



The rules of recruitment

How partnering with an employment agency can help you succeed in your work search

BY NOA GLOU BE RMA N

In your hunt for a job, going it alone can be tough. Fortunately, you don't have to. Recruitment agencies, also called employment or staffing firms, are experts at matching the right candidates to the right job opportunities, and could be your key to success.

"There are a number of companies that will *only* use recruitment agencies for any new hiring they do, because they know we're the experts and a lot of top candidates go through our agency," explained **Andrew d'Eça**, vice-president and general manager of **Angus One**, which offers permanent, executive, contract and temporary staffing services across the Lower Mainland.

In addition, says d'Eça, "90% of the job market these days is hidden, meaning most jobs are never advertised but, rather, filled through referrals, networking and, of course, employment agencies."

"Recruiters have access to jobs that, in many cases, aren't even posted on the company's own website," agreed **Jamesie Bower**, owner of Vancouver-based **Staff Systems Inc.** "When a new position comes in, we refer to our 'hotlist' [of candidates] to find a great match. Those candidates have the opportunity to get put forward for a role they would have otherwise never come across on their own."

Besides granting you access to a "hidden vault" of jobs, recruiters "offer a certain sense of perspective to a job seeker, be it an accurate description of the current job market, salary expectations or simply putting them in touch with the kinds of companies they want to work for," said **Darcia Bower**, managing director of boutique staffing firm **Expert Recruiters Inc.** "In this competitive market it often makes sense to work with a recruiter, as they can be your ambassador [and] often have certain ins with

companies where your resumé can get overlooked and lost."

On the salary front, "a recruitment firm or recruiter can be key in helping you navigate compensation issues," said **David Litherland**, managing partner for **Summit Search Group**. "They can help you properly translate the fine print on contracts to ensure that your needs will be met and your goals and compensation is fair and attainable."

But since some staffing firms specialize in a particular field or industry, choosing the right one can make a big difference to your success.

Summit, for one, specializes in recruitment for sales positions. "This specialization grants us the ability to really focus in and understand the inner workings of sales positions, so we can be certain we know the landscape," Litherland explained. "Looking for a recruiter that specializes may help you get the best possible results and ensure you're working with a group that will be more accurately aware of your needs and potential."

If you're seeking employment in finance or accounting, on the other hand, you may choose a firm like **Merced Bradley Inc.**, which specializes in placing those types of professionals. According to director of operations **Zoya Kanto**, "A recruiter can help anyone find a job specific to what the recruitment organization specializes in."

Rather than focus on an industry, generalist agencies like **Angus One** aim to place all types of job seekers with employers across a number of sectors, including health-care and industrial companies, financial institutions, governmental departments and non-profit organizations.

"We look at what our client, the employer, needs and what our candidates, the job seekers, want to come up with a natural match," d'Eça explained. "We ultimately present job seekers with what they're after, which is a good career match."

But with so many recruitment agencies to choose from, how do you know which is right for you?

Jackie Burns, vice-president, Western Can-

ada, at **Hays**, told the *Employment Paper* that "asking for referrals from friends, family and colleagues is one way of finding the right recruiter. Researching companies that are advertising a variety of positions ... will also help to see who's being proactive."

"A job seeker should research the recruiting firm's area of expertise prior to presenting their candidature," agreed **Randstad** Vancouver branch manager **Emilie McIver**. "Word-of-mouth and referrals are often a great indication of a recruiter's success and area of expertise."

One thing all job seekers need to know is that there should never be a candidate fee associated with recruitment.

"Charging a fee to help a candidate is illegal and against the code of ethics that recruiters follow," stressed Kanto.

"Employment agencies are required to have a licence to operate ... in B.C. Employment agency licences are issued for one year and must be renewed annually," added Burns. "When renewing, we're asked to provide names of employees we've placed and the employers we've placed them with. A person must not operate an employment agency ... unless the person is licensed under the BC Employment Standards Act."

After ensuring the agency is properly licensed and that you won't be charged a fee, **Raymond To**, senior partner at Vancouver's **Go Recruitment**, suggests every job seeker ask a set of questions before agreeing to work with any staffing firm.

"How many years has the recruiter been in business? How many placements have they placed with a specific employer? Does the recruiter ask good questions?" he said. "Ask the recruiter about their fall-off rate and ask how they keep abreast of industry trends."

To, like every expert we spoke to, added there's no harm in working with more than one staffing firm at a time, "so long as you're open and honest about it."

"Every recruitment company has a different network of companies. It's definitely advisable to work with a few selected recruiters to broad-

en your chances," agreed **Dennis Wolff**, IT and tech talent conductor at **McNeill Nakamoto Recruitment Group**. "Open and honest disclosure to all recruiters will be appreciated by everyone."

Wolff also said that, in approaching an employment agency, it's best to "ask your friends and network who they have worked with in the past and who they can recommend. That way you can contact a recruiter directly, which is often more effective than registering online."

Added To: "Don't consume too much of their time, but taking a recruiter out to lunch may be a good starting point. Like most service-based business, it's about building a relationship."

Once you've signed on with an agency, however, don't abandon your own job search believing the recruiter will take care of you, our experts warned.

"A job seeker needs to be actively networking and looking on their own,"

stressed Kanto. "Agencies are an aid to assist the candidate with the job search. If a recruiter feels they can place you within a few days in an ideal role, they may ask you for a few days exclusivity. This is fantastic for you as a candidate, knowing that you're being actively marketed or considered for a role very quickly."

"I would say not to rely solely on the recruiter [to find you a job]," echoed To. "If you had 10 hours to spend on a job search, I'd spend two hours reaching out to recruiters and explaining your skills and goals. The other eight hours, I'd be networking with past co-workers, bosses, alumni, community and friends."

"Looking for work is a full-time job in itself and should be treated as one," Jamesie Bower concluded. "It is not the responsibility of a recruiter to find someone a job. It is one avenue of your job search and therefore, a job seeker should never stop looking on their own." •

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