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**National Association of Legal Search Consultants**

**WINTER 2012**

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**President's Message** by Marina Sirras

Dear NALSC® Members,

As we begin 2012, I am delighted to report on the many positive things happening for NALSC®.

First, we are excited to announce that our multi-day NALSC® 2012 Annual Conference scheduled for Thursday, May 3rd (at 3pm) through Saturday, May 5th (breakfast) at the 4-star historic Hotel Monteleone located in the heart of the French Quarter in New Orleans. We have planned an exciting and informative program. Keynote Speaker James M. McGrew, Esq. will launch the event. Mr. McGrew is the Client Relations Executive of Ogletree, Deakins, Nash Smoak, & Stewart P.C. and prior In-house Legal Counsel and Director of Human Resources for Emeril's Homebase. In addition, our event will include a session on *Skills-Based Hiring for Effective Post-Recession Lateral Associate Recruitment*, interactive Roundtable Discussions, Managing Partner panel, hands-on Breakout Sessions, and a presentation on *Effective Face-to-Face Communication with Clients, Prospects and Candidates*. Our networking receptions include a kickoff cocktail reception, luncheon with raffle and Silent Auction, historic Louisiana Supreme Court Building tour, second line jazz band escort, and gala dinner at the world famous Arnaud's Restaurant. Our Conference will end in time to

enjoy the famous Jazz and Heritage Festival, if you wish. This is a very exciting yet busy time in New Orleans so be sure to [book your travel plans as soon as possible](#). Details and Conference registration are available on [www.nalsc.org](http://www.nalsc.org).

We greatly appreciate the continued support of our corporate sponsors ALM, lawjobs.com, Leopard Solutions, MaxHire, Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod LLP, The Cluen Corporation, LegallyLooking.com and TFI Resources; as well as our law firm contributor Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP.

Second, our organization continues to increase with new members. I want to thank all of you - our members and our hard working Board of Directors - for making all of this possible. We continue to focus on NALSC®'s national and international visibility, especially as we strengthen our relationships with NALP, ALM, and all of our loyal sponsors.

On a personal note, thanks to all who attended our NALSC® 2011 Fall Symposium at the Harvard Club of New York City. This full-day event was an overwhelming success. Legal recruiters, sponsors, speakers, and professional colleagues all gathered for this educational and networking meeting. Keynote

Speaker Mark J. Neuberger, Esq. of Foley & Lardner's Labor and Employment Practice gave a dynamic and presentation on the *Law of Poaching and How Not to Get Pinched*. In addition, other informative sessions included *Developing Long Term Relationships with Clients and Candidates*; *Relationship Management Strategies from Both the Law Firm and In-House Perspectives*; and *Social Media/Networking as it Relates to Recruiting*.

I wish you much success in 2012.

Best regards to all,  
Marina Sirras, President

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

*Marina Sirras is President of NALSC®. She is the owner of Marina Sirras & Associates LLC ([www.lawseek.com](http://www.lawseek.com)), a NYC based legal search firm specializing in the placement of attorneys at all levels of experience in law firms and corporations in the US and internationally. Marina has 24 years of experience in legal recruiting, and she can be reached at [msirras@lawseek.com](mailto:msirras@lawseek.com).*



**2012 Spring Conference** by Joe Ankus, Esq.

On Thursday, May 3rd through Saturday, May 5th NALSC® will host its Annual Conference at the Hotel Monteleone in New Orleans

during Jazz Fest! The Big Easy is a wonderful destination with incredible music, cuisine, attractions and night life.

We expect this three-day event to be dynamic, engaging, and thought-provoking. Beginning on

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Thursday (at 3pm) and ending after a Breakfast Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, attendees will have the weekend to enjoy all that New Orleans has to offer. So far the response to this upcoming Conference has been overwhelmingly positive. We expect it will be an extremely successful event—one you won't want to miss! The star line-up of informative speakers, panels, roundtables, and breakouts will focus on the subject *"Legal Recruiting... and all that Jazz."*

Our Keynote Speaker will be Client Relations Executive James M. McGrew, Esq. of Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak and Stewart P.C. who routinely speaks on human resources and

employment law topics. Panels will focus on skills-based hiring for lateral associates, business development and evaluation for lateral partners, and effective communication models. Our goals are for participants to leave with practical tips, strategies, and goals to take home with them back to their businesses.

