

Legal Recruitment News - March 2020

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Legal Job Market Report

Legal Recruitment - busy market

Each month we run a comparison between the last calendar month and the same time period in 2019 to see if there has been any noticeable difference. In January we saw very little change from 2019 to 2020.

So how was February 2020 compared to February 2019?

We saw a 29% increase in the number of permanent vacancies registered with us, which is a good sign of a busy market. We expect the March statistics to be fascinating. I have not known a start to the month of March before where the phone has stopped ringing during the day - it is one of the busiest months of the year across our companies as clients look to spend budgets before the end of the tax year. This year the phone has hardly rung at all. I am not sure whether law firms are finding this as well, but it has been a very very quiet start to March and we think it is down to Covid-19. I suspect there are other more pressing issues in everyone's minds than reading CVs or making job applications! There is plenty of work out there - mainly from our well established clients who have worked with us for years if not decades - but new business is down. The market is busy generally, although in house roles are still scarce.

Statistics

General Statistics for February 2020 (comparison is with February 2019)

Current live vacancies: 1008

New permanent vacancies added: 44 (34)

New locum vacancies added: 20 (16)

New candidates registering: 60 (67)

We have 33 law firms for sale at the moment [for details of current law firms for sale please click here to view our list.](#)

Candidate Database Statistics - February 2020

London Candidates: 3058

Midlands Candidates: 1198

North East Candidates: 844

North West Candidates: 992

South East England Candidates: 4829

South West England Candidates: 512

Northern Ireland: 22

Scotland: 64

Wales: 395

Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives

March 2020 Locum Solicitor & ILEX Rates

Child Care - £35-45 per hour (very difficult to source locums).

Civil Litigation – £28-35 per hour.

Commercial Contract - £35-75 per hour

Commercial Litigation – £35-75 per hour.

Company Commercial – £45-85 per hour.

Construction (non-contentious) £60-75, (contentious) £45-60 per hour

Conveyancing – £30-37 per hour.

Commercial Property – £35-55 per hour

Employment Solicitors – £30-50 per hour.

Family Solicitors – £30-35 per hour+.

In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £25-40 per hour,

In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £45-105 per hour

In House Interim Advisors (SME) - £55-65 per hour

Insolvency - £30-60 per hour.

IP - £50-85 per hour

Local authority rates: variable.

Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence – 3+ years PQE – £25-£40 per hour.

Professional Negligence - £45-55 per hour

Wills & Probate – £35-50 per hour, going up to £55 per hour. Average currently around £40-45.

More private client locums available this year.

NB all rates exclude agency fees. The rates are for self-employed locums billing firms directly on a weekly basis.

A third class degree and re-entering the law

A graduate has recently written to us to ask us for advice on what to do with a third class degree and a potential legal career. The graduate finished at university in September 2017 with a third class law degree and his query to us also stated the fact that he had not got any legal work experience during his law degree or after. What type of job would be suitable for him?

Our advice is fairly simple: if you have not got any legal experience and have worked in non-related law fields since graduating (this particular graduate had only worked as a barman) then your chances of getting into law are bordering on zero if not into the minus figures.

Quite how anyone can go through 3 years of a law degree, finish, work in a non-professional job and then think that in any way, shape or form they could possibly get into law and progress a career is just beyond me. This is a classic example of the need to get work experience in any profession that you were thinking of going into. I have lost track of the amount of times over the years I have given out this advice, which is the same every single time someone like this gets in touch. If you have a third class law degree your chances of ever getting a job in law are very slim because there are so many other people looking for work, and so few of them have a third class law degree. Furthermore, by not actually seeing what work a solicitor does whilst studying or even afterwards leaves me to wonder why on earth you would want to come back into law when you don't even know what a solicitor actually does.

There are plenty of solicitors and lawyers out there with third class degrees who have qualified and have enjoyed extensive careers in law, but they are usually people who have strived to succeed, obtained experience, have connections or built connections and worked extremely hard to get where they are. It is very rare to meet someone who is working as a waiter with a third class degree and absolutely no legal work experience walking into a legal job without any effort at all.

This advice may sound unbelievably harsh and fairly cruel.

It is. But so is the world. After all, if you are enjoying your work as a waiter or a barman, why not look into staying in that field rather than going into something completely different? Have you considered opening your own bar or restaurant, or looking at getting qualified into management in the hospitality industry? Have a think, but whatever you do make sure your decision is backed up with actual evidence rather than just wishful thinking.

Interview Questions & Answers Series

Each month we include 2 interview questions and model answers for popular (or unpopular) interview questions, with advice from our Managing Director. If you would like an ebook with over 50+ of these questions and model answers, please email Jonathan Fagan at jbfagan@ten-percent.co.uk and we'll send it over to you - no charge.

You can also view our free online legal job interview training videos on our website - <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/interview-advice/>. 100 minutes of advice on technique, interview styles, dealing with technical questions, etc.. Some of the footage is a bit grainy, but the advice is good!

Interview Question 37 – Did you feel you progressed satisfactorily in your last job?

