



**“HELP US HELP YOU” IDENTIFY THE IDEAL CANDIDATE FOR
YOUR FIRM’S LATERAL ATTORNEY SEARCH**

The following questions should be considered as part of the conversation between legal recruiters, law firm recruiting personnel and hiring partners when a law firm has an active search at the associate or partner level. This list is not exclusive, but rather can be used a guide to identify areas for discussion to help recruiters find the most qualified candidates.

I. TELL US ABOUT THE POSITION YOU ARE SEEKING TO FILL

- a. What is the title of the position?
 - i. Partner
 - ii. Associate
 - iii. Counsel
 - iv. Staff/Department Attorney

- b. Where will the position be located?
 - i. Will you consider re-locators/do candidates need to have the appropriate State Bar admission to apply?
 - ii. Does all work come from that office or does work come from other offices as well?
 - iii. How much travel, if any, will be associated with this position?
 - iv. Are you open to candidates working remotely?

- c. Why are you looking to fill this position?
 - i. Understaffed
 - ii. Departure of attorney(s) (if so, why?)
 - iii. Servicing a particular client
 - iv. Firm is expanding in general, or in this practice group in particular

- d. How urgent is the search?
 - i. Need someone ASAP
 - ii. “Opportunistic” search if the right candidate comes along (soft search)
 - iii. Not urgent but there is a real need and will hire when the right candidate is presented

- e. Practice group questions
 - i. Which partner is leading the search?
 - ii. How many partners/associates are in the practice group?
 - iii. How does work get divided among associates?
 - iv. Do associates get assigned to partners or do they work with various partners as needed?

- v. Is there an opportunity to get work from other partners/practice groups?
- vi. Do associates and partners work in teams?
- vii. Does this practice group represent a growth area within the firm, either locally or firm-wide?
- viii. How is the culture/environment in the practice group?

f. Job-specific questions

- i. What types of clients will the candidate be working with? Are there any specific well-known clients that we can share with them?
- ii. What kind of work is the candidate expected to perform for the group on a day-to-day- basis?
- iii. Is there training or mentoring involved, or are candidates expected to be able to “hit the ground running”?
- iv. What have you seen that has made candidates successful in this role within the practice group?
- v. What have you seen that has made candidates unsuccessful in this role within the practice group?

II. **TELL US MORE ABOUT THE FIRM**

a. What is the firm’s compensation structure?

- i. What is the anticipated compensation (or approximate compensation range) for this position?
- ii. For Associates, is compensation lockstep, performance-based or a hybrid approach?
- iii. For Partners, is there a base salary plus bonus? Is compensation based on distributions? Are partners allocated to different compensation “bands”?
- iv. How are bonuses determined?
- v. What is the average bonus or bonus range in a typical year?
- vi. Does the firm offer clerkship bonuses? If so, what is the bonus?
- vii. Does the firm offer a relocation package? If so, what is the amount allocated for relocation?
- viii. What is the firm’s benefits package?
- ix. Is it an open or closed compensation system?

b. What are the firm’s billable hour requirements?

- i. Is there a billable hour requirement to be considered for a bonus?
- ii. Are attorneys typically meeting this requirement?
- iii. What is the average number of billable hours worked (vs. what is required)?
- iv. Do pro-bono hours count towards the billable hour requirement?

c. What is the culture and environment like at the firm?

- i. Do attorneys typically get along well and work in a collaborative and collegial environment?
 - ii. Do partners regularly make themselves accessible to associates?
 - iii. Do attorneys get together outside of the office?
 - iv. Is the firm family-oriented?
 - v. What is the work/life balance at the firm, and would this be considered a “lifestyle” firm?
- d. For Associates, what are the opportunities for advancement and partnership?
 - i. Are there a set number of years required to make partner?
 - ii. What has been the typical trajectory from associate to partner?
 - iii. How often are associates up for partnership?
 - iv. How does the process work to determine if an associate is elected to partnership?
- e. For Partners, how is the partnership structured and are there management opportunities?
 - i. Is there a management component to this particular opportunity, either within the practice group, that office or firm-wide?
 - ii. How many levels of partnership are there?
 - iii. Are there equity and non-equity partners? What is required to make equity partner?
- f. Financial questions about the firm
 - i. What was the firm’s revenue last year? The last 3-5 years?
 - ii. What is the firm’s PPP (profit per partner)?
 - iii. What are the firm’s plans to grow this practice group, this office or the firm in general, and do the economics support this growth?
- g. Firm Pitch
 - i. Why should a candidate join your firm (and not your competitor)?
 - ii. What can you tell us about your firm that we would not be able to read on your website?

III. **WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN AN IDEAL ASSOCIATE CANDIDATE?**

- a. Experience
 - i. How many years experience is required or ideal for this position?
 - ii. Will you consider more senior candidates willing to take a class year hit?
 - iii. Will you consider more junior candidates with significant experience either pre-law school graduation, or coming from a firm that has a reputation for candidates practicing beyond their years?

- iv. Are there any peer firms or geographic locations where you have found that candidates from those firms or those locations have the experience that fits this position?
- v. What experience is needed that is specific to this position?
- vi. Does a candidate need all of the experience required for this position, or will the firm consider candidates that are willing to be trained in some related areas?
- vii. Do they need to “take the files and run”?
- viii. For litigation positions, is a clerkship strongly preferred or required?

b. Academics

- i. How important is pedigree for the candidate?
- ii. Does the candidate have to have a JD from a Top 50 law school? Top 20? Top 10?
- iii. Are there certain law schools from which you have found that candidates are a particularly good match for this practice group or firm?
- iv. Will you consider candidates outside of top 50 law schools if they performed exceptionally well or there are other extenuating circumstances?
- v. Is there a requirement for a candidate to have graduated with or above a certain GPA?
- vi. Is *Law Review* or any other law school academic achievement strongly preferred or required?

c. Miscellaneous candidate attributes

- i. Are foreign language skills helpful or required?
- ii. Do you want to see candidates with significant extracurricular activities such as community involvement?
- iii. Do you prefer candidates who have had published articles and/or presentations on topics related to their field?
- iv. Are strong connections to the city or region preferred or required?

d. Red Flags

- i. Firm or city “hoppers”
- ii. “Re-tools”

e. Personality

- i. What kind of personality is a good fit for this practice group or the firm in general?
- ii. What kinds of personalities have not fit into this practice group or the firm in general?
- iii. Is it helpful for someone to be a self-starter and/or entrepreneurial, or do you need more “worker-bees”?

IV. **IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN AN IDEAL PARTNER CANDIDATE?**

a. Book of Business

- i. How much portable business is required?
- ii. Is there potential for a group move? Can the firm support such a move?
- iii. Are there multiple clients or does a majority of the business come from one client?
- iv. How much work comes from clients in other practice areas within their firm?
- v. Is the partner the main contact person for their clients?
- vi. Has the partner's book of business increased or decreased over the past 3-5 years?
- vii. Is the partner currently responsible for generating business or are they a service partner?
- viii. Has the partner collected a large portion of their receivables, and what is the average time for collection?

b. Financial questions

- i. What is the partner's hourly billing rate?
- ii. What are the partner's collections over the past 3 years?
- iii. What is the partner's current salary?
- iv. What are the partner's salary expectations?

c. Conflicts

- i. Are there any known conflicts that would cause any concerns?
- ii. Has the partner been directly opposite the firm on any occasions?

d. Management Experience

- i. Does the partner manage a group of associates or other partners?
- ii. Is the partner the head of their practice group?
- iii. Has the partner served in any leadership roles, including committees, at past firms?