



# HOW TO WORK WITH A LEGAL RECRUITER TO DEVELOP YOUR CAREER



WHERE LAW FIRMS COME  
**TO RECRUIT LEGAL TALENT**

# Amazing legal careers take work.

The commitment, hard work and sacrifice needed to get up the career ladder are often what defines a successful career for legal professionals and are the first desirable traits many will point to if asked to list the recipe for long-term career success.

Among these indispensable traits, however, one thing that will prove to be invaluable for any legal professional over the course of their career is the access they can have to the services of a specialist legal recruiter, and the potential to supercharge their career growth by leveraging this connection.

With a wealth of skills, industry connections, and behind-the-scenes knowledge (and in some cases, previous legal experience) on hand, a specialist legal recruiter can be one of the most valuable connections you have to give you an edge over the competition; and ensure you have a fulfilling career.

However, just like any resource, the value you get out of it depends on how well you can leverage it.

In this complimentary report, we'll be looking at the steps you can take to improve your chances of success when working with a legal recruiter to develop your career.

We'll be covering everything from getting into the right frame of mind to putting your plan into action.

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# Developing Your Legal Career: Embracing the Right Mindset

You will likely be aware of the importance of this when carrying out any long-term plan. As the first step to achieving any goal worth chasing, it is crucial that you adopt one conducive to and capable of facilitating your growth.

As previously alluded to, it's quite easy to assume intelligence and talent are often the keys to success in your legal career. However, many of the most powerful and successful people in business today reached their goals through dedication, grit, perseverance as well as the humility to ask for help when needed.

If you lack the right mindset from the get-go, it doesn't matter how potentially valuable your skills, business acumen, and connections are - they will make little to no difference in how far you get in your career. The same goes for utilising the services of a legal recruiter to access the best opportunities available; it's up to you to take advantage of the options provided to you and prove yourself to potential employers.

## **So, what does the right mindset involve?**

According to Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, it's the "growth" mindset that today's ambitious individuals need to pursue.

Most people have a "fixed" mindset. This essentially means you assume your situation is always set in stone, and there's nothing you can do about it. A person with a fixed mindset in the wrong job would argue there weren't enough opportunities elsewhere without actually taking the time to explore their options fully.

A "growth" mindset is an alternative approach.

When you have a growth mindset, you commit to consistently improving yourself and your opportunities. Rather than just saying you don't have the skills for the legal job you want, you define which new talents you need to develop and work on cultivating them by any means you can.

A growth mindset ensures you have the potential to move into any role you choose.

To develop one:

- Begin to pay attention to how you think: Instead of saying, "I can't do that," ask, "How can I do this?"
  - Look at challenges as opportunities: When something feels difficult, don't automatically assume it's not worth doing.
  - Stop fearing failure: Accept you may not achieve all of your goals immediately, and remember every failure is a new opportunity to learn.
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## Creating Your Career Plan: The Self-Reflection Stage

Once you have the right mindset, you can begin taking the first step towards mapping out the kind of legal career you want to work towards with your recruitment consultant.

Research from Harvard Business School shows that self-reflection is the key to success, as it helps us better understand what we want and how to get it.

With self-reflection, you can determine what you currently have to offer potential employers and what you might need to develop and improve. Start by looking at:

### **Your skills**

What are you capable of offering your employer or future employers in terms of hard and soft skills? List all of the qualifications you have achieved relevant to your practice area and any general experience you've developed in the industry so far.

Your transferable skills will especially be relevant here, as they will not only always be a staple in the demands of employers but they are set to be in even higher demand with how technology-centric the industry is going to become in the near future. Skills like strong communication, excellent literacy, and good problem-solving are and always will be relevant in virtually any job in today's economy.

### **Your Values**

Your values give you an insight into what kind of company culture you will be looking for when applying for new legal roles. This is important as firm culture will be the basis on which your performance and ability to function effectively as a professional rests, and forms the environment you will find yourself spending the vast majority of your time in.

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That determines everything from your attitude and work ethic to your social skills and relationship management, which all, of course, impact performance levels and the overall satisfaction you get from your role.

When stuck in a working environment or role that doesn't facilitate individual success or play to our strengths, it becomes much more difficult to bring out our best and stunts our growth potential as a result. That's why it's crucial to outline what your values are - it ensures the values and culture of the firm you're looking to work in are well-aligned with yours.

### **Your Preferences and Priorities**

Consider the job you're in right now. What do you like and dislike about your day-to-day tasks?

