

Candidate Chronicles - FAQs About Recruiters

Recruiting often seems to be a mysterious process. Candidates wonder how they can best "use" a recruiter ... how they can get a recruiter's attention ... why recruiters aren't calling them back ... and so forth.

Below are some of the most frequently asked questions of Sanford Rose Associates search consultants - and how we answer them.

How can I select a recruiter to help me with my job search?

Unfortunately, you can't. Professional search consultants represent employers, who engage them to fill position openings. In other words, recruiters find people for jobs - not jobs for people. If you are a superstar, a recruiter - with your permission - may present you to employers known to be interested in superstars, but almost no one will serve as your talent agent.

How can I at least get noticed by the right recruiters?

That's a more realistic question. The "wrong" recruiters and recruiting firms are those who don't specialize in your industry or functional background, or who tend to fill positions far above or below your salary range. If you don't know a cross-section of firms specializing in your industry or discipline, consult a good reference work, such as Kennedy Information's The Directory of Executive Recruiters, available at all major libraries.

You "get noticed" in a wide variety of ways - by providing an up-to-date electronic résumé with the kinds of key words that match a recruiter's needs, by being helpful and responsive when recruiters call, by maintaining a network of business associates who will recommend you, by holding an important position at a well-known company, by holding elected or appointed office in professional societies and trade associations, by writing or appearing in articles that subsequently get "Googled" - in short, by making it easy to find you.

Why don't I hear back from recruiters?

If you are trying to discover whether they received your résumé, your call or e-mail is likely to be more annoying than helpful. Assuming you sent your résumé to the kinds of firms who recruit people like you, the odds are high that a researcher will keep it on file. But the odds are low that any individual recruiter will be working on the "right" search assignment at the moment you inquire, so asking doesn't help. On the other hand, if a recruiter has contacted you concerning an open search and presented you to the client company, you deserve to be informed of the outcome.

Should I be concerned about confidentiality when speaking with a recruiter?

If you have never spoken to a particular recruiter or are unaware of the person's firm, you certainly can confirm who they are - by visiting their website, requesting a reference, etc. Most reputable firms are members of either the National Association of Personnel Services or the Association of Executive Search Consultants, two professional societies that maintain codes of ethics. Once you have decided you would like to develop a relationship, be honest and forthcoming - about your accomplishments, about your compensation and about your needs. Recruiters stay in business by respecting confidences.

How early in the process will a recruiter want to check references?

After talking with you and examining your qualifications for the job, a recruiter will decide whether to present you to the employer as a strong candidate for the open position. Before that presentation, most recruiters will want to check at least one reference for an independent verification of your background and accomplishments. Later, if you stay in the game, a more extensive background check is probable. (Under U.S. law, any reference or background check requires your written consent.) At stage one, no one will contact your current employer - but be prepared to volunteer the names of one or two people who have had some business relationship with you now or in the recent past.



Sanford Rose Associates®
Executive Search

"Finding People Who Make a Difference®"
Finding People Who Make a Difference®

What do I do when I know I'm qualified for the job, but the recruiter disagrees?

Professional recruiters always consider the "fit" between a potential candidate and the open position. Sanford Rose Associates, for example, uses a proprietary matching process called Dimensional Search® that compares a candidate's skills to job requirements, past experience to future job needs and management style to corporate culture. In one scenario, your skills may be a close match, but the kinds of job experiences you have had may not. Or, you may be a Lone Ranger, while the employer is looking for a team player. And so on. (In some cases, it may even boil down to how much you presently earn, compared to what the new job can pay.) Nevertheless, if you believe a recruiter is overlooking some key personal attribute, don't hesitate to "sell" the recruiter. In the end, however, the employer is paying the search firm to make those sorts of judgments. Just because you are not the best fit for a current position opening does not mean you won't fit the next one.