

Legal Recruitment News - 13th January 2021

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Good morning and a happy new year - this is the first edition of Legal Recruitment News for 2021. It includes our legal job market report, locum hourly rates, law firm sales, annual assessment of a psychic's predictions, advice on buying law firms without any money, a CV review, interview answers and interview techniques for employers.

Legal Job Market Report - January 13th 2021

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

Locum Recruitment - Busy

Normally over the Christmas break we put our feet up, deal with a few emergency requests here and there in January and wait for the market to pick up when we return from skiing in February half term. This year has been completely different. In December, for the first time in many years, we were unable to fulfil conveyancing locum roles which were office based. Eight emergency cover roles in Greater Manchester, Wiltshire, London due to staff sickness or increased workload went unfilled in December. Locums were understandably reluctant to travel to work - accommodation issues for the professional travelling locums and concerns about unnecessary exposure to Covid-19 just before Christmas were both major issues. One problem is that some firms still have a requirement for staff to be office based, although fortunately most firms are now set up for remote working and have fully embraced the benefits. There are plenty of conveyancing locums available for remote work still and I have also added in an example price list for conveyancing title check work below as well (we have had a number of enquiries in the last week).

The locum market is not just about conveyancing though - we have seen an increase in commercial litigation, corporate commercial & in house, coupled with a higher than usual demand for family law. Large increase in the search for ad hoc consultants in a wide range of work including costs and in house general counsel. One quiet area is wills & probate - it remains surprisingly inactive still despite previous predictions of it turning into a boom area. Locum updates here:

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

Permanent Recruitment - Busy

It has picked up on the permanent front. Firms are registering property and family vacancies with us mainly - it seems that a number of candidates have decided to move on and handed in their notice after the Christmas break. This increase is fairly standard for the time of year - and every year we are always surprised that partners always seem surprised (if not horrified) when they receive notice from employees straight after Christmas! Vacancies here: <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/vacancies/>

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

Christmas has been a time of reflection for potential law firm sellers. I have had a few calls this week from senior partners taking stock and thinking about a future without the stress of running a law firm. I have taken three new instructions in the last week with a further three in the pipeline. We have a £500k turnover CLC practice in North West England, a small £125k turnover portable CQS property law firm with national clients and a shell law firm in London with a £30k turnover. Full list at <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/buy-or-sell-a-solicitors-practice/>. For a confidential discussion please ring 01824 780937 and speak to Jonathan Fagan or email jbfagan@ten-percent.co.uk.

REC/KPMG UK Job Market Report (we are members of the panel contributing to this report)

Key Findings

Permanent placements rise marginally

Temp billings expand at sharpest pace since October 2018

Total demand for staff rises for first time in three months

KPMG Vice Chair Comment:

"The emergence of a vaccine did bring more confidence to the jobs market in December with a small increase in permanent appointments. Temporary billings were also sharply up across the UK although London was a notable exception. However, we will have to see what January brings with a new national lockdown sure to fuel economic uncertainty, alongside preparing and adapting to the new relationship with the EU. But with the UK leading the way on the vaccine roll out and continued government financial support, there is hopefully light at the end of the tunnel for both business and jobseekers."

Ten Percent Legal Recruitment Statistics - December 2020

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

New permanent vacancies added: 12 (7)

New locum vacancies added: 16 (10)

New candidates registering: 30 (43)



Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives

January 2021 Locum Hourly Rates - Solicitors and Legal Executives

NB: Remote Working Role rates are about 10-20% lower.

Child Care - £35-45 per hour.

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 – £32-40 per hour.

Commercial Property – £35-£45 per hour
Employment Solicitors – £30-£45 per hour.
Family Solicitors – £32-40 per hour.
In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £30-45 per hour,
In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £45-105 per hour
In House Interim Lawyers (SMEs) - £55-65 per hour
Insolvency - £35-60 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.

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

Conveyancing Title Checks - Outsourced Rates

We have had a few queries in recently for the cost of using remotely working conveyancers to cover conveyancing title check work on an ad hoc ongoing basis. Example of a price list is below.

Licensed Conveyancer Price List Example

£20 if freehold
£30 if freehold and search report
£30 if unregistered freehold
£40 if unregistered and search report
£60 if leasehold
£70 if leasehold and search report
£80 if unregistered leasehold
£100 if unregistered and search report
£100 if freehold new build
£120 if leasehold new build
£150 if leasehold, new build and shared ownership
25%- uplift for 24 hour turnaround.

Prices for the work vary dramatically, but it seems that the usual hourly rate quoted for this work is £30 per hour or thereabouts if remote. We have a number of consultants and locums available for this type of work on an ongoing basis. Drop us a line if you would like to see who is available.