Are you mostly happy where you are but feel like your current role is not giving you much of a challenge? If so, you might want to consider looking at roles with more responsibility, such as legal management positions.

If you like the time you spend working as part of a team more than you enjoy your time working solo, perhaps it would be a good idea to look at roles where you can interact with other people more often.

Imagine what a day in your ideal legal job would look like:

- What would your schedule include?
- Where would you be; at home or in the office, or working in a hybrid role?
- Who would you be working with?
- What would your essential tasks be?
- Do you want to work in a diverse team?

## **Exploring Your Legal Career Options**

Once you have a better idea of who you are, you are now in a position to search for roles that match your strengths, development areas, values, and ambitions. The best way to start this is to begin with a general assessment of the wider industry, identifying prevalent trends and emerging demands in your practice area.

Are there new job opportunities opening up in your area of specialism that might allow you to do more of the work you enjoy most? Have you discovered a new skill during your time in this sector that might make you suitable for a new role?

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This is where the knowledge and insight of your legal recruiter will prove useful as they can give you the rundown on your current market dynamics, changes and evolving roles, allowing you to approach your job search with a much more informed perspective on where the best opportunities lie for career growth.

If you're not sure which direction you want to head in, you can consider expanding the scope of your search by doing the following:

- **Networking:** Discussing career opportunities with like-minded peers will help you learn more about the positions that appeal most to your values and interests.
- **Internships or volunteering:** Getting involved with an internship or volunteer position, even part-time, helps you develop the necessary experience while learning more about what you want from your ideal role.
- **Job shadowing:** Job shadowing allows you to gain experience in a specific field and ask questions.

Remember, your vision of your ideal role will not remain the same as you progress through your career and gain experience. What you saw as the role for you when you newly graduated from college or university might not be the same as what you believe is ideal for you now. As you gain additional experience and learn more about the industry, your ambitions, preferences and priorities are certain to change to some degree.

Once you have an idea of the kind of roles you might want to apply for, performing a SWOT analysis can help you determine what steps you might need to take to prepare yourself for the next stage in your career development.

Using a job description from one of the roles you might want to apply for in the future, assess your:

- **Strengths:** What skills, experience, and talents do you already have that make you ideal for the role you want to apply for? Where do you feel the most confident?
  - **Development areas:** Where are you lacking in specific legal expertise relevant to your desired role? How can you develop your knowledge in these areas and boost your proficiency?
  - **Opportunities:** What opportunities already exist to take you closer to your ideal role? Can you work with mentors in your current job or train in your existing role?
  - **Threats:** What might make it difficult for you to end up in the right position, and how can you overcome those challenges? For instance, if you need to get another certification to get the right role, can you learn part-time rather than give up your current job?
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# Create a Career Development Plan

Now that you have a good idea of where you stand and where you want to end up career-wise, it's time to begin creating a career map. This can and should stay with you for many years, as it will adapt and evolve as you learn more about yourself and your area of expertise.

Of course, it will also be useful to have on hand when discussing your job hunt with your specialist recruiter. As they'll be able to see your long-term and short-term goals, they will be better equipped to guide you towards opportunities that will deliver the right results long-term.

To create your career development plan:

## **1. Create long-term and short-term goals**

Your career is a life-long concept that will evolve and transform with you over many years. With that in mind, it's important not to focus all of your attention on long-term goals.

Start with a general idea of where you'd like to end up one day. Maybe you want to manage your own legal team or run your own business. Whatever that point is, it will certainly have a lot of smaller milestones you'll need to reach along the way before it is achieved.

Plan out the smaller short-term goals between where you are now and where you want to be five or ten years in the future.

For instance, if you have your eye on a managerial position/role, but are currently working in an entry-level field, you may need to start by welcoming a greater amount of responsibility in your role and building on the knowledge you have in your specific area of interest.

## **2. Pinpoint Your Next Step**

With your short and long-term goals mapped out, determine what your "next step" is likely to be. An experienced recruitment consultant can help you with this as they will have worked with many legal employees before to help them map out logical and workable next steps.

## **3. Implement Time Frames into Your Goals**

Though it's difficult to predict exactly when you're going to reach certain points in your intended career path, you should have a general idea of how long certain things should take. For instance, if you need a new certification and it takes a year to complete, you know you will need a year before starting to look for roles that demand this certification with your recruiter.

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Applying general time frames to each of your “next steps” will ensure you don’t lose track.

