

## Recruiters – An information session

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What's the difference between a "headhunter," "recruiter," and "executive recruiter"? In short, nothing. They can be an important ally and an integral component of your job search ... have you ever considered partnering with one?

In this article, I want to provide some basic education on how recruiters work and how they can play an integral part in your job search success — today, next year, 10, and even 20 years down the road. You are the boss and must be ultimately accountable for your career, but it's helpful to select effective partners. Recruiters can be your eyes and ears for years to come. The key to inspiring recruiters assist you? Build relationships with them. They will work with you but please understand and remember, their loyalties remain primarily with their client; the company who pays them.

If you are proactive and serious about your job search, through networking, you have most likely met someone who has worked with an executive recruiter. Ask them, was it a positive or negative experience? Did job interviews result from your partnership? Was the recruiter a positive influence during negotiations? Have you remained in contact? Would you do it again?

### **1. Recruiters work most effectively for candidates at a local level, don't they?**

Recruiting firms vary in size from multi-national through small boutiques and independent individuals. Some firms deal with a broad range of disciplines (generalists); others concentrate in a particular industry such as accounting, manufacturing, engineering, sales & marketing, and others (specialists). At each large firm there are invariably specialty recruiters, experts in their field. For instance, within the materials management discipline there will be experts in purchasing, inventory management, materials/requirement planning, physical distribution, traffic & transportation, logistics and packaging. Some recruiters prefer to build a network of hiring decision makers within a certain geographic region.

Bear in mind that, especially at the executive level, the location of the recruiter typically has little to do with the location of the opportunity. Said another way, a recruiter based in New York may be looking for candidates to fill key positions in Atlanta, San Francisco, Singapore, or elsewhere.

Then where exactly do you begin your search for a partner? Find a recruiting firm that meets your specific needs, your level, your industry, your expertise. Use the Kennedy Directory of Recruiters, the Internet, or word of mouth from a personal/professional referral. Size of the firm means little; it's the industry- and function-specific recruiting knowledge you are seeking. If you are considering moving overseas then a firm with a global reach would also be a good idea.

### **2. How are recruiters compensated? Understanding that I'm not paying a fee, how can I get her/him to find me a job?**

This is a good point. Knowing how recruiters operate is important, and the more you know about how they conduct business, the more you can leverage the variables to your benefit.

There are two main categories of executive recruiters, segmented into how they receive their payment from clients:

- Contingency
- Retained

Note: one very critical element to understand is that recruiting firms are paid by the client company looking to fill a position. It's **never**, you, the candidate. I have had clients who were asked to pay money

to a recruiter. If you ever are, my advice is to disengage quickly — doing so is “double-dipping”, and it’s unethical.

Going on, although as a rule both categories of recruiters are paid based on a percentage of the positions’ expected compensation, this is where the similarities end. Let me explain how the two differ in more detail.

## **Contingency**

A contingent recruiter is normally remunerated only after a successful search, once the candidate is placed and performs successfully for a predetermined period of time. In other words, the recruiter works at no charge until their client firm hires successfully. The contingency recruiter has a number of search projects on the go at one time. Tip: when looking for a search firm, it’s best to find one that has obtained exclusive rights to completing a contact.

## **Retained**

You may find it more difficult to build relationships with retained recruiters; they are much more elusive. They are on the “hunt” for very specific, typically high-level executive expertise as has been detailed by their client. Often they have long relationships with their client companies, and maintain exclusive control of the executive search. Unlike a contingent assignment, their services are paid either up-front or in stages as the search progresses, and are compensated whether a successful placement is made or not.

As today companies are filling their pipelines successfully through additional (and very effective) means (internal referrals, company websites, specialty job boards, etc.), they have become less motivated to invest in a recruiter-assisted search. As a result contingent firms, because they are “less expensive” for the company than a retained partnership, have seen some rise in activity. This translates into the fact that contingent firms have more orders — an important consideration when selecting your partner.

### ***3. I sent them my résumé, but I didn’t hear back. What does that mean? Should I follow up?***

Recruiters can be a non-communicative bunch to be sure, but it’s pretty much out of necessity. They’re consistently bombarded by résumé after résumé, and remember, they’re not working for “us”. Their job is to put “round pegs” in “round holes”, so if your profile is not an exact match (and I do mean exact) to their order, they do not call.

On the other hand, they too are interested in filling their databases with “sellable” candidates (which is another reason the composition of your marketing materials is so very important ... but that’s another discussion). You’re the way they make their money. So just because you don’t hear directly from them on first contact, all is not lost. They may well have placed your material into their database, and when an order does cross their desk that’s a good match for your credentials, bingo! They give you a call.

Caveat: data tends to be dropped over time, keeping their pool “fresh”. We therefore recommend that you resubmit your material to recruiters on a 3 – 6-month schedule, to keep your position in the active queue.

Yes, give them a call. From my experience, it’s often best to initiate telephone contact at the beginning of the day. Begin a relationship, and provide them with your well-rehearsed “one minute pitch”. Ask them how **you** might be helpful to **them** in making a placement. I have found that once the initial rapport and respect has been built, most recruiters will provide you with advice on ways to optimize the search utilizing their services.

### ***4. Even without a current order, recruiters should interview me anyway so they know the “soft details” of my candidacy.***

A good idea, but they won't. They receive many, many resumes a day, so to do so would be time-prohibitive.

### **5. What is the best method to deliver a resume?**

From my experience interacting with recruiters, the best method is via email with your résumé attached in MS Word. Virus scanners are so sophisticated today that the fear of viruses has been diminished considerably, so attachments are less often a barrier. An alternative? Include an ASCII (plain text) version of your documents and/or include a Web link to your portfolio within the body of the email in addition to the Word attachment.

If you are uncertain, why not invite them to inform you how to dispatch your career documents? Another opportunity to begin a dialogue.

In summary, responsible for near 20% of successful placements in today's market, working with a recruiting firm that is a close match to your skills and goal can be another effective method to increase your exposure and drive your marketing campaign. Our advice? Select your partner carefully, offer value, be consistent in your communication and follow-up, and make it easy for the recruiter to help you.

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