**How to Engage with an Agency Recruiter**

**What Is a Recruitment/Staffing Agency?**

A recruitment or staffing agency matches job seekers to open positions at a variety of companies. These agencies will be focused in many different areas, such as human resources, technology, legal, administration, and accounting/finance.

**How Do Recruitment/Staffing Agencies Work?**

A company pays an agency to find candidates for its open positions. The company is paying for the agency’s database of candidates and relying on recruiters as the first line of defense to screen out candidates who aren’t the right fit.

**Why Are They Important?**

Companies rely on agencies for their network of candidates to fill positions quickly. The main reasons companies enlist an agency include:

* To outsource the recruiting function entirely
* To supplement the current recruiting department to fill an excess of positions
* To fill specialized positions

**How Do I Find an Agency?**

Most agencies specialize in a specific function. Simply conduct a Google search of staffing/recruitment agencies by location and discipline. A list will populate with area agencies. Research the agency’s website to gain more information about the company and its specialization, as well as to view any open positions.

**How Do I Know Which Agency to Choose?**

You want to research and choose an agency that is focused on your target market. The best way to identify the agencies to work with is to engage in a conversation with a recruiter.

**What Is the Best Way to Connect with a Recruiter?**

Agency recruiters are in the business of placing job seekers. It’s how they earn their living. The best method to connect with a recruiter is to submit your resume via the agency’s online portal, then call the agency’s main number and request to speak to a recruiter. If you saw a specific position on the agency’s website that was of interest to you, reference that position when speaking to the recruiter.

**Do I Have to Work with Every Recruiter I Contact?**

No, you do not. You want to work with agency recruiters you trust and who have the types of positions you are targeting. Ask questions to gain a better understanding of the recruiter’s style and approach to the job market. Below are a few questions to ask:

* What are the most popular positions you staff in the software development world?
* What types of skills and qualifications are the top priorities for your clients?
* How many clients are you working with currently who are looking for talent in the software development field?
* Are you currently recruiting for open positions that I might be a good match for?
* What is the best method of communication for you?
* How often should I touch base with you?

**How Many Recruiters Can (and Should) I Work with at One Time?**

The general rule of thumb is three to five agency recruiters at one time. If you engage with more than five, it can get a bit confusing tracking conversations and positions.

When working with agency recruiters, keep in mind that although they want to place you in a position, the one that pays the bills (the company) is their client. Agency recruiters will send their most qualified candidates (usually the top five) to their clients for a position. Following are a few tips to gain access to the top-five status:

* Treat the interview just like you would any other professional interview. Candidates often make the mistake of thinking it’s not a real interview because the agency recruiter isn’t the client. Agency recruiters will only recommend those candidates who they believe will represent them well when interfacing with their clients.
* Prepare. Ensure you have your professional value proposition perfected, along with why you would be a good fit for the position or a great candidate, to present to their clients.
* Showcase flexibility. Agency recruiters want to work with candidates who are positive and flexible, meaning you should be willing to discuss opportunities. If you provide them with a very narrow focus as far as the type of position, company, salary range, or location, it will be more difficult for them to present opportunities to you.

Agency recruiters can offer a wealth of insight, even if they don’t have the right position for you. Tap into their knowledge of the job market, current hiring trends, and the top qualifications companies are seeking. Remember, agency recruiters can expand not only your job search knowledge but also your professional network.