Our dynamic program also combines many interactive networking receptions, roundtables and breakout workshops. Additional surprises include a Gala Dinner at a NOLA landmark as well as a personalized tour of the Louisiana Supreme Court Building. This will certainly be a memorable event ... *and all that jazz.*

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

Joe Ankus is Executive Director and past board member of NALSC®. In addition, he is President of Ankus Consulting, Inc. ([www.ankusconsulting.com](http://www.ankusconsulting.com)) at which he has specialized in legal recruiting for over 20 years as well as training seminars specifically for legal recruiters. Joe can be reached at [info@ankusconsulting.com](mailto:info@ankusconsulting.com).



***"This will certainly be a memorable event ... and all that jazz."***

## **Jungle Drums**

by Will Meyerhofer, JD, LMSW - Reprinted from *The People's Therapist* November 30, 2011

I received an offer recently that I couldn't refuse – an invitation from "legal search consultants."

Headhunters!

They were having a convention and asked if I wanted to drop by, and, you know, say hi.

Vague images flitted through my mind – guys in suits dancing in a conga line wearing hats with silly horns.

I don't often get invited to shindigs. I'm a therapist. Mostly, I visit my office, my dog and whoever's sitting in the other chair. Or I sit at my desk and write columns. Ask me to a party? Hell yeah, I'm down. I'm all over it like a tall dog in a cheap suit. You looking to turn it out? Count me in.

I never say no to headhunters, conga lines and hats with silly horns.

So I went. And it was fun.

Here's the newsflash about headhunters – they're good peeps.

At very least, they're more fun than lawyers. In fact, many of them were lawyers, but had to get out because they were too fun.

They can also teach you stuff you need to know – not just pointers on beer pong and naked Twister.

Behold three key lessons acquired whilst getting down with my bad self in the company of legal search consultant party animals...

FIRST: They aren't the enemy.

I'm not sure why you thought they were the enemy. Except I used to.

As a snotty-nosed first-year at Sullivan & Cromwell, I received weekly phone calls from headhunters and I knew exactly what to do. The routine is simple – you hang up. You announce, in

a snooty voice, that you aren't interested. Then you slam down the receiver. It's like slamming the door on a door-to-door salesman. It's his just and inevitable fate, because he's a little person and you're at a top NYC law firm.

Then – in your second or third year – it dawns on you your ultimate career destiny might not lie with Sullivan & Cromwell – and the headhunter you slammed the phone on could have been your ticket out. He's also a former second or third year – or fourth or fifth year – from a top firm himself. He got out – and is currently doing a whole lot better than you are.

That's why he's calling – you idiot.

You hung up on him and it was fun. But now you're stuck in hell and it's looking like that might be your fate in life – that or unemployment. Take your pick.

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***"... it dawns on you your ultimate career destiny might not lie with Sullivan & Cromwell - and the headhunter you slammed the phone on could have been your ticket out."***

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The toughest-skinned headhunter takes umbrage at being treated him like a vacuum cleaner salesman. Even vacuum cleaner salesmen find it irksome.

But hey – aren't headhunters sleazebags in it for the money?

And you're not?

Sure – some headhunters are better than others. Some are more honest and scrupulous. I spoke to plenty of them at this convention cum erotic dance party. A few looked me in the eye and admitted they weren't all the same. A surprising number turned serious and swore they would never place a candidate in a position they felt was "a bad fit" – even if it meant picking up a fee worth over twenty grand.

Do I believe them? Yes.

A good headhunter knows burning candidates – and clients – doesn't make long-term sense. An unhappy candidate won't last the six months or so required to earn a fee. If the candidate storms off in a huff, it burns bridges with the client – and damages the headhunter's reputation. That makes it impossible to get more placements.

Additionally, all headhunters aren't evil. Remember – they're no longer lawyers, they only work for them.

