

Legal Recruitment News - 17th August 2022

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Good morning and welcome to the August 2022 edition of Legal Recruitment News. It includes our legal job market report, locum hourly rates, what is a reasonable pay rise, effective interview techniques, PII broker notification, our charity donation, and more.

Legal Job Market Report - August 2022

Here is our summary of the current state of the legal job market:

Locum Recruitment - Very Busy

The market is incredibly busy and we continue the theme from last month, which is if we can get a locum expressing an interest for a role, we are very pleased with our performance (its usual to have at least 2-3 locums per assignment to choose from). Remote working is still the primary requirement for a lot of locums, and we still find it much easier to source remote working locums than office based in most areas of the UK. One major issue is permanent recruitment and the huge disparity between employee and employer expectations, which is continuing. Local authorities have experienced similar problems in recruitment for years (local authority locums get paid a lot more than salaried local authority lawyers and hence it can be very hard to fill salaried local authority roles). We think private practice may go the same way too and end up more dependent on ad hoc consultants than they do salaried fee earners. All areas of locum work are busy - in house corporate commercial, family, private client. Notable exceptions as usual are personal injury and employment law.

Locum assignment updates here: <https://www.interimlawyers.co.uk/category/locum-solicitor-updates/>

Permanent Recruitment - Very Busy

This section of our newsletter is starting sound a bit like a stuck CD. Finding PAYE/salaried staff for any jobs at the moment is hard work - last month we only had 29 new candidates registering, which is the lowest figure for a very long time indeed. There is a shortage of just about everyone other

than inexperienced paralegals and one of the hardest jobs for us at the moment is managing expectations - employers looking for employees. Difficulties arise primarily around remote working and salary levels. Candidates want figures far higher than firms can often afford and wages to attract candidates need to be higher than levels we are seeing a number of firms try to recruit at. Most recruitment for us is taking place from our database of existing candidates rather than job posting, which is having much less effect generally as the months go on.

Vacancies can be viewed here:<https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/vacancies/>

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

Slightly quieter than usual at the moment from buyers and sellers due to the summer break. Our valuation & exit advice services are however extremely busy as law firm owners consider their plans prior to the PII renewal season. We have a couple of very keen buyers chasing law firm shell sales at the moment, which probably ties in with the PII renewals.

Full list at <https://www.jonathanfagan.co.uk/law-accountancy-firms-for-sale/>. For valuations, exit planning or a confidential discussion about a potential sale or acquisition generally please ring 01824 780937 and speak to Jonathan Fagan or email jf@jonathanfagan.co.uk

Ten Percent Legal Recruitment Statistics

General Statistics for July 2022 (bracketed number is for July 2021)

New permanent vacancies added: 31 (30)

New locum vacancies added: 48 (39)

New candidates registering: 29 (47)

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs UK August 2022

Summary:

Slowest increase in permanent placements for 17 months

Demand for staff rises at softest rate since March 2021

Downturn in staff supply eases, but pay pressures remain acute

Commentary from Claire Warnes, Head of Education, Skills and Productivity at KPMG UK

"The trend of uncertainty in the UK jobs market of the last few months continues, as overall hiring activity saw another slowdown in July. Given the challenging economic outlook, employers are rightly hesitant about their hiring plans. But to compound this, a lack of suitable candidates and an overall skills shortage in most sectors are keeping starting salaries high. As the cost-of-living crisis continues to bite - alongside rising inflation - workers may well choose to stay where they are rather than risk job security by moving now."

Commentary from Kate Shoesmith, REC Deputy CEO

"The jobs market remains solid. Demand for staff continues to rise, as it has done since early 2021, rising in every sector. Starting salaries are still growing too, making this a good time for jobseekers to be looking for their next role. However, growth in permanent hiring has softened in recent months. We've seen that rising fuel and energy prices, inflation and labour shortages are impacting employer confidence. Labour and skills shortages are also restricting opportunities for both the private and public sector to meet consumer demand."



Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives

August 2022 Locum Hourly Rates - Solicitors and Legal Executives

NB: Remote Working Role rates are about 10% lower.

Child Care - £40-£50 per hour.

Civil Litigation – £32-£37 per hour.

Commercial Contract - £35-£75 per hour

Commercial Litigation – £35-£75 per hour.

Company Commercial – £50-£90 per hour.

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

Conveyancing - £35 per hour and upwards (NB rates now a minimum of £40-45 per hour for annual leave cover until the end of September)

Commercial Property – £45-£60 per hour

Employment Solicitors – £30-£45 per hour.

Family Solicitors – £32-£40 per hour.

In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £35-£50 per hour,

In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £50-£95 per hour

In House Interim Lawyers (SMEs) - £50-£75 per hour

Insolvency - £45-£55 per hour.

IP - £55-80 per hour

Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence – 3+ years PQE – £35-£45 per hour.

Professional Negligence - £45-£55 per hour.

Wills & Probate – £45-£60 per hour.

We have an online calculator to convert hourly rates to salary equivalents [-click here](#).

NB all rates exclude agency fees. The rates are for self-employed locums billing firms directly on a weekly basis. These are the ranges we have seen over the last 30 days from assignments.

What is a reasonable pay rise?

This question very often arises in a very unexpected way - and probably quite differently to the way most employers would expect it to.

Candidates get in touch with us to specifically ask what they ought to be asking for from their employers taking into account all factors including what is the right amount or what is the morally acceptable amount, rather than what they can squeeze out of their employer. Some of course are only interested in the money, but the vast majority tend to want to know what they 'should' be paid.

Genuine concern

Employees tend to be genuinely worried about asking for too much money, for fear of causing their employer difficulties with their cashflow. Of course, some employers are very good at constantly going on about cashflow so that employees start to develop the idea that their employer has no money, and therefore they should not be asking for a pay rise. However, the vast majority of employees and employers try to do what is fair for each side, rather than trying to squeeze lots of money out of the other party.

Factors to consider

So, very often the question arises, how much an employee should be asking an employer for in terms of a pay rise on a year-to-year basis.

We tend to advise in the same way that we do law firm valuations. You need to look at a whole host of different factors including the following:

How much work you have generated for the firm

What extra responsibilities you have taken on in the previous year

What hours you have worked

What your sickness levels have been like (not strictly relevant but still relevant) and how good your employer has been about any sickness leave

What benefit your employment has been to the company, if not just in billing or managerial skills

What suggestions you have come up with over the year that have generated more income for the firm

What introductions you have made to the firm both for clients and for other staff

What level of inflation there is at the moment in the country generally

Whether your own personal costs have gone up due to external factors such as divorce, death in the family, extra children, a move to a larger house.

How much it would cost the firm to recruit someone else into your position - would the salary need to be a lot higher or lower?

When you have put all of these factors together to determine what has changed from the last year, you are then able to have a think about what you want to get out of the pay rise.

Can I have more money please?

Just asking for a pay rise for a pay rise's sake doesn't really work, because there is no real justification from one year to the next for an employer to give you a pay rise unless there is a real reason for it. A reason for a pay rise is one of the reasons given above – the strongest of these will be of course that your billing has increased or your value to the business has increased dramatically, and therefore you need a pay rise to reflect this.

The curse of inflation

However, don't forget the implications of inflation. For many years now, inflation has been running at such low levels it has not been a thing, but in recent times with inflation now shooting up to double figures it has become a real thing again, and it does need to be taken into consideration when looking at pay rises every year.

If you do not get a pay rise from one year to the next, then in fact your employer has actually given you a pay cut, because the value of your salary has now gone down by the cost of inflation.

Sorry there's no money

Of course your employer might come up with a list of reasons why they can't give you a pay rise, which could include the business not having the spare capital to be able to spend more money on your salary.

