



How BCG Screens Candidates

By A. Harrison Barnes, Esq.

Hiring organizations are often surprised to learn that more than 50 percent of the work done by our professional search consultants involves screening candidates. Before you ever meet a candidate of ours, one of our search consultants has already dedicated many hours to answering one fundamental question. After reviewing all of our basic screening factors (which we will explore in more detail below), you must ascertain whether the candidate has the potential to become a truly valuable resource to your legal-hiring organization.

A Different Type of Motivation is Involved in Our Screening Process

Is it difficult for you to believe that we will only present candidates to you who have the potential to become truly valuable resources to your legal-hiring organization? Our recruiters know that their success is dependent upon making placements that work. Period. You can rest assured that a candidate will never be presented to you unless one of our recruiters believes that the individual is a good candidate, someone who has a realistic chance of joining your organization and succeeding on the job.

Our internal statistics indicate that although we receive thousands of new resumes each year, we are actually choosing to work with only the top five percent of these potential candidates. In fact, we believe that we are more selective about choosing our candidates than any other search firm in the United States. Due to our thorough screening process and high standards, almost every one of the candidates we choose to work with will eventually find full-time employment through BCG Attorney Search. Like any organization focused on realizing its long-term objectives, we are painfully aware of the fact that our credibility is on the line each time we present a new candidate to you. Accordingly, we make every effort to ensure that our standards remain high as we concentrate on making placements that your hiring organization and our candidates will deem successful. In pursuing this goal, we sometimes will present candidates to you who would not typically be presented by other search firms.

Screening for the Obvious

On a daily basis, we refuse to work with attorneys other recruiters might readily choose to represent. We only make these decisions after we've talked with the individuals and discerned that they are potential trouble. We do not want to present an individual to you who

1. is not committed to the practice of law,
2. is unsure of what he/she wants,
3. has experienced significant problems at his/her current

legal-hiring organization,

4. is looking at several markets in addition to the one you are in, or
5. has simply managed to "rub us the wrong way."

We refuse to work with approximately 25 percent of those who might be considered otherwise qualified, except for the reasons listed above. Out of this 25 percent, more than one half of the candidates have qualifications on paper that would normally enable them to get hired by a top (AmLaw 100) law firm.

Screening for the Less Obvious Factors

We approach our work in a highly personal, yet methodical way. We use a sophisticated database that updates our files on a daily basis with news about many legal-hiring organizations. We attempt to understand what you do, where you are going, and the nature of your hiring needs. We also keep meticulous records on the types of candidates we have presented to you in the past and which ones you have chosen to interview. These records help us identify new candidates you may want to consider in the future.

When we recruit candidates, we never limit our review to simply noting which law school they attended, their grade point average, their current employment situation, and their past work experience. We recognize that a law school grade point average can be affected by such factors as the academic quality of the institution, the difficulty of the legal courses selected by the candidate, and the possible presence of grade inflation at the particular institution. When reviewing individual candidates, BCG Attorney Search tries to take such factors as those listed above into account. However, we also take other factors into account that may be missed by those who do not put as much thought into what they do as our search consultants. These other factors may include

1. The candidate's perceived degree of motivation,
2. The candidate's presentation,
3. The candidate's work experiences outside the field of law,



Articles from the CEO

4. Evidence that the candidate has overcome significant life obstacles to enter and stay in the practice of law,
5. The maturity gained by an individual from other life experiences after choosing to step away from the practice of law for a period of years,
6. A rising trend in academic performance versus solid but unexceptional work,
7. Financial pressure requiring employment during law school,
8. Significant personal achievement in extracurricular work while in college or law school. Other notable work or military experience. Prior training and background in an unusual area, and
9. In addition, economic, social, or educational obstacles that have been overcome successfully by a candidate have contributed to favorable consideration. Other similar factors also are considered.

Legal hiring organizations generally seek to maintain a diverse group of attorneys; this creates an environment in which the free exchange of ideas and viewpoints can flourish. It also provides a rich experience for both employees and clients. In an effort to help provide this diversity, our search consultants actively recruit minority candidates during our screening process. We do not shy away from stating that ethnicity is a factor that we consider, in conjunction with other, more typical background information, when choosing which candidates we would like to represent.

We also consider unique and challenging personal experiences a candidate has faced. Did the candidate confront and surmount life's difficulties with grace, courage, and

effectiveness? Is this a candidate that shows compassion and concern for the welfare of those around him/her? Factors like these help us to assess a candidate's ability to be both objective and responsive to the needs of a diverse client base. They can enhance the chances for both minority and non-minority candidates.

We should add that the failure to respond with vigor and effectiveness to opportunities created by affluence or sacrifice on the part of one's family or other benefactors is viewed negatively in the assessment. We continue to believe that this policy is right for both the institutions we serve and consistent with current and controlling legal mandates, which we intend to fully respect and follow.

Our multilayered approach often requires the legal-hiring organizations we serve to look "beneath the surface" so that they can see the considerable thought and analysis that have gone into presenting a specific candidate to them. Obviously, the name of the law school attended, the grades earned during law school, and the quality of each candidate's past legal experiences are the primary determinants we use when deciding if we want to present a particular candidate to you. Unless an applicant has good "paper qualifications," the chances are rather slim that we will choose to work with him/her.

However, we should add that each year, we choose to work with some applicants whose "paper qualifications" are a bit below those frequently presented by attorneys seeking jobs with top-tier law firms. We do this because these applicants have other truly impressive credentials.

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