

The Recruiter Explained



By Christopher Jones

Recruiters are the gatekeepers of the hiring process.

In most cases, they serve as your first and last point of contact with a potential employer before the hiring decision is made.

As such, they wield considerable influence over whether or not you get the job. However, they do not usually make the final decision.

The recruiter's knowledge of a position is based on information provided by the hiring manager. This information is usually communicated in a requisition form -- the document that creates a job opening in most companies. The requisition form, sometimes called a "req," is also the basis for the job ad.

What They Do

Recruiters are hiring specialists who work with hiring managers to locate and "place" employees.

Recruiters usually oversee the administrative portion of the hiring process. They post job ads and screen candidates in addition to writing offer -- and rejection -- letters.

Recruiters also run background checks and screen references. If you've fibbed on your resume, the recruiter is the person who's most likely to find out.

The Inside Scoop

Recruiters are multitaskers; they have to be.

On one side of their to-do list, recruiters have hundreds of anxious job seekers; on the other, a bevy of hiring managers who want their positions filled -- like, yesterday.

Add to this the fact that some recruiters handle more than just recruiting. Some smaller companies task recruiters with HR duties (managing benefits, employee training, etc.).

If you want to make sure your telephone calls and e-mails pierce the recruiter's helter-skelter existence, provide as much context as possible, including your first and last name as well as the title of the job you're applying for. Never assume the recruiter is only working to fill the position you're interested in.

Recruiters are notoriously "tough graders." A good recruiter can spot errors and bogus information on a resume in seconds. If you want to make the cut, be sure your resume is concise, well organized and error-free.

Lastly, follow instructions in job ads to the letter. "Exceptions to the rule," is not a concept easily grasped by recruiters facing a fresh mound of resumes.

What to Ask

Job candidates who confuse the roles of the recruiter and hiring manager often ask the wrong question to the wrong person and wind up ruining otherwise good interviews.

The recruiter is your general resource for company information. Pitch him or her questions about employee benefits, including health insurance and 401(k) plans.

I generally advise job seekers not to ask about vacation in an early interview as this can be interpreted negatively. ("He hasn't even worked here a day, and he's already interested in vacation!")

As the recruiter oversees the administrative duties associated with filling open positions, you might also want to ask about the next steps in the process.

The recruiter will also be able to tell you who your primary contact will be. Make sure you get this person's name, title, phone number and e-mail address.