



IS IT TIME TO ENLIST THE HELP OF A LEGAL RECRUITMENT EXPERT?



WHERE LAW FIRMS COME
TO RECRUIT LEGAL TALENT

The current hiring landscape remains challenging for law firms across the UK;

Especially those still intent on organic growth and expansion, but mindful of increasing operating costs, changing candidate preferences, and a much-documented skills-shortage. Despite the challenging backdrop, the demand for talent is still by and large surpassing the available pool of candidates seeking legal positions - it is no wonder then that firms are feeling the strain.

According to a report highlighted in [The Lawyer](#):

- 42% of managers say staff are working longer hours and are becoming disengaged.
- 36% go on to say that they feel unfulfilled at work.
- 30% of managers also concede to missing deadlines as they do not have the staff.

Additionally, it is reported that approximately 80% of businesses express difficulties in filling job positions due to a shortage of qualified candidates. This situation is further exacerbated by the ongoing changes in the legal industry, including the adoption of new technologies and evolving client expectations. Law firms are under pressure to adapt and innovate, which necessitates hiring individuals with a diverse set of skills and capabilities. As a result, the competition for top legal talent is fierce, making it essential for law firms to not only attract but also retain their workforce to remain competitive in this dynamic environment.

In response to these challenges, many firms are exploring alternative talent acquisition strategies, such as flexible work arrangements, upskilling existing staff, and leveraging technology to streamline their operations and make the most of the available talent pool. As the legal industry continues to evolve, law firms that can adapt to these changes and embrace new hiring strategies will be better positioned to navigate the complex hiring landscape and secure the legal talent they need to thrive in the future.

But what happens if you're already falling short of hitting key KPIs in your hiring strategy? If your firm currently manages all or most of its hiring internally, it may be time to consider other options. And that starts with a holistic review of the hiring process itself. Our checklist below will help to focus on the various aspects linked to successful hiring and is a great start to benchmark your current activities and understand any gaps or pain points you might be experiencing.

Read each statement below and decide on how much you agree, using the following scale -

- 1 – Strongly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly agree

So, let's get started!

Career Checklist

1. We have an internal resource/department/team that is solely responsible for hiring with our firm.
 2. We have lots of experience when it comes to attracting, engaging with, and ultimately, hiring new talent for our firm.
 3. Across the team, we are able to find the time required to focus on the activities surrounding the hiring and onboarding of new legal professionals at our firm.
 4. We have a good understanding of the availability of active candidates (jobseekers) in our region and market.
 5. We have a good understanding of current trends impacting the labour market more generally (and the impact this may have on our own hiring efforts).
 6. We are able to market our 'value proposition' to potential new hires and understand the tools and techniques to do this effectively.
 7. The retention rate of our recent new hires is excellent and in line with our internal KPIs.
 8. We have a good understanding of our competitors when it comes to hiring and the movement of talented individuals within our sector and region.
 9. We have tried and tested methods to effectively screen and vet suitable candidates, and ensure that we shortlist only those that we feel are a good fit on all fronts for our firm.
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10. We are comfortable and competent when it comes to offer management including salary negotiations and an understanding of market rate.
 11. Our hiring process is well-defined, and we always hit the relevant KPIs relating to the key milestones within this.
 12. DEI is at the centre of our hiring strategy and approach, and we actively seek diverse candidates to enhance our firm's inclusivity.
 13. We have access to an engaged talent pool of 'passive candidates' in the relevant region and legal specialisms – those that aren't looking for a new opportunity at the moment but are generally engaged with our firm.
 14. If and when temporary work or assignments arise, we are able to approach Locum legal professionals quickly and efficiently for short- and medium-term contracts.
 15. We have the relevant tech, platforms, and channels that are fully utilised and add value to our hiring strategy (including advertising channels, social media, video platforms, and tech to support screening and evaluation).
 16. When it comes to specialist roles (senior, key man, hard-to-fill) we are confident in our ability to attract, engage, and hire those individuals.
 17. As and when our hiring needs change, we can focus on hiring quickly and kickstart the process with little disruption to business as usual.
 18. The time-to-hire metrics for our firm are satisfactory with little lag or bottlenecks in the process.
 19. When it comes to growth for our firm, we have a good understanding of opportunities and threats and regularly map the market as part of our business strategy.
 20. We generally have a high success rate when it comes to attracting legal professionals to our firm – across all regions, practice areas, and levels of seniority.
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What Did You Score?

Tally up what you scored and take a look below at some of the points you may want to consider when thinking about your hiring strategy – whether you continue to largely go it alone, or when it's time to bring in the experts and tackle some of the red flags...

20-40

Alarm Bells!

This score says your hiring activities aren't going to plan, and you are likely not hitting key KPIs or milestones. This score might indicate that you don't have the right internal resources to dedicate to hiring or are simply short of time to focus on the various elements of the, often multi-faceted, process. Alternatively, it may be down to external factors impacting your hiring success. We suggest reviewing the exact reason(s) your hiring activities are falling short – especially if these are temporary, a change from the norm, or simply put, aren't getting you the results that you and the business need.

Whether you have an internal resource dedicated to hiring, or the remit is part of someone's general role profile, enlisting the support of those with a sole focus on legal hiring is key.

41-60

Room for Improvement

A better score, which suggests there are elements of your hiring plan that are going to plan and are starting to yield positive results. Again, a deeper dive into the areas where the score was lower is needed here to get to the root of where things aren't where they need to be. It may be that your retention rate and onboarding process with new starters is excellent, but your time to hire is lagging – ultimately impacting the bottom line when it comes to fees through the door. Or you see great success in attracting active jobseekers to your firm, but struggle with specialist roles that require reaching out to a passive talent pool. Either way, understanding the whole of your hiring strategy and not just the transactional parts is key here to identifying where improvements need to be made – and quickly.

