

Well THAT Was a Surprise!

After the Accepted Offer – It's Not Necessarily a Done Deal

by Audrey Rabinowitz, Esq.

I've been very surprised at the increasing issues with new hires at all levels over the last two years. The pandemic caused some attorneys to change their priorities and remote work has been both a blessing and a curse. The disappointments that my clients and I have suffered included a partner candidate who got a better offer the week before the start date, a counsel who got off to a very poor start, and an associate who started amid wedding planning and was distracted. Some of these situations were successfully resolved. Others were not.

As legal recruiters inside and outside the law firm, a candidate's acceptance of an offer isn't the time to breathe easy and exchange high-fives. There's still work to be done to ensure the placement sticks.

The most important key to success is communication – between recruiters, the client, and the candidate. This is the key to avoiding/resolving almost any early arising issues:

Ideally, prior to the start date, recruiters and their firm contacts will discuss with each other and prepare the candidate about:

- What the on-boarding process look like.
- Mentoring in a hybrid or remote setting.
- Identifying contacts at the firm for administrative, mentoring, personal questions.
- Designating a person at the firm who will check in with the new hire.
- Expectations about how to communicate with the team and the firm culture in terms of open doors, etc.
- Encouraging communication as soon as possible if a new hire is having problems.
- If necessary, consider extending the guarantee period so that the firm can try to make it work (rather than terminating.)
- Outside recruiters make sure your client understands that you are there to assist them for the long term, that you have built a relationship with the new hire and may be able to assist if there are problems at the outset.

Outside recruiters should also talk with their candidates about:

- What to do if they receive another offer after they've accepted, (or started) a position. (Immediately reach out to you! You may be able resolve it quickly by talking it through or addressing it with the firm.)
- Explain that there's an expected ramp up period regarding work product. This affords a unique window to ask questions and make sure they're starting on the right track.
- Remind them that it takes time to get comfortable. This can be even more challenging with hybrid or remote work. Any issues should be brought to your attention right away.
- Clearly explain that the first 30-90 days are essential to developing a great first and lasting impression. A bad first impression will also be a lasting one. And encourage them to:
 - ◇ Be friendly and willing. Make life easier for the team.
 - ◇ Be responsive – to emails, calls, texts, etc. This means ASAP!
 - ◇ Meet deadlines! And if it's not possible, tell them so.
 - ◇ Reach out and ask for feedback on work if none is provided.
 - ◇ Work hard and keep busy. Ask for work if there's not enough – but don't overdo it such that assignments can't be completed well or on time. That said, put in the hours to make sure the job is done well.

- ◇ LISTEN – to feedback. Sometimes colleagues are indirect in expressing concerns. If unsure about how things are going – ask!
- ◇ If they're unhappy – for any reason – find someone to talk to (i.e., recruiter).
- ◇ Stick with it. It takes time to get comfortable. Persevere.

Everyone – recruiters, law firms, and especially candidates – have worked hard to get to the start date. Everyone is primed for a successful outcome. Work together to make it happen!

Now, it's your turn to surprise us! Please send info@NALSC.org the most surprising thing you've encountered in your recruiting career. We'll select one and a member of the newsletter committee will work with you to craft an article for the next newsletter. We might learn something unexpected!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Audrey Rabinowitz, Esq.
Legal Recruiter at Marina Sirras & Associates LLC

P: (914) 907-8186
E: Arabinowitz@lawseek.com
W: www.lawseek.com