruiter to stay in touch with you. They're busy running the numbers, remember? When you speak with someone, put a note in your calendar to follow up in a week if you haven't heard from them. You'll be amazed at how many times they have an opportunity and simply didn't get around to calling you.

Once you discuss a particular job, make notes of the details, including the amount of money you discussed. Most of all, it's imperative to get the name of the company *before* you agree to being submitted, as you don't want your resume to land on a hiring manager's desk more than once. In order to avoid a fight with multiple recruiting companies over which one should get the commission for placing you, they'll simply throw all of your resumes in the trash. Most recruiters understand this.

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However, should they refuse to tell you the company name, walk away. They're not the sort of people you want to work with.

## Let's Make A Deal

Of course, before you get submitted for a job, discuss your expectations -- compensation, benefits, relocation if appropriate, relocation assistance if appropriate, etc. This is a critical part of the recruiting process. Depending upon your circumstances you might be willing to gamble a bit here and there. When a recruiter addresses your expectations, be aware that some points are more negotiable than others; don't be afraid to ask for more information. Always frame questions positively, never appear greedy or mercenary, but remember – if you don't ask, you don't get.

The only way to find out what you're worth is to take a few chances to see what the market will bear. Working with multiple recruiters can give you the confidence you'll need to reach for something better. Another plus to working with recruiters is the opportunity it offers to let you fight your battles in private. In business, everything is negotiable, and there's certainly nothing wrong with a spirited round of bargaining. However, no matter how diplomatically you handle it, the process often generates tension between the two parties. By working with a third party who's used to this sort of thing, you leave any negatives tucked safely away behind the scenes, allowing you to show up for your first day on the job as the great new hire instead of that pesky individual who kept asking for more money.

Show your recruiter that you're realistic and understand how the business works, and you'll be well on your way to building a profitable, long term relationship.

Finally, you're going to be in this business a long time, and few jobs last forever. If you treat your recruiters like friends and act in an honorable and dependable manner, you'll be the first person they call when something new comes along, even if you already have a job. There's nothing like having several enthusiastic professionals all competing to offer you the very best career opportunities.

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