Surprisingly Powerful Tools for Hiring Legal Marketing Professionals

Hints of spring are in the air, making this is an excellent time to take stock of your legal marketing department to determine your recruiting and hiring priorities for the rest of the year. Should your law firm retain IT and project management professionals in-house or outsource those functions? Where can you recruit A-list players to join your team and sign up for your mission? What incentive packages would make your firm desirable to work for these ideal recruits? To identify your strategic possibilities, you have to assess many changing variables .

As a board member of a nonprofit organization, I recently participated on a search committee to fill a dynamic, multifaceted position. While the position itself had nothing to do with legal marketing, its requirements floored me: They were *exactly* what you'd want from the ideal legal marketer. When looking to add strength to your team, consider these three factors.

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Skills Versus Qualities

Graphic designers, IT experts and website engineers obviously must possess a core set of skills just to do their jobs. Before you even start recruiting legal marketing professionals, clearly identify the skills your candidate will need. Pay attention to the subtle differences between skills and qualities. For example, someone who has good communication *skills* – writes well, presents well, is easily accessible, etc. – may not relate well to people. Someone with excellent design skills might not have good leadership qualities. Be mindful of what the position requires to make sure that the job description explains both the skills *and* the qualities you need for it.

Management Style

Will the person be managing a team? If so, learn about the candidate's management style. How frequently does he or she communicate with current team members? Does he or she use email, in-person meetings, Skype or some combination of channels and, if so, why? How does he or she handle personnel problems? What's the feedback process? Is the candidate open to constructive criticism, and can he or she deliver such criticism to others in a positive way?

What about project management? Does the candidate know how to create law firm marketing plans and budgets, and manage teams? Ask how he or she would handle scope creep or the inevitable challenges that come with big projects.

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Culture

Most organizations, particularly law firms, have very strong cultures. Know the quirks of your organization. Figure out whether the candidate will embrace your culture and share your values. Offer specific examples of how you do things and of the firm's historical attitudes and policies. Be honest. Your culture and values are likely to be polarizing. This is good, in that you want everyone to believe in what you're doing. At the same time, you want to avoid trying to push a round peg into a square hole, metaphorically speaking.

Finally, as you take stock of candidates, be introspective. Do you have all of the skills and qualities you need to do *your* job as well as you can? Is there an area where you need improvement? If so, think about taking a class or attending a conference to strengthen areas of weakness; doing so will benefit both your firm and yourself.

Feel free to email me or leave a comment with tips on hiring people for your law firm marketing department at sholtzman@jaffepr.com.