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Links to Recruiters Might Reveal Opportunities

By SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN

Building relationships with recruiters may expose you to career opportunities that you might not learn about otherwise.

Most employers don't advertise the positions they hire recruiters to help fill, which are typically a firm's most senior and highest-paying. And search executives usually promote their services to employers, not job hunters.

Identifying and connecting with recruiters who specialize in your area of expertise can be very worthwhile—though candidates should remember that recruiters are paid by the employer, and will put that employer's interests first. Such niche recruiters aren't always easy to find, so job seekers might need to use creative tactics.

Start by tapping your own network. Many senior executives work with recruiters at some point in their careers as a candidate or client, says Rick Slayton, president of Slayton Search Partners Inc., a Chicago-based recruiting firm. Ask the most experienced professionals in your network to refer you to the recruiters they know, he says.

Other sources are people you know in your industry or at organizations that interest you, says Lynette Lewis, a human-resources consultant and author of "Climbing the Ladder in Silents" (Thomas Nelson, 2006). Find out which recruiting firms their employers use. Don't be discouraged if the list you compile is short. "In certain niche markets, there are recruiters who pretty much work with all big players," she says. "You'll typically hear the same name several times."

A good way to stay on a recruiter's radar screen is to suggest names of prospects you know for jobs the recruiter is seeking to fill, but for which you don't qualify, adds Mr. Slayton. Be sure to offer quality referrals, he says, because inappropriate recommendations can reflect poorly on you.

Sara Hawes says that in 2000 she earned an acquaintance at Deloitte & Touche LLP to ask which search firm the auditing and management-services company retains. A few days later, her contact, a partner at the firm, introduced her to a recruiter via email. She followed up by phone and was invited to interview



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for a job as a business-development manager at Deloitte's New York office. Ms. Hawes, who had been a vice president of investor relations at a start-up, got the job. "They needed me right at that moment, and it worked out perfectly," says Ms. Hawes, 47 years old, who is now a client-services executive at a large technology-services company.

Scan recruiter directories. Your local library may have these resources available at no charge, says Arlene Hirsch, a career coach in Chicago.

RileyGuide.com, a free online job-search resource, has a listing of recruiter directories, some free to users online, such as Oya's Directory of Recruiters, among others. Most fee-based directories are more up-to-date and offer better search options, says Margaret Dikel, author of the Riley Guide. (RileyGuide.com is a business partner of CareerJournal.com, part of Dow Jones & Co., the publisher of The Wall Street Journal.)

BluesSteps.com, from the Association of Executive Search Consultants, includes a database of more than 4,000 recruiters from its member firms, along with other features. Access to the database costs \$299 for two years, among pricing options.

You can also search for recruiters' profiles online. Many recruiters have profiles on networking sites such as LinkedIn.com, Ecademy.com and Doostang.com. To find them, do a keyword search or ask fellow members for referrals.

LinkedIn.com, for instance, carries about 90,000 recruiter profiles, according to its founder, Konstantin Guerttke, and most list a specialty. It's free to join and search the site, though other features require paid membership. To find recruiters' profiles, click on the "advanced search" tool at the top of the home page for members. In the industry category, select "corporate services," then choose "staffing and recruiting." Enter a keyword, such as the recruiter specialty you're seeking, and then hit "search."

Message boards may have postings that relate to specialists in your search area. Check career-networking sites. In addition, job hunters can seek recruiter referrals on boards hosted by their trade association, professional society or alma mater.

Remember to read the business press. Recruiters often are quoted in news media, notes Carrie Pryor, a senior client partner in New York for

Korn/Ferry International, a Los Angeles-based recruiting firm. If you read about one who interests you, type the recruiter's name into a search engine to find his or her contact information, she suggests.

In June 2004, when Ms. Pryor worked for a different recruiting firm, a job seeker from North Carolina called her and offered himself as a candidate. He said that he had read about her in a newspaper article and was interested in a senior finance job. Ms. Pryor, who specializes in media, entertainment and technology, says she wasn't listed on her firm's Web site. She likely called her firm's main number and asked for her, she says. Ms. Pryor happened to have an opening for a controller at a publishing company in his area. After reviewing his résumé, she lined him up with an interview, and he got the job, she says.

News stories announcing executive changes can be another source of recruiter leads. They often mention the search firm a company has hired to find a successor.

Check trade or industry groups for referrals. Many recruiters belong to an association in their specialty, says Rachel Schwartz, public relations and communications practice leader in Westport, Conn., for RRD Partners Inc., a New York-based executive-recruiting firm. These groups may include a roster of members on their Web sites. If you join, you'll likely have opportunities to network with recruiter members, she says.

Earlier this year, Ms. Schwartz says, a job seeker found her name on the Web site for the Publicity Club of New York, a group for public-relations professionals. Ms. Schwartz was on its board at the time. She says the job seeker may have tracked her down by going to RRD's Web site, which lists her contact information. She says she is looking into opportunities for her.

Call top employers in your industry. Dial the main number and request to be transferred to the human-resources department, says Ms. Lewis. Then ask the HR employee who answers which search firm the company uses. "Most of them will be very free with that information," she says.

Online Today: Learn seven steps to improve the odds of finding recruiters return your calls, at CareerJournal.com.