You could in cases like this try calling your employers' bluff and ask them for details of exactly what is going on with the company accounts – how much the turnover has dropped from year to year, what the extra costs have been that mean there is an increase in the overheads, why there is no spare cash to pay you a bit more when you have generated more money for the business. Some employers are very open with their own finances, but others are a little bit more reluctant to divulge details.

Business Sales - what should I tell my PII broker?

As little as possible, is the quick answer, with the longer answer appearing below!

Call the broker

We have had a number of instances where sellers have felt an obligation to notify their insurers about everything to do with the sale of their business. When they have thought about selling, they notified their broker. Each time they get an expression of interest from a buyer, they notify their broker. Each time discussions get to the point of an offer being made, they notify their broker. Essentially the seller in these cases has notified their broker about everything, from the moment they have even thought about contemplating a sale or disposal, right through to the point that they actually get close to the point of closing a deal.

Unfortunately, in these deals to date, the firms have not managed to successfully sell. One of the main issues has been the involvement of the PII broker. In fact, as soon as a seller notifies me that they are consulting their broker during a deal going through, we get a sinking feeling..

Printing money

I suppose the fundamental question is why would you feel it necessary to notify someone whose sole existence is dependent on you giving them lots of money on an annual basis, and working in a trade where making changes to anything, no matter how small, results in extra fees being paid? Does your broker really need to know anything about your own personal commercial plans and what business is it of theirs?

Contractual obligations

Yes, but there are contractual obligations, you may say. Indeed, I have heard of PII contracts where there is an obligation in the insurance agreement to notify the insurers of any material changes 'being considered' that will affect the insurance. This includes planned material changes, and in one instance it included even thinking about making a material change.

Confidential information

I am currently working on a law firm valuation and reviewing a PII proposal form that includes questions such as 'are you considering becoming an ABS in the next 12 months' and under 'Significant Change' - '...do you expect any significant change in the coming year? For example...merger or closure of your practice?'

Why should anyone tick yes to this one? Would this in any way lower the premiums? What business is it of the brokers to know whether you are considering closing your practice? If you get home insurance do you need to notify the insurers if you are planning to sell the house and whether you did or not would this make any difference to the insurance? Anecdotal evidence suggests that if you do tick yes to this question or notify the broker of any intention to retire, it can make life very difficult for any buyer taking over the practice and looking to acquire the benefit of the PII policy.

Broker involvement scuppers sales

The simple fact is that, in our experience, if you notify your insurers of everything to do with a sale of a commercial entity, it is highly likely you will never get a sale, because the insurers will try and get involved at every single step of the way and lob spanners into the works wherever possible.

Our suggestion

The usual advice when it comes to insurance is to of course keep within your contractual obligations, but to have a careful think about what those contractual obligations actually are, and how you can progress a deal and stay within them. Give your broker as little detail as possible on

the basis that the more information you give them, the more likely it is either a fee will be charged and/or they will scupper your deal.

Regardless of the deal that is being done, a quick and easy way of looking at dealing with the insurers is simply that if you manage to sell your business, then at that point you can notify your insurers that you are no longer the owner, and a new owner is coming on board to take over, and then anything to do with the insurance is dependent on the new owner and not you.

The business is carrying on if someone is taking over as a buyer, or if another law firm are purchasing your practice they become the successor firm, so there are no insurance issues for you personally, and the insurance you have is almost certainly going to be tied to the business.

There are lots of different routes to affect a sale of a business, and how this occurs is dependent on the structure of your company, but the quick and easy solution to dealing with insurers is to keep them at arm's length for as much as possible, and just do not forget the old adage that your professional indemnity insurance broker is most certainly not your friend.

Effective Interview Techniques for Employers

Perhaps the easiest way of writing this article would be to give a big, long list of ineffective interview techniques, because this tends to be an overwhelming issue when it comes to interviewing. It's much easier to describe the mistakes than it is to describe how to do it properly, but here goes.

Choose a nice room

Firstly, check the room that you're interviewing in is a nice, pleasant environment, and one that you would feel comfortable in if you were meeting someone for the first time about a future job. We have heard horror stories about interviews being conducted in virtual broom cupboards, or someone wanting to meet in the corner of a noisy pub. This simply will not work, and you need to find a nice airy room with sufficient chairs and space for everyone to sit in and feel comfortable.

