

7 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT RECRUITERS

BY JOYCE LAIN KENNEDY

Here are seven true things about executive recruiters that may advance your search.

1. Recruiters are door-openers to the best jobs. Independent or third party recruiters are called executive recruiters, technical recruiters, headhunters, executive search consultants and management staffing consultants. (Recruiters employed directly by companies are called company recruiters; they are not discussed in this column.) Ron Daratany, who heads DMR Global Inc., an executive search firm in Coral Springs, Fla., correctly points out that a recruiter who presents you to an employer “may provide you with a significant advantage over others who just send in their resumes with no formal introduction.”
2. Recruiters as a class are professionals, not your best buddies. It’s a big mistake to think that you, the job seeker, are closest to a recruiter’s heart. You’re not. The near-and-dears are the companies that hire recruiters to find candidates, paying them about 20 percent to 35 percent of the job’s first-year compensation.
3. Some operators misrepresent their services. Any third-party employment service provider who asks you to pay a fee is not a recruiter but an employment agency.
4. Search firms come in two basic business models: “retained” and “contingency.” Some search firms use both models. Retained search focuses on top management jobs and occurs when a recruiting firm is paid whether or not an external or internal candidate is hired. Retained consultants collect a fee—win, loose or draw. But contingency search firms earn a fee only when the firm identifies and presents the candidate whom the client hires. Only fly in the contingency soup: Squabbles occasionally arise over which contingency firm should be paid the search fee because several may inadvertently propose the same candidate to an employer. If you’re the candidate caught in the crossfire of two search firms, you lose if the employer chooses to walk away from trouble and hire someone else. Moral: Be clear about where your resume is being sent and by whom.
5. Retained search firms do not have a monopoly on great jobs. Mid-level managers and professionals are well served by hard-working contingency recruiters who don’t eat until you eat.
6. A recruiter’s focus matters—function, industry and locale. A high-tech candidate doesn’t want to waste time on recruiters of nursing staff, for instance.
7. Recruiters are not magicians. You may not get the job even when you are a supremely qualified finalist and are coached and presented by the best of recruiters. Gut feelings can get in the way. One Midwestern employer recalls the ditching of a prize candidate presented by a top recruiter. “Unfortunately, I didn’t like him (the candidate) very much. Something just didn’t gel and since he would be reporting to me, I couldn’t see enduring a daily relationship with a person with whom I was subliminally uncomfortable.” When a client says “Keep looking,” the recruiter is as disappointed as the job seeker. Once you’ve identified your preferred search squad, should you telephone to

introduce yourself to each recruiter? Ron Daratany says yes. "After breaking the ice, try to confirm your understanding of the firm's search process and that the firm frequently recruits for candidates of your qualifications," Daratany advises.