

# Time



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## *The Law Firm's Enemy in the Recruiting Process*

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Everyone in the legal industry knows that aside from a merger, a lateral partner hire takes the most amount of time. But does everyone know that assumption is costly?

Getting the candidate in front of all of the right people and coordinating schedules can be an all-consuming nightmare. Then getting the executive committee together for a vote can literally take weeks to months. But everyone knows that, so if the candidate is really sold on your firm, they'll wait, right? Wrong.

Always assume that if you're looking at an exceptional candidate, other firms are too. Chances are, those other firms are of the same ilk, and will offer them a similar package. So, the one to act first, may just be the winner.

To understand this, you must see it from the candidate's perspective. Once a notable candidate has made the decision to check out their options, a recruiter generally presents several similar firms for their perusal. If the recruiter has done their job well, barring conflicts, all of those firms will want them. When candidates officially begin the interview process, they start to get a little nervous. They need everything to remain confidential. Not only do they want to keep what they're doing from their current firm, they need to protect their clients and their book of business. The more people who see their Lateral Partner Questionnaire, which discloses their client list and originations, the more nervous they become.



The interview process is tedious. It takes an average of five rounds of interviews with a prominent firm to get to the offer stage. When a candidate is interviewing with more than one firm, they are taking up valuable billing time and attention from their clients. The result? They want to get this done as quickly and efficiently as possible. Not every firm is going to be the best fit for them, but psychologically, they are on a time crunch. Not every candidate is conscious of that fact, but a certain level of anxiety is present and they don't want to live with that stress any longer than they have to.

How to beat the others to the punch:

- **Streamline your hiring process.** Create a system. Office managing partners should be able to operate within a firm wide structure that accommodates the level of priority they are dealing with. Perhaps a range from “as soon as possible” to “urgent” or color codes from green to red might be appropriate. Ideally, there would be definitions assigned to each level of priority. “Urgent” must fit certain criteria. For example, it might indicate that a candidate’s practice is in an identified area of need and there is another offer on the table, etc.
- **Have a non-attorney organize interviews.** Save billable hours and have a designated interview scheduler. Have as many decision makers as possible present at each interview. Utilize video conferencing as much as you can. Having as many people as possible in one interview will avoid duplicate questions and answers, saving everyone valuable time.
- **Streamline interview questions.** Break it down to the imperative information that will lead to an offer or not.
- **Simplify the Lateral Partner Questionnaire.** Except on a rare occasion, candidates are filling out multiple LPQ’s. These are time consuming for busy attorneys and the terminology used by firms differs. Explain exactly what you mean by “billing”, “working”, “originating”, etc. Many attorneys haven’t moved in a while and these forms are still rather new. Compensation structure in firms varies greatly, so be specific about what you want and need to know. Again, include only what will make or break a candidate for you.
- **Save the business plan for an interview.** If you need a business plan from a partner candidate, tie it to an interview. Let them know they should have it prepared when they meet you. It gives the candidate a deadline. You don’t need to have a business plan request out there, wondering when they are going to have time to get to it back to you, given their workload. Additionally, if they are interviewing with multiple firms, they might be hesitant to put the time into creating a business plan while unsure if they will ever have another interview with you. In that time, if another firm schedules a meeting first, you could lose them.
- **Use the recruiter!** That is what they are there for. They are more efficient at scheduling interviews and coordination. Give them straight feedback. They have something at stake in this process and are there to help it along.

A quick and efficient lateral hiring process is one of the easiest ways to increase your bottom line by hiring the best candidates on the market.

Happy New Year.