No one bad-mouths real estate agents – or hardly anyone. But given the choice between a real estate agent and a headhunter, I'd take the headhunter any day. A real estate agent is more likely to rip you off, because he can get away with it and move onto another clueless homebuyer.

Stop bashing headhunters.

If you were a big-shot partner looking for a job, you'd already know that. You'd also have made the logical leap that these folks are out there to help you. That's the only way they earn a living. They're not out to waste anyone's time.

SECOND point: They really, really hate it when you aren't serious about exclusivity.

Why do headhunters "cold call"

nasty little associates at law firms? To make money.

It works. They might call on a day the Kool-Aid's wearing off. The day the partner smirks and yet again hands you an assignment on Friday afternoon due Monday morning. The day he hands back your brief covered in red ink and says he "expected better" even though you only put in his changes. The day you haven't billed an hour in two months but everyone else looks busy.

On that day, you could use a supportive voice on the other end of the line, offering steady insider advice. You could use a means of escape.

At that point, you're going to break down and send this headhunter – the one who happened to call – your resume, and agree to let him submit it to a few law firms or other places to try to get you a job.

Stop right there – at that moment in time – and think.

After you give him that permission, you shall be represented exclusively by that guy, at least for those jobs. That might not be a bad thing. But a week later, when a really nice lady headhunter you like even better calls, and you break down in tears with her and she says exactly what you need to hear and you realize she's the best headhunter in the whole wide world...well, you've already gone with the other guy. It is a *fait accompli*.

Maybe you forgot you ever told the first guy he could send in your resume. Maybe you weren't listening closely when he asked. Or you didn't think he meant all *twelve* firms. Or you thought you could change your mind and go with the nice lady.

You can't. It will be a major drag for the nice lady when she re-submits your resume to the firms and finds out you – more or less – lied to her, and made her look like an idiot by re-submitting a candidate already represented by her colleague.

Don't do it. Stop, use common sense, and have lunch with a few headhunters before you decide on the one you want to use. That's all they're asking.

FINALLY : They don't have any jobs for you unless you're at the top of the market.

You already know this – you just haven't stopped and thought it out and acknowledged it to yourself. So let's do it. It is rather ironic – now that you realize headhunters are your friends, you won't be meeting any any time soon.

They only want to meet you if they think they can place you. According to the consensus I was hearing from the party people singing "Dayyyyyyy -O!" and bending before the limbo pole at the convention – at this juncture in our nation's history, there are no legal jobs out there for anyone but the upper-upper-crust.

One guy told me in serious, hushed tones: "Look, if you're Joe Schmo, there's no work. If you're top of your class at Harvard or Yale, there's work. That's what the firms want."

Another put it differently: "Either you got the resume or you're S.O.L."

("S.O.L." is a technical headhunting term.)

Sorry, guys. Headhunters are looking for two things. First, partners with at least a few hundred grand in portable business. (Duh.) Second, brilliant associates from top schools with superb credentials in specialized areas sought after in specialized regions of the country.

I overheard dudes from the Bay Area parleying with New England prepsters about relocating labor specialists. I listened in while gals from Houston put out the buzz to fellas from Chicago for senior oil and gas in-house types willing to travel.

Headhunters aren't clowns you hang up on. They're pro's earning more than you, doing a serious job.

Trust me on one final point: Unlike your lawyer buddies – they know how to party.

*Will Meyerhofer can be contacted at [wmeyerhofer@gmail.com](mailto:wmeyerhofer@gmail.com).*

**"A good headhunter knows burning candidates - and clients - doesn't make long-term sense. An unhappy candidate won't last the six months or so required to earn a fee. If the candidate storms off in a huff, it burns bridges with the client - and damages the headhunter's reputation. That makes it impossible to get more placements."**

## Interviewing Tips for Employers

An interview is part of almost every hiring process. Interviewing can be expensive and time consuming for a company. Typically, the interview is one of the final evaluations of a candidate. Yet, many people believe that they can just “wing it” when conducting an interview, and many organizations do not take the time to prepare or train their interviewers. Improving the interview process can lead to higher quality new hires, which will certainly pay dividends for the company.