It’s too easy to tell yourself you’re having a challenging time at work, so you’ll take on studying for a new qualification “next month” instead. Specific time frames help to hold you accountable and improve your chances of reaching your goals faster.

#### **4. Be Open to Changing Your Plan**

Your career plan is there to give you a compass to guide you through the process of pursuing your legal career. However, it shouldn’t restrict you from pursuing new avenues that might open up later down the line.

Think of your plan as a living and breathing document that grows and changes with you. As you spend more time in your role, learn what you’re good at, develop new skills, and network with new people, make it a habit to check back on your career plan and update it accordingly.

You might decide that you want to go in a different direction with your skills once you’ve acquired them. Or your recruitment partner might suggest an avenue for your career you haven’t considered yourself. Being open to change will ensure you don’t miss out on the best opportunities.

## **Why Use a Recruitment Partner?**

Once you have a basic career plan to guide you, the right mindset, and a good view of what you want to accomplish career-wise, the next step is to enlist the help of a specialist legal recruiter. Having been familiar with your area of expertise and what is demanded of legal professionals practising within that area of specialism, they are the secret weapon you need to turbocharge your career development strategy.

Using the information you share about what you can currently do, what you’re working towards, and what you’re hoping to achieve, your legal recruiter can give you the support and guidance you need to accomplish your goals.

A legal recruiter can help you in the following ways:

- Improve your CV/Resume/LinkedIn Profile:

Improve your CV/Resume/LinkedIn Profile: Your recruitment partner is well-versed in what employers are looking for in terms of credentials and profiles, and so can provide tailored guidance on how to craft a CV, resume, or LinkedIn profile that perfectly matches the requirements of your dream job.

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A legal recruitment partner can:

- Help you access more opportunities: Finding the ideal position isn't always easy, even if you know what your ideal job looks like. Sometimes, it can feel like the ideal role isn't out there. A specialist recruiter can open doors to hidden job opportunities that you might not find through traditional channels, as they often have access they have to exclusive job opportunities that might otherwise remain under your radar.
- Work with you on your personal brand: Your recruiter can help you refine your personal professional brand and work with you to showcase your strengths effectively in online content, job applications, or cover letters, ensuring you leave a lasting impression on potential employers.
- Prepare for interviews: A legal recruiter can essentially train you with all of the information you need before an interview to ensure you make the right impression on your potential employer. They can help you develop scenarios to share in a competency-based interview or offer advice on how to present yourself to hiring managers in both in-person and video conversations.
- Improve your chances of a good match: A recruiter can use their knowledge of your values and personal goals to ensure you're applying for roles that match your skill sets and company culture requirements. Legal recruiters are experts at matching the right candidate to the correct employer.

## How to Find Your Legal Recruitment Partner

Finding the right legal recruitment partner is essentially like choosing the secret ingredient in the recipe for a successful career. However, knowing who you should work with can be challenging.

The first step is knowing where to look for one in the first place. If you're specifically looking for local job opportunities, a simple Google search on recruitment within your industry and location or a hashtag search using the tags #Recruitment or #JobOpportunity on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter can give you a good start.

Other ways you can find recruiters include:

- Reach out to people in your professional network and ask for recommendations or advice on recruiters they may know.
- Joining job groups on Facebook and LinkedIn
- Visiting in-person job fairs and events

Once you've found a handful of recruitment agencies you're interested in working with, narrow down your options by focusing on:

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- **Industry expertise:** While a one-size-fits-all recruiter might look good, they may lack the specific level of insight required to offer the best advice on where to take your career. Every industry (and especially practice area) has unique nuances to be aware of when applying for jobs and standing out to potential employers, so it's important you don't underestimate the impact that having in-depth knowledge can have on the robustness of your career growth plan.
- **Reputation:** Many of the best recruitment companies let their work do the talking by listing case studies, testimonials, and reviews. Visit the Recruiter's website you're thinking of working with and ask yourself if their happy clients and candidates speak for them.
- **Opportunities:** Check out the job board on your legal recruiters' website and ask yourself whether they list the kind of jobs you're interested in. Some recruiters focus on more entry-level jobs, while others are more likely to list positions for those who want to move into a managerial or C-Suite role.
- **Process:** You should be able to find some basic information on how your Recruiter works with candidates on their website. Find out how much support they're willing to offer you for your ideal role. Can they offer advice on things like interviewing and improving your CV? Are they available to talk to you and answer any questions?