How to Buy a Law Firm Without Any Money

We regularly get telephone calls from potential buyers of law firms looking to purchase a practice. They may be a solicitor and they may be somebody without any legal experience or qualifications whatsoever. One thing that is very often clear is that there is an assumption you can buy a law firm without paying any money for it.

Law Firms Cost Nothing?

Only the other day I had a conversation with a senior partner of a solicitors' firm who asked me if I could send him a list of all the law firms available for sale where the partners wanted to hand over the practice without spending any money.

We had a discussion for a while and he informed me that there is a business broker out there selling law firms without anybody needing to hand over any cash. He was genuinely surprised that there could be firms requiring cash payments unless they had cash in the bank that they were selling. He did admit however that if he sold his own law firm he would probably want a reasonable amount of money for it upfront in cash!

This is a fairly widely held assumption, but unfortunately law firms for sale very often are exactly that. Owners of law firms tend to only want to sell if someone is willing to offer them some money for their firm.

You Get What You Pay For

It goes without saying that if you have spent 25 years building up a business which is turning over £200,000 a year with staff, ongoing clients, a good claims history, a very low professional indemnity insurance premium, good levels of profit and a fairly rosy future (pending external factors), the partners are hardly likely to want to sign an agreement to hand over the keys and leave it to somebody else without them giving them any cash sums.

It goes without saying of course that there are law firms out there that probably are available without spending any cash because they have serious issues. A practice that has a terrible claims history, hardly any staff, very low turnover, virtually no profit and horrifically expensive professional indemnity insurance premiums is not going to sell for very much money at all.

In fact the value of a practice like that is probably equal to or less than the cost of the run-off cover that the owner is going to need to pay to get out of the practice. Run-off cover is the amount of insurance you have to pay upfront when you shut a law firm down to cover the insurance company for future claims. It tends to be a huge issue for sellers with poor claims history because very often the run-off cover is around three and a half times the annual premium.

So if you are looking for a law firm that is not going to cost any money, and you have any requirements other than a solicitors firm in a terrible shape with awful claims history and horrific professional indemnity insurance premiums, you are not going to find very many firms for sale.

However, if you have cash lump sum starting at about £30,000 (for a virtual shell) and heading up to around £250,000, you can probably buy yourself a functioning law firm with a good claims history and perhaps enjoy a good business experience in the years to come.

For a list of firms for sale please visit <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/buy-or-sell-a-solicitors-practice/>

If you would like a valuation of your law firm, please get in touch and we would be happy to have a discussion, whether in confidence and informally on the telephone or a written opinion. Jonathan Fagan - 01824 780937 or jbfagan@ten-percent.co.uk.

Legal Job Interview Techniques – The Fake Receptionist

We have recently been involved in a recruitment process where a rather novel use of a pretend receptionist was employed in order to root out good prospective employees attending for interview. The firm in question decided on the day of interviews to replace their usual receptionist with one of the partners to see how the prospective job applicants behaved at the reception desk.

Dirt on Shoe

One particular applicant turned up and spoke to the receptionist as if she was dirt on his shoe, and when he went through for interview he was surprised to see the same receptionist waiting to interview him. The receptionist turned out to be the senior partner who advised him that his behaviour towards her as a receptionist had made her feel very uncomfortable, in fact so uncomfortable that there was no way she could possibly employ him and that she was not going to interview him.

Other candidates were absolutely fine with the receptionist – polite, professional and friendly, which is what you would expect from someone you intend to employ and work with for some years to come.

So is this a good way of rooting out potential staff?

Our advice is yes definitely. If you do this then it means you can immediately see the character of someone coming to interview. Some people simply cannot help themselves when they speak to receptionists and display their normal behaviour, whereas others will try and be as polite as possible to everyone within the building and the false receptionist test will not necessarily show their true character. However, it is a quick two minute way of assessing someone and saving you bothering interview them for an hour and considering at all any further if they turn out to be thoroughly vile and rude people who treat receptionists with great disdain.

Technique in Practice

So the best way of doing this is simply to go and sit at the front of reception when you know a potential applicant is due to be coming and give your receptionist a break for a few minutes. Be as polite as possible to the job applicant and observe them closely when they enter the building, and also when they sit down to wait for the interview. You can also gain some good feedback simply by observing someone sitting and waiting. What do they do, do they look nervous, are they on their phone to somebody all the time, what have they brought with them?

In fact, spending a bit of time watching someone before they come in for interview can be quite a useful exercise, because it does give you a reading into their character that you don't necessarily get in an interview room. You might think someone in the interview room is completely laid back and you are a bit concerned that they may not take a job particularly seriously, whereas in fact the candidate has sat in reception looking very nervous but is able to perform well during interviews and not give off any sign of nervousness.