### The Groundwork

One of the most important steps in conducting an effective interview (and the overall hiring process) is to develop a full understanding of the open position – the required experience and skills, responsibilities, and expectations. The hiring manager should work with the internal stakeholders to develop and agree upon a profile of the ideal candidate with the key attributes to succeed in the position. If it is an existing position, the hiring manager should consider what made prior employees successful or unsuccessful in that role. If it is a new position, the hiring manager should focus on the reasons why the position was created and the expectations for the position.

Once a detailed description of the position has been created, the hiring manager should hold a planning meeting with decision makers to determine the steps that will be taken with prospective candidates and develop the overall hiring plan based on the ideal candidate profile. The plan includes the parameters around, and identifies those who will participate in, the initial screening of candidates as well as the interviews, which normally occur at a relatively late stage of the process. Most companies only interview a “short list” of candidates who have made it through the initial screening and review process.

Deciding who to include on the interview team is very important. Whenever possible, the new hire’s direct manager or supervisor should

be included. The relationship between a new hire and that employee’s direct boss can largely determine how long the employee stays at the company. Depending on the position, it may also be useful to include higher level executives and team members or colleagues who will work with the new hire. By including more people at different levels within the organization, the hiring manager will hopefully gain a more complete picture of each candidate and his or her potential “cultural fit”.

### Preparing the Interviewers

The hiring manager should meet with all of the interviewers in advance to prepare them for the candidate interviews. Some of the interviewers and perhaps, some members of management will think that this is an unnecessary step. It can, however, significantly improve the effectiveness of the interview process. The detailed profile developed for the position at the outset of the search can help the interviewers to better understand the necessary skills and attributes that a candidate must possess. Additionally, it is useful if the company requires each interviewer to complete a short evaluation of how well each candidate matches up with the position requirements, including “cultural fit” and other relevant qualifications.

The hiring manager should also provide the interviewers with some “standard questions” to be asked in each interview and which focus on the most important skills and attributes necessary to succeed in the position and at the company. If each interviewer is allowed to come up with their own questions without any uniformity, evaluating each candidate becomes more difficult. This is not to suggest that the entire interview must be scripted. However, a more “standard process” can aid in the evaluation of candidates and can be a defense against potential discrimination claims by

unsuccessful candidates. It is also important that the interviewers understand what questions they may not ask. Discrimination and privacy laws vary by country or by province, region, or state within a country. If unsure of the legal requirements governing interviews and the hiring process in a particular jurisdiction, the hiring manager should seek the advice of legal counsel. It is also important to understand cultural differences and customs before conducting interviews for an international position. While “cultural gaffes” committed by interviewers may not subject the company to legal liability, they can damage the company’s reputation and potentially hurt global expansion efforts.

### During the Interview

An interview is an opportunity, not only for a company to evaluate a candidate more closely, but also, for the candidate to evaluate the company. Therefore, the company should “roll out the red carpet” and welcome each candidate. It is important that the candidate leave with a favorable impression of the company after the interview. In the “social media age” negative opinions can spread rapidly. One of the worst impressions that an interviewer can give is that he did not bother to prepare for the interview by at least becoming familiar with the candidate’s resume or CV. Asking questions that are easily answered by reviewing those documents is a waste of everyone’s valuable time. Also, while an interviewer should “sell” the highlights of the position and the company, he should allow the candidate to do most of the talking and listen attentively.

The goal of the interview is to find out as much as possible about the candidate. To try and put the candidate more at ease, it is a good idea to start the interview with a little bit of “small talk” (while remembering to avoid impermissible topics). If the candidate is less tense, she will be

***“One of the most important steps in conducting an interview (and the overall hiring process) is to develop a full understanding of the open position - the required experience and skills, responsibilities, and expectations.”***

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more likely to open up to the interviewer and share more information about herself. Also, the interviewer should make sure to ask open ended questions that require more than just a “yes or no” response. Many HR professionals favor behavioral interview questions, which typically require the interviewee to provide specific examples of past experiences in which they demonstrated a key trait or characteristic.

