

Managing

MARCIA PENNINGTON SHANNON

Using Law Schools in Your Recruiting Strategy

Finding new lawyers for your firm can be challenging. Many individuals given this assignment use the traditional method of advertising in the local newspaper, which can be a lesson in frustration. You might receive many resumes, but often the applicants' qualifications don't fit the position. Or, when you meet potential candidates in the interview process, you learn that they aren't good matches with your firm's "personality" or culture.

Is there a resource that will make this task easier and increase your success in the recruitment process? For the magazine's annual "Good Idea" issue, *Managing* looks at how you and your firm can benefit by including the career services offices of law schools in your recruitment strategy. Many employers are unaware that these offices can be a great source of potential candidates, from law students to highly experienced lawyers.

So, just what recruitment-related services do law schools provide to employers and how can you best take advantage of them?

Job Listings

Law school career centers welcome job listings for students and new graduates. Also, most law schools have greatly expanded their services for alumni, allowing older graduates to use the career services resources, check job listings and receive career counseling, too.

Many of these offices place their job listings online so that students and alumni can access the postings directly

Action Plan

- Identify law schools with which you would like to establish a relationship as part of your recruitment strategy.
- Check their schedules for on-campus and regional interview programs, and arrange to participate in appropriate ones.
- Contact the director or employer-relations staff member of the schools' career services offices, and arrange to meet.
- Discuss your firm's practice, environment, successes and hiring criteria and needs.
- Keep in touch with the career services representative on a regular basis.
- Volunteer to participate in information sessions and mock interviews to increase your visibility on the law school campus.

Learn more from the following resources:

- National Association for Law Placement, Washington, D.C., (202) 835-1001, www.nalp.org.
- Recruiting Lawyers: How to Hire the Best Talent* by Marcia Pennington Shannon and Susan Manch. ABA Law Practice Management Section, 2000.

from their computers. This allows you, the employer, to reach a broad range of individuals with relative ease. You should think not just of using local law schools, but also law schools outside of your firm's geographic area.

On-Campus Interview Programs

All law schools organize and conduct on-campus programs that enable their current students to interview for summer and new associate positions. When can you expect to participate?

- Many large firms and government agencies participate in the fall recruitment program because they know their needs many months in advance.

- Smaller employers participate in the spring recruitment program, closer to the time in which they plan to have the individual begin employment.

The school's career services office usually collects resumes, sends them to prospective employers for candidate selection and then arranges the interview day. Typically, a representative of your firm will spend the scheduled day at the law school site or other selected interview location.

Regional and Consortium Interviews

Several law schools organize interview programs for their students in major locations around the country, allowing students to meet with several employers in one location on one specific date. A regional program gives you an opportunity to meet with students from distant law schools with minimal travel required on your part. Sometimes a

group, or consortium, of law schools will organize the interview program. The National Association for Law Placement (www.nalp.org) is a terrific resource for identifying possible regional and consortium interview programs.

Compensation and Related Recruiting Information

To attract the kind of lawyers you want for your firm, you need to stay competitive within the legal marketplace. Career services offices can be excellent sources of information on, among other things, the salaries and benefits currently being offered to students and alumni. These offices can also discuss the types of factors that law students and lawyers are using in making their career decisions. That information can be extremely useful to you in planning your own hiring tactics and needs.

The Word-of-Mouth Strategy

While participating in interview programs and listing job openings are key, do not underestimate the value of using the word-of-mouth strategy with law schools as well. If you do nothing else, this one is invaluable.

Meet with the director of the office, describing your firm in detail, including:

- Practice areas
- Firm environment
- Firm philosophy
- Profiles of successful lawyers
- Representative cases on which your firm has worked

It can also be very useful to create a short firm description that can be kept on file in the career services office.

In addition, tell the director about the type of students or lawyers you are seeking to join your firm. In this way, the director can be on the lookout for people who might fit your bill. Be sure to stay in touch with the director—every six months to a year—to update

him or her with any new information about the firm and its current hiring needs. This personal connection to the director can lead to excellent word-of-mouth referrals for your firm.

Another good idea is to become one of those firms that everyone in the law school knows about by participating in panels, presentations and mock interviews. Career services offices are always looking for practitioners to present information to students about the actual practice of law. Participating in a panel discussion is an excellent way for students and the career services office to get to know you and your firm. In addition, to help their students prepare for upcoming interviews, many offices arrange mock interviews with practicing lawyers. Volunteering some time can be

another way of getting your firm's name known in the law school community.

An Odds-On Favorite

All in all, the career services offices of law schools are excellent tools to employ in your recruitment strategy. Most offices have Web sites that can give you detailed information about the services provided to you, the employer. Firms of all sizes have found these offices to be invaluable. The odds are that your firm will, too. ■



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