

Q&A Column

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Email Subject Line: Sorting Out The World of Recruiters

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Headline: Employment Agency, Recruiter or Headhunter?

Summary:

Question: I'd like to work with some recruiting firms to help me find a new job. But there seem to be so many different types of agencies and I'm not sure which ones would work with me. Could you please give me some advice on where to start?

Keisha A., Montreal, Quebec

Landing Page copy

Headline : Employment Agency, Recruiter or Headhunter?

Dear Mark,

Question: I'd like to work with some recruiting firms to help me find a new job. The phone book here in Montreal lists over 200 companies when you type in the words "employment agencies." I've heard there are different types of agencies depending on your job, the industry you're in, how much you earn, etc. I'm not sure which ones would even consider working with me. Could you please give me some advice on where to start?

Keisha A., Montreal, Quebec

Dear Keisha,

Search firms can be an important part of your job hunt. They may have access to some positions you can't find elsewhere. But if you haven't dealt with recruiting agencies before, the first thing to keep in mind is who they actually work for: the employers who pay their fees to find the right candidates. You should never pay a search firm to "find you a job," and the reputable ones will never ask you to do so.

As for the names recruiters use to describe themselves, it can certainly be confusing. There are personnel agencies, search consultants, executive recruiters and so on. What you basically need to know is that there are three levels of firms to be aware of. Roughly speaking they're split in terms of the salary ranges they deal with.

Employment and Temp Agencies

This is the end of the spectrum where the most jobs are available. Names like Kelly Services, Drake, Ajilon Pinstripe (owned by Adecco) and Randstad come to mind. These companies specialize in filling positions in the under \$50,000 range. Administrative assistants, customer service representatives and data entry clerks are typical assignments.

Firms like the ones just mentioned often, though not exclusively, place candidates as "temps." You're sent to an employer for a fixed term, say three weeks or three months. These short term positions can sometimes turn into extended or even permanent roles. You should speak to the agency about its policies, and your goals, before accepting an assignment. This way there'll be no confusion about how to manage the arrangement should it change over time.

Recruiting Firms

Moving up a notch or two on the ladder brings us to recruiters, also known as placement consultants and search groups. If you're pulling down from the mid \$50,000 range up to \$100,000 or so, this is who you should approach.

A quick way to find the right kind of firms for you is to use a directory. Your local library should have a copy of "The Directory of Canadian Recruiters" from Continental Records Company. Also there's the Kennedy "Directory of Executive Recruiters" and www.employmentagencies.ca.

Executive Search

Welcome to the stratosphere of recruiting. Senior executives and highly paid professionals are sought out by such headhunters as Caldwell Partners International, Heidrick & Struggle and Korn/Ferry. Usually Directors and V.P.'s are the starting point, right up to CEO.

One quick note of caution: if you're working with multiple agencies, no matter what level you're at, consider insisting that each one notify you before you allow them to send out your resume. The last thing you want is your application to end up on some H.R. manager's desk three or four times, all from different search firms. It could put you out of the running if there's potential for dispute over who got there first.



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