Advice

This is a loaded question, if you say anything negative about a former employer it immediately makes the interviewer think you are likely to consider them in a similar fashion in a few years' time. If however your application to the firm has been on the basis that there has been a lack of progression in your current firm and therefore you are happy to look at alternatives you will need to get this over to the firm and make them understand that this is the reason you are looking to move. Remember that at all times in an interview you need to be positive. You can be positive and at the same time make comments that could be classed as either a criticism or an admission of weakness, provided it is dressed up correctly. For example you are answering this question to say that you are looking for a move because there was a lack of progression in your firm job, you could dress this up by explaining that your current employer has a lack of opportunities at the level

you are looking to get into because there are a number of long service employees in those roles who do not anticipate leaving or retiring for some time and therefore your options are limited. At the same time you could explain to the interviewer that your current employer has been very supportive and tried to give you encouragement and progress new responsibilities wherever possible, but the opportunity is simply not there. Try to avoid making any comments about poor management or colleagues who are in jobs you feel you ought to have. This is indicative of somebody who is likely to have an awkward personality or who is going to be scheming and trying to get rid of colleagues through their actions.

Examples of Answers

"I am very happy with my existing firm. They have been very supportive throughout my time there, provided me with any training I have asked for and given me all the encouragement to expand my knowledge and skill base. Unfortunately there is no opportunity to progress within the firm because the next stage up has long term employees in the roles who do not expect to be moving within the next ten to fifteen years. It is perhaps an example of why I enjoy working at the firm because the workplace is a positive and happy one as well as productive, and people stay a very long term there. My current firm know that I am looking to progress my career and have given me every encouragement in my training to ensure that I am able to do this when the time is right, either with them or with an alternative firm. They have already offered me an outstanding reference if I did decide to leave."

Interview Question 38 – Did you increase sales or profits in your last job?

Advice

This is a difficult question if you have not worked in a senior managerial post or sales and profits did not increase in your last job. This is also difficult if you are applying at a time of recession rather than at a time of boom because sales and profits do not necessarily increase in a time of recession. It may be as much of an achievement to maintain constant levels or to only see profits diminish by half as opposed to more than half. One thing is very clear with this question is that you do need to make sure that you provide evidence when answering. If you did not do a job that would necessarily increase sales or profits it is highly likely this question would not be asked anyway.

Examples of Answers

"Yes. I started my last position in 2006 at which time sales levels were £2.5 million with a profit margin of 40%. Through implementation of a savings plan as well as aggressively expanding our marketing programme, we managed to increase sales by 25% and expand the profit margin to 60%".

Or:

"I started my last post in the middle of the recession in 2008 with the short term plan to stabilise sale levels and to ensure the long term survival of the company. I managed to maintain the existing level of sales through replacing regular clients who had gone out of business with a new stream of work that in the medium to long term will hopefully increase the profitability of the company".

Or:

"My role in my present firm does not enable me to have much say on sales and profit levels as I am undertaking more on a process role as opposed to a development role. This is something I

wish to change as I am very keen to get more involved on the management side”.

Lawyers & accountants earn at least £80,000 a year, if not a lot more.

In November 2019, during the winter election campaign, a BBC Question Time audience member informed the panel that he was a member of the working class and considered that £80,000 salary was not a lot of money and that it was a bit of a struggle surviving on this. He expressed incredulity, along with a significant portion of the audience, when Richard Burgon, a Labour MP, stated that he had been a solicitor before getting into parliament, and that his salary had been £40,000.

It is one of the oldest examples of fake news that exists in society today, and dates back many years. Solicitors & accountants are considered by the general population to earn a lot more money than the average wage. The big 4 firms in accountancy and the city law firms in London distort the figures somewhat and make headline news, detracting away from the reality for the majority of fee earners in both professions.

Our own consultants were astonished to hear this assertion because we work with solicitors in all parts of the profession, including the high street and at sole practitioner level, and we know that salary levels for 90% of solicitors are lower than £45k.

Similarly we also work with accountancy practices and undertake the recruitment of senior accountants. We know that exactly the same issue arises. At least 75% of accountants working in public practice do not earn more than £45,000 per year.

It is unfortunate that this perception exists because it does mean increasing numbers of people applying to enter the legal profession and the accountancy profession without actually knowing the true facts as to how hard it is to make a living out of accountancy or law, and that the vast majority of lawyers and accountants do not earn large amounts of money.

The next time somebody stands up on a mainstream political show and states that lawyers and accountants earn huge amounts of money, maybe, just maybe, somebody on the show can be well enough informed to correct the obvious fake news immediately, before they spread the myth even further. Its good news for the various universities offering LLB, ACCA and LPC courses, but I am not sure about the professions in general.

Salary Reviews - how to succeed

Annual reviews are one area of practice that a lot of lawyers deal with poorly as they fail to prepare for them, and do not appreciate the opportunity.

Annual reviews can consist of an apologetic partner ticking boxes on a pre-printed form, whether to simply add the form to your file to comply with internal requirements, or for external assessors to see. They can also be spent discussing irrelevant issues such as a case you dealt with last month that was of particular interest.