At the conclusion of each interview, the interviewer should thank the candidate for his or her time. Forgetting to extend this common courtesy could leave the candidate with a negative impression of both the interviewer and the company. Also, it is important that each candidate leave with a clear understanding of the “next steps” in the company’s decision-making process.

#### Evaluating the Candidates

The hiring team should meet promptly following the interviews to discuss the interviewers’ evaluations and compare each

candidate against the position profile. Interviews, by their nature, involve subjective evaluations.

However, the interviewers should try to remain as objective as possible in their assessment of each candidate. While an interviewer should not totally ignore his “gut feeling” if something does not “feel right” about a candidate, he must be careful not to allow personal biases to cloud his judgment. A candidate’s potential cultural fit is important, and the interview process often provides the most insight on that subject. However, each member of the hiring team should remember that the ultimate goal is to find the candidate most likely to excel in the position, not a new “best friend”.

Sanford Rose Associates® offices help their clients get the most out of the interview process. At the beginning of each search assignment, Sanford Rose Associates® consultants work closely with their client to develop a comprehensive Position Profile detailing the respon-

sibilities as well as the requirements for success. Based on that Position Profile, Sanford Rose Associates® search consultants identify potential candidates, conduct the initial screening and candidate review on a large number of prospects, and only present those candidates who are a good match for, and genuinely interested in, the opportunity to their client. After presenting this “short list” of qualified candidates within a relatively short time period, Sanford Rose Associates® offices coordinate the interview logistics and details with the candidates and their client. Promptly after the interviews, the search consultants follow up with the candidates and provide valuable “real time” feedback to the company. Improving the quality and efficiency of the interview process is one of the ways that Sanford Rose Associates® search consultants strive to meet the ultimate goal of “finding people who make a difference®” to fill their clients’ critical openings.

*Sep/Oct 2011 - by Rick Carter*

*Submitted by Sanford Rose Legal Search - Portland, ME*

**“...the interviewer should make sure to ask open ended questions that require more than just a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ response.”**

## Legal Recruiting: The Perils of Doing It Yourself

by Jon Lewis, Managing Director, Michael Lord & Company

Particularly in soft job markets, many law firms and in-house legal departments will ask themselves whether they really need to use a legal recruiter to fill an open position. After all, there are a lot of good lawyers out there looking for a job — how hard can it be to find one? And, more importantly, why should they pay a fee to have someone else do it for them?

Fair enough questions, and going it alone can indeed be a reasonable way to search for legal talent in some cases. Before doing so, however, employers should be aware of the potential pitfalls of such an approach, including the following:

**1. Overwhelming Quantity.** In a tight market for lawyers, employers can quite reasonably expect to have few problems in getting resumes. Just post the job on your website and watch the applications come rolling in. What could be easier, right? One problem, however, is that this can actually be too true. A posting for a reasonably attractive position can sometimes quickly generate an avalanche of candidates, many of whom are horribly desperate and even more horribly unqualified. There is a paradox here: the same tough times that make it easy to get resumes from a job

posting are exactly when such a posting is most likely to generate a flood of paper that would be useful to have a recruiter sift through. This issue may not be too troublesome for a large firm or corporation with staff dedicated to recruitment, but for a smaller organization, a huge stack of resumes can become too much of a good thing.

**2. Insufficient Quality.** Most job seekers prefer to work with a recruiter if they can. Recruiters provide a variety of services (including resume review, market intelligence, interview preparation, etc.), all at no cost

**“There is a paradox here: the same tough times that make it easy to get resumes from a job posting are exactly when such a posting is most likely to generate a flood of paper that would be useful to have a recruiter sift through.”**

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to the candidate. Obviously, recruiters offer such services because they hope to earn a fee by placing the candidate, but will not do so for candidates whose credentials they do not feel are strong enough to lead to a placement. (Shocking, I know, but saintly altruists are actually quite rare in the recruiting industry.) As a result, when an employer declines to work with recruiters, they are effectively making it more difficult for the higher-quality candidates using those recruiters to learn of the opening/submit resumes. Of course, some strong candidates will both work with a recruiter and take the additional step of submitting resumes directly for positions not open to recruiters. However, many good candidates will rely almost exclusively on recruiters to present them with appropriate opportunities, either because they are too busy with work to look on their own or are not actively considering new employment unless/until something attractive is presented to them. For this reason, the decision by an employer to forego recruiters has the net effect of disproportionately reducing the number of high-quality resumes likely to be received.