Meeting Some Goals

By and large, you are hitting many of your KPIs when it comes to hiring within your firm. You have a good understanding of external conditions and the impact on both the labour market more generally, as well as the direct impact of your efforts. You mostly have the right tools and processes in place to successfully attract and secure new talent for your firm, although there is room for improvement when you dig a little deeper. If there is a specific area where your score is lower (e.g., market mapping or understanding what your competitors are doing) it may be that this is the area where you need a helping hand and additional resources, rather than the whole kit and caboodle.

81+

Smashing your Targets

The hiring activities and processes within your law firm run like clockwork. You feel confident that you have the right people and tools to effectively attract, engage with, hire, onboard, and ultimately retain top talent. You have a good eye on what is happening in the market – both at a macro level, and also amongst your competitors, and can scale activities up and down as necessary. What the post-pandemic hiring landscape has taught us however is that it is unwise to rest on your laurels especially when so many external factors can impact hiring and candidate behaviour. Ensuring you at least know of reputable 3rd party specialists and have done your due diligence is vital should any of the variables change in the future.

Next Steps: Analysing the Root Causes

Whatever your final score, it's imperative to dive deeper into the root causes behind your hiring challenges. Taking time to pinpoint the specific issues affecting your hiring process is important to start challenging the status quo and consider alternative solutions that address these one by one.

1. Assess Internal Resource Allocation

The first step in addressing your hiring activities is to examine your internal resource allocation. Are the right people and resources dedicated to the hiring process? It could be that you don't have the necessary expertise, time, or manpower to streamline your recruitment efforts effectively.

Evaluate the current responsibilities of your HR or recruitment team, if applicable. Are they overloaded with other tasks, leaving them insufficient time to focus on hiring?

It could be as simple as a review of the roles and responsibilities of your existing team but could also look at whether additional staff or external support might be required to bolster your hiring capabilities.

2. Identify External Influences

External factors can also significantly impact your hiring success. It's essential to recognise and address these factors if they are contributing to your lower scores. Some external factors to consider include:

- **Market Conditions:** Economic shifts, changes in industry demand, or the emergence of new competitors can affect your ability to attract and retain top talent. Monitoring market conditions and adapting your hiring strategy accordingly is key – and again, that starts with having the time and resources to do so.
- **Candidate Preferences:** Changes in the expectations and preferences of job seekers can influence your ability to attract and retain talent. The obvious example here of course is the exponential rise of remote work which may impact your hiring strategy if your firm primarily offers in-office positions.
- **Competitive Landscape:** Keeping an eye on what your competitors are doing in terms of hiring, remuneration, and benefits development opportunities can provide insights into your hiring challenges. Are you as competitive (or attractive) as you think you are? It may be necessary to adjust your offerings to stay competitive.

3. Review and Adapt

To improve your hiring activities, you should continually go through the exercise of understanding the exact reasons why you are falling short of your goals. Are these challenges temporary, or do they represent a deviation from your usual hiring performance? Knowing this will enable you to adapt your strategy and resources accordingly.

Conduct a comprehensive review of your recruitment processes, from job posting to onboarding, to identify bottlenecks or areas that need improvement.

If the challenges are temporary or a result of external factors, develop contingency plans to address them. This may involve setting short-term goals, revising your job descriptions, or recalibrating your hiring timeline.

Regularly assess your key performance indicators (KPIs) and milestones to ensure they align with your evolving business needs and objectives – and if they don't, be honest about what changes are needed.

4. The Role of Dedicated Legal Hiring Experts

Whether you're facing internal or external challenges, enlisting the support of professionals with a dedicated focus on legal hiring can be a game-changer. Legal recruitment specialists bring specialised knowledge and experience to the table, ensuring that your legal team is staffed with the right talent and your growth plans remain on track. A specialist legal recruiter can offer the following:

- True Expertise in Legal Hiring - Legal recruiters have a deep understanding of the unique requirements and nuances of the legal industry. They can identify the ideal candidates who not only possess the required legal skills but also align with your firm's culture and values.
- An Extensive Network – Legal recruiters often have an extensive network of legal professionals, making it easier to source and attract top legal talent. They can tap into their connections to find candidates who might not be actively searching for jobs but are open to exceptional opportunities.
- A Streamlined Recruitment Process - Legal recruitment experts can streamline the hiring process, reducing the time and effort required to fill legal positions. They are well-versed in conducting interviews, assessing legal qualifications, and conducting background checks efficiently. Many invest in market-leading tech here too (an investment that you therefore don't need to make) to supercharge elements of the hiring process to help deliver results.
- Legal Market Insights – Recruiters worth knowing make a point of keeping up to date on the latest legal market and general labour market trends, including compensation benchmarks and in-demand skills. This knowledge can be invaluable in setting competitive offers and positioning your firm as an attractive employer.

In Conclusion

Incorporating the expertise of legal hiring specialists into your recruitment strategy can significantly boost your hiring success and help you achieve your KPIs and milestones effectively.

If this checklist has prompted you to think about any pinch points in your own approach to hiring, it may be time to reach out to a [legal recruitment specialist](#) who can help to bridge the gaps. Knowing where to turn when you have arrived at this decision can also be daunting – so we have provided an [additional guide on how to go about identifying a strategic partner](#) from the get-go that is aligned with your own goals and objectives.

With nearly 25 years under our belt, and an earned reputation for professionalism, honesty, and reliability, the team at Clayton Legal can work as an extension to your internal hiring team, or as an outsourced solution to get the results you need.

Step one- [get in touch](#) today and let's kickstart that conversation.

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 which 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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