Some firms take the opportunity to tell you how poor your billing levels are, and how lucky you are that you have a position still let alone a payrise.

Think of an annual review in the following way:

Check the current rate of inflation. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices> - this is the Office for National Statistics.

Consider your current costs for getting to work. Any equipment you are required to own (books, bags, suits etc..) Travel costs including car maintenance, train tickets, car parking fees, lunch and snacks costs.

Calculate your earnings for the firm in the past 12 months, not forgetting work in progress, any repeat clients that will come back, and any benefits you have gained for the firm.

Know your worth - when asked (if asked) what you should be paid (some firms do this to pass the buck!) bear all of the above in mind and have a figure ready that you think is reasonable and justified.

Consider the ancient 1/3 rule of thumb that a lot of solicitors firms work to – 1/3 wage, 1/3 profit and 1/3 overheads is the old method for paying a salary.

Concentrate on the matter to hand – you are speaking to the partner or HR Director specifically to assess how much you are worth to the company – do not be sidetracked.

Be firm and confident. Tell your employers what you think you are worth and do not be embarrassed. Give them the figure required for the firm to retain the benefit of you working for them. Have the thought in your mind that it is an honour for the firm to employ you and utilise your expertise, not vice versa.

Consider other options to salary increases – targeted bonuses, payments for any overtime worked, payments for clients introduced, expenses, golf club membership (it happens), extra annual leave arrangements, flexible hours, an option to work from home, car park permits, health club membership, private health insurance, pension contributions, profit share or partnership offers either immediate or within 24 months etc..

Ask for increased Annual Leave. If a pay rise is refused because the firm cannot afford it, ask for additional annual leave in lieu of a pay rise. If you don't ask, you don't get.

If you Fail - if you get an offer of a rise you consider unreasonable think carefully about your next move. One option is to decline the offer immediately and request a higher figure. Another option is to look elsewhere for work in the meantime. It is important to be careful here – if there are no other posts out there, you may be cutting your nose off to spite your face if you decline and demand extra money.

Do not miss the opportunity - above all do not miss the opportunity to progress your career – if like most lawyers you only get one chance each year to promote yourself and obtain a higher income it would be a shame to miss it and spend the rest of the year stewing it over!

Low Cost Recruitment for Solicitors - Ten Percent Unlimited and Chancery Lane

We offer not one but two lower cost budget recruitment services.

1. Ten Percent Unlimited

Recruit as many staff as you like over a set period of time (3 or 5 years) for a low monthly fee starting at just £65 plus VAT. We offer this service to law firms and accountancy practices. There are no restrictions on numbers and no other similar services exist in the recruitment industry. You can save £000s on your ongoing recruitment. Includes unlimited job posting on www.chancerylane.co.uk. Interested? Call Clare Fagan on 0207 127 4343 or email clare.fagan@ten-percent.co.uk. www.tenpercentunlimited.co.uk.

2. ChanceryLane.co.uk

Our online jobs board. We have used this ourselves for years as a useful source of candidates

from time to time. It is picked up by Google Jobs amongst other aggregators and has been around for over 10 years. This year we have decided to allow anyone to post onto the board for just £50 per vacancy. No time limit - keep the vacancy live for as long as it takes you to recruit and full CVs are sent over to you automatically when a candidate applies. For details please visit www.chancerylane.co.uk or give us a ring on 0800 246 5001.

How to be a Locum - pdf guide

We have produced a guide on how to be a locum. This includes sections on getting work, realistic expectations, hourly rates, popular fields of law, payment, insurance, umbrella companies and much more. Available for download or to read online from www.interimlawyers.co.uk.

Outsourcing Transcription

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About Ten-Percent Legal Recruitment

We are a specialist legal recruiter, covering both permanent and locum roles across the whole of the UK. Over 11,000 lawyers are registered with us and we have access to a range of external and internal job boards and websites where we do not have candidates available ourselves. We also assist with recruitment advice and assistance, regularly advising partners and practice managers on suitable salary and package levels.

Our company is unique for a number of reasons, including the fact that we are not shy to publish our fee structure and also donate a chunk of our profits to charity each year. We offer unlimited permanent and locum recruitment for a fixed monthly fee or one-off fees depending on the job. We also buy and sell law firms. We donate 10% of our profits annually to charity, hence our name.

We have three recruitment consultants, Jonathan Fagan, Clare Fagan and Peter Gresty. As a team we have over 40 years of experience in the legal profession.

Ten-Percent Legal Recruitment also owns Interim Lawyers, a specialist locum service. We operate an outsourced UK based typing service as well – www.tptranscription.co.uk and are preferred suppliers to a number of institutional clients and law firms across the UK and overseas.

The Ten-Percent Group of Legal Recruitment websites gives 10% of annual profits to charity. We have maintained this tradition since we formed the company 19 years ago. So far over £100k has been donated to charities in the UK and Africa including LawCare, Unlock and Reprieve.

We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter and look forward to hearing from you if we can assist further.

Warm regards

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