**3. Paper Tigers.** Sometimes, resumes lie. And not just in the sense that candidates may deliberately falsify information (though that unfortunately does happen from time to time). Even

candidates who legitimately offer outstanding paper credentials in terms of academic achievement, legal experience, and job stability may not be good candidates for a particular position. Factors not apparent from a resume (such as personality issues, long-term career objectives, salary requirements, etc.) can be major stumbling blocks. While a good recruiter can often sniff out such problems before submitting a resume, an employer who opts against using a recruiter can expect to more frequently experience the disappointment (and waste of time) resulting when an interview reveals that the candidate who looked like a handsome prince on paper is an ugly toad in the real world.

**4. Misreading Candidate Interest Levels.** When candidates are in the midst of the interview process, they have every incentive to convey enthusiasm to the firm/company that is looking to hire. Even if candidates have reservations about the desirability/suitability of a particular opportunity, they will often not disclose that to the potential employer, figuring that they might as well get an offer even if they are likely to turn it down. Recruiters can often be a valuable resource in helping their clients better understand which candidates are, and are not, likely to accept an offered position. For this reason, employers who go it alone in hiring run a greater risk of wasting time on candidates who

probably aren't going to join them at the end of the day.

**5. Negotiation Hangover.** Even candidates and employers who are very well suited to one another sometimes have a hard time ironing out all the terms of a deal. An experienced recruiter can often help with the negotiation process, if nothing else than by serving as an intermediary who takes the heat from both sides. If protracted negotiations are handled directly between the parties, there is a greater risk that one or both sides may wind up harboring resentments towards the other (rather than towards a recruiter) before employment even starts. Not an auspicious way to begin a relationship.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

*Jon Lewis is a Managing Director with Michael Lord & Company. Jon graduated from Yale Law School and Wesleyan University and is formerly a trademark counsel at Joseph E. Seagram & Company and an associate at the predecessor firm to the New York City office of Dorsey & Whitney. His direct dial is 646.431.3431, and his email address is [jon@mlordco.com](mailto:jon@mlordco.com).*



**“...an employer who opts against using a recruiter can expect to more frequently experience the disappointment (and waste of time) resulting when an interview reveals that the candidate who looked like a handsome prince on paper is an ugly toad in the real world.”**

## **Do the Right Thing**

I recently was approached by an associate at one of my top boutique clients who was considering making a lateral move. This associate was one of the few at my client's firm we had not placed, so we were technically in the clear under the NALSC code of ethics – we had not solicited the candidate, he was not a past placed candidate, and we did not have an existing mandate from the firm at the time. However, the client is

longstanding, does all their search work through our firm, and the managing partner would almost certainly know of our involvement in his associate's departure were we to assist.

We met with the associate, had a good chat (great guy, just wrong fit for his current firm), and in the end we discussed with the candidate we felt it would be very difficult for us to work with him in securing his next

position. We gave him a good sense of the market, some factors to consider as to why he might want to stay with his current employer, but if not, what other issues he should consider in making the move. He really wanted us to assist him in making the move, but we indicated we just simply couldn't act as his representative in the market given our strong relationship with his employer. In the end,

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he ended up moving to a competitor firm on his own. Shortly thereafter, we got a call from our client indicating he needed to hire another associate, and that he probably should stick to using a recruiter for his hiring needs, as his independent hiring efforts weren't nearly as successful as

our placements (in five years, we've not had a single placement leave his firm). Nice outcome for all parties involved.

*resolution of the dilemma presented.*

What would you do?

*Note: "Do the Right Thing" is not reviewed by the NALSC® Ethics Committee, nor does NALSC® approve or disapprove of the thought process or proposed*

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