If you are joining the revolution of homeworking and remote work, then it is probably likely you will be looking to conduct an interview in a café or restaurant type thing, rather than an office, and if this is the case, research it carefully. You do not want to be speaking to someone in an extremely noisy café or pub, where you cannot hear a word that is being said.

Clean the room

Make sure the chairs and table are clean, and the floor has been vacuumed in recent years. Similarly, and this will sound utterly daft, but make sure the room has been dusted. As a hayfever sufferer and someone with an allergy to dust, I can safely say that if you interviewed me in a room full of dust that hadn't been cleaned in a very long time, I would probably spend most of the interview sneezing, and you would not really get a very good response during the interview.

Remember the interview

Turn up on time. Nothing, and I repeat nothing, is worse than an employer arranging to interview someone at a specific time, and then actually turning up late to the interview. To a candidate, this is the height of all rudeness and should be avoided at all costs. If someone has gone to the trouble of taking time off work and travelling to see you, then the least you can do is actually turn up to the interview. Even worse than this is an employer who forgets about the interview, and does not actually know who the person is they are interviewing, which leads me on to my next point.

Print a copy of the CV

Make sure you print out the interviewee's CV before you speak to them. This may sound like common sense, but I would estimate that about 20% of all interviews happen without the interviewer knowing anything about the interviewee, other than possibly their name. This is because they have arranged the interview and then forgotten to actually research who the person is.

Background check

Do some reading around about the interviewee before you speak to them. This can have immense rewards for your interview, because it will give you plenty to talk to the candidate about, but similarly flag anything that you need to speak to them about as well.

Good cop/bad cop is old hat

Be friendly to the person you are interviewing, and do not fall for the old we need to do a good cop/bad cop routine. It just doesn't work, and in a candidate-led market, it is nothing worse than an absolute nightmare, because the candidate will simply leave the interview and make a decision there and then never to accept any job you might offer them.

Interview = conversation not monologue

Interview the person. An interview by definition is a conversation between two people with questions and answers. It is not an opportunity for you to spend the next two hours talking about yourself, your plans and your firm, something which a lot of employers seem to struggle with. You must have questions that you want to ask the interviewee, and we would usually recommend compiling a list so that you have plenty to talk about. Whilst this might seem a little bit extreme, it does mean that you have a structure to your interview, and you don't waste your time sitting and chatting, trying to think of your next question.

Listen

Listen to the answers of the interviewee, and whatever you do, do not succumb to the temptation to look at your phone whilst the interview is talking. Not only is this the height of rudeness, it is also incredibly off-putting for the person you are interviewing.

Ask difficult questions

Ask testing questions, but don't ask confrontational, personal, or rude questions. It is absolutely fine to put the candidate on the spot and ask them questions about their technical competence. It is not okay to start criticising them for things that they may have done, simply to see whether you can make them cry. This does happen.

Open with a gentle question

Ask the interviewee a nice gentle question to start, usually around their journey to the office or the weather, or whether they have been okay getting time off to attend the interview. Next, think about asking them to talk about themselves for a little bit, and give you about a minute or two to sum themselves up. This is pretty much along the lines of an "elevator pitch," which is the technique used when it comes to networking for business. You are looking to see whether the candidate is able to summarise themselves and talk about themselves clearly and concisely within that time, and make relevant points but not go on about something for too long. Once the candidate has done this, it will give you the opportunity to then pick up on things they may have said during that time and ask some questions about it.

Concentrate on the questions - go technical

Get on to the questions you want to ask as quickly as possible, as otherwise you may find you run out of time talking about things you didn't particularly want to talk about. For professional jobs, it is always worth asking lots and lots of technical questions that test their ability and knowledge. Some professional interviews will even include a case study where an actual example of work is handed to the interviewee, and they are asked to deal with it there and then. There is nothing wrong with this technique, and in fact it is to be commended, because it really does put the candidate on the spot and get them to think about their experience and apply it there and then under pressure.