If possible, it's often worth communicating with a recruiter directly to ask any questions you might have about their service. A face-to-face, video call, or even on the phone can help put your mind at ease that you're working with the right professional.

# Make the Most of your Legal Recruiter

Once you've chosen the recruiter you believe can assist in advancing your legal career, the next step is to cultivate and strengthen that relationship. Remember, a recruiter's success depends on your active participation and they can only deliver excellent results if you're willing to put the work in on your side too.

With that in mind, follow these tips.

## **Step 1: Be Honest and clear**

Explain what you're looking for from a recruitment professional from day one and what you'd like to avoid in future roles. If you're looking for temporary positions instead of full-time roles, make sure the recruitment consultant you're working with knows that.

Provide an honest account of your skills and experiences, and be realistic when outlining your explaining your expectations for new job opportunities and roles. Use the career development plan you have built above to show your recruiter where you are today and where you'd like to be with their help.

Don't be afraid to share all the details of your job history with your recruiter. For instance, if you were unemployed for a period, let them know about this, and they can give you advice on how to answer questions potential employers might have about that time.

## **Step 2: Work on your essential assets**

A recruiter can help you improve your CV and enhance your cover letter, but they can't write the whole thing for you. Make sure you have all the assets you need to help your recruiter present you in the best possible light. This includes having a well-prepared CV and cover letter that accurately reflects your qualifications and aspirations.

Start with keeping your CV up-to-date with all of the most relevant experience you've developed in connection with your desired role. Remove anything from your CV that isn't relevant to the legal roles you want to apply for and remember to tailor each CV and cover letter to the specifications of the the jobs you're targeting.

It's also worth considering the impact of your digital presence and online reputation here. Is your LinkedIn profile complete, with plenty of insights into other companies you've worked for? Do you have a professional brand when someone searches for your name online? A recruiter can't help you if someone sees an inappropriate social media profile when googling you.

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### **Step 3: Make the most of your Recruiter's resources**

Recruiters often provide valuable resources that can enhance your appeal as a legal candidate. For instance, they will have reports that offer guidance on a range of topics including job hunting, employment, resignation, and promotions or have access to CV templates you can use to make your application ATS-ready.

### **Step 4: Follow through on your part**

Your recruiter can't do all the work for you. You still need to make sure you follow through with your commitments, arrive on time for job interviews, and present yourself in a professional manner when required. Keep in mind that your diligence or negligence in doing your part not only reflects on you as a candidate but can also impact your recruiter's reputation with legal employers, and will end up either helping or hurting your career prospects in the long run.

### **Step 5: Communicate regularly**

Finally, (and perhaps most importantly) the biggest favour you can do yourself when working with a legal recruitment agency is to keep the lines of communication open as often as possible. Sharing your experiences about your job interviews, or requesting to receive feedback from employers when something doesn't go well only helps to improve the guidance and overall support they can offer you, whatever your endeavours may be.

A recruiter doesn't just have to be a short-term partner; they can be a key cog in the well-oiled machine that your career development plan is built to be.

## **Is it Time to Take the Next Step in Your Career?**

Developing your legal role career is hard work, but it is undoubtedly worth it. With a solid plan, the right support, and a strong vision of your goals, you can achieve everything you've set out to and more in your professional life. Taking charge of your career development plan puts the power back into your hands and reminds you that you're responsible for where your roles take you.

If you feel the time has come to make an important decision regarding your legal career, you're in luck. At Clayton Legal, we make it our goal to ensure our candidates get the most value out of their job search when working with us and would love to help turn your career ambitions into reality. If you want to give yourself the leg-up you need to supercharge your career growth, give our team a call today on 01772 259 121 or get in touch with us [here](#).

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## CLAYTON LEGAL

We understand that while talent is your greatest asset - it can also be your scarcest resource - which is why you need a recruitment partner with the market expertise, insight and network to deliver the right people at the right time.

Clayton Legal has been partnering with law firms across the country since 1999 and during that time has built up an enviable reputation for trust and reliability.

We provide an experienced and credible voice in the market by being able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the legal sector's talent agenda. Talent is all about people and just like you, our consultants are true experts in their field with a real drive for excellence that informs everything they do.

From Partners and Associates through to Solicitors, junior fee-earning positions and support staff, Clayton Legal is the only name you'll ever need - and what's more - we are nice people to do business with!

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Keep up to date with the very latest industry news and insight, by connecting with us on our social channels:





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