Look for competency

Don't forget that the key to a successful interview is to test the candidate to see whether or not they are someone you want to work with. This means that perhaps they share the same sense of humour as you, but primarily it means they are competent and able to do the job you expect of them. Finding someone competent who is able to do a job expected of them is the difficult bit – getting them to demonstrate that to you in interview is even harder, but this is what you have to think about when you are interviewing someone, and not whether or not you want to try and catch the person out in some bizarre cat and mouse game that some interviewers seem to like playing.

Check the awkward bits

If there is anything awkward on the CV, then it is always worth asking about it, but do it gently to start with, so the candidate is able to explain themselves without any embarrassment. For example, sometimes candidates will write on their CV the reasons they left their last employment, and it may be too much information that you don't really need to know as an employer. Be nice to these people, because at least they're being honest with you and giving you the full information.

Keep the interview within a timeframe

Don't spend too long in interview. There is no point interviewing someone for two or three hours, when an hour interview would have sufficed. You've probably wasted their time and your own, and it would have been much better to try and keep your questions short and succinct. If a candidate waffles too much in their answers, there is nothing wrong with interjecting and saying that you're going to move on to the next question. This is sometimes necessary, and it is worth thinking about.

Summary

In summary, the most effective interview technique is to try and be yourself, but to concentrate at all times on the aims of the interview, which is to find someone that you are comfortable working with, who can competently do the job, and is not going to buckle under pressure.



The Arun Sunshine Group, West Sussex - Ten Percent Foundation Award - £500

In the Ten Percent Foundation's latest round of donations, the Arun Sunshine Group has been chosen by the trustees to receive £500 to put towards equipment.

Background

The Arun Sunshine Group is a group set up in West Sussex in 2006. They provide recreational and leisure activities to adults with learning difficulties. Activities that they offer include computer games, arts and crafts, board games and jigsaws. On top of this, the group goes on outings to local

establishments, like restaurants, pubs and bowling, as well as further afield, such as summer outings to the zoo, the Isle of Wight and Brighton.

Aims

The group aims to improve the conditions of life for its members, as well as to provide an environment where they can develop confidence, improve social skills and communication, make friends and have fun! They also hope to give carers a regular break, to help reduce the stress of their daily lives.

How will the donation help?

At the moment, the group relies heavily on charity to raise funds. Derek Moore, the leader of the project, said that the money "will be put to very good use as we desperately need to replace a lot of our age-appropriate puzzles and craft items." This will allow the group to further improve the lives of its members, and to make their sessions more enjoyable for those involved. It has also allowed the group to buy a karaoke machine, which the members really love to use.

Future plans

The group is currently looking for more volunteers and trustees, so that they can continue to run their sessions and help their members. They have just received a Lottery Community Fund Grant, which should allow more of their sessions to run, and for more materials to be bought to entertain their members. For more information, see their website: <http://arunsunshine.org.uk>

Facts about learning disabilities

There are approximately 1.1 million adults with a learning disability in the UK. 956,000 of these are within England.

This means that around 2.16% of adults in the UK have a learning disability, which is equivalent to 1 in 50 adults.

On top of this, 2.5% of children in the UK have a learning disability, which is approximately 1 in 40.

According to the NHS, learning disabilities can make it difficult for a person to understand complicated information, learn some skills, and look after themselves or live alone.

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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 (our lowest fees are offered to legal aid firms). We offer this service to law firms and accountancy practices and some of our member firms have been using the service for over 10 years. 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.

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.

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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 four recruitment consultants, Jonathan Fagan, Clare Fagan, Peter Gresty and Emma Ireland. Jonathan is a non-practising solicitor and Emma is a law graduate. As a team we have over 40 years of experience in the legal profession. Three of us are Fellows of the Institute of Recruitment Professionals (FIRP).

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 20 years ago. So far over £150k 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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