If you do decide to go down the false receptionist route you do need to be prepared to be honest to the person you are going to interview and explain that you do not want to continue based on your experience.

Summary

There are lots of different ways of assessing someone at an interview without just asking them questions and this is just one of them. Other exercises include chair positioning to put the candidate under a bit of stress (The Chair Technique - see our [YouTube video!](#)), providing them with a written task, asking them to give a talk for a couple of minutes on a particular subject, or handing them a file and asking them what they would do differently.

Annual Predictions - how did the professional psychic do?

We have been following the predictions of Craig Hamilton-Parker of psychics.co.uk for some years now - it is fascinating to see how he fares every year with his previous year's predictions.

Here are a selection of his predictions for 2020 taken from his website at the start of the year:
War in the Middle East - hmm - sort of correct (but then there is always a war occurring in the Middle East - its a bit like predicting that it will rain in Wales).

Trump Reelected - incorrect

Boris Marries Carrie Symonds - incorrect

Meghan Markle Pregnancy - sort of correct!

Revolution in China - incorrect

European Economic Crisis - incorrect

Yvette Cooper becomes the leader of the Labour Party. - incorrect

Prince Charles will be hit by an egg. - incorrect (unless Camilla threw one at him and nobody knows).

Elizabeth Warren will be the Democrat Presidential Contender - incorrect.

Total score - 1/2 out of 9. Megan was pregnant for a while and there is a war in the Middle East. However it does like the cosmic rays were not fully functioning in 2020!

Selection of Predictions for 2021 Taken From

<https://psychics.co.uk/blog/predictions/>

There will be a tsunami near Japan.

Giant iceberg causes shipping problems.

There will be strikes and protests in the USA, the UK and Europe. Very violent protests occur in Paris, London and Washington.

North Korea will fire more missiles. There will be starvation in North Korea and moves to remove Kim Jong-un by his own people.

New infrastructure projects will be announced including plans to build a tunnel to Northern Ireland.

Southern Ireland will struggle with Brexit and in the years to come will leave the EU.

There will be a public backlash against the BBC's overt political correctness.

Terrorists hijack a plane. I see Paris. Gunfight in an airport.

Joe Biden will have a short presidency. An illness or accident will stop his presidency short. Biden will be succeeded by a woman.

A serious Trump illness during 2021 is predicted and marital problems ahead. Possible affair revealed. Trump will stand as an independent candidate in 2024. The Republican party will betray him. It's too soon to say if he will win in 2024. (unless he does the remedies) An earlier election may be called.

We will revisit in January 2021 with a score! Incidentally psychics are available now to speak to at £1.50 per minute on the website above (although there is currently a special offer of 29p per minute for 10 minutes for new customers).

Interview Question 42 – Do you feel you are ready to take on greater responsibilities?

Advice

This question is only going to be asked if you are going for a more senior position to the one you currently hold. You could simply answer it with a yes and leave it at that but our usual advice is to answer it and provide evidence to show why you are ready to take on greater responsibilities, linking existing responsibilities with other responsibilities you expect to have. If you are unable to give evidence as to why you feel you are ready to take on greater responsibility you are applying for the job that is probably out of your depth. You must be able to give examples that will give the employer confidence that you are the person they need despite you possibly coming from a lower job level.

Examples of Answers

“Yes. During my current post I have regularly deputised for the senior manager and dealt with all issues coming across his desk. Specific examples of work I have dealt with include disciplinary action against employees, dealing with a faulty product from a supplier where a production line was shut down until it was resolved and attending board meetings as the stand-in manager for the plant. I feel that my experience dealing at this level as left me ready to take on greater responsibility.”

Or:

“Yes. I am used to handling a high level of responsibility in my current post and have always been able to successfully perform any tasks set for me with any of my previous roles or activities I have undertaken so far in life. In terms of management I have enjoyed some parts of my current role that have involved management tasks being delegated to me as well as in sporting and non-academic activities captaining my local hockey team and being the Chair of the local school governors. I welcome any increases in the levels of responsibility.”

Career Coaching & CV Review Services - free and paid

Ten Percent Legal has been coaching lawyers and reviewing CVs for over 20 years. We have worked on CVs at all levels of experience, from law students through to senior partners.

This is a guide to our services, both free of charge and paid. [Testimonials for our careers services can be found here.](#)

CV Reviews

We provide free CV reviews, providing you are willing for us to post our review live on our website - example of a recent one is here: <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/cv-review-commercial-paralegal-with-experience/>

We review CVs as a paid service (£64.99) and application forms for all kinds of legal work (£75). We will review your CV or form, provide full feedback and suggestions on how to improve it as well as any additional follow up advice needed. [Details here.](#)

Career Coaching

We are offering a career coaching session with one of our consultants for a fixed price. One hour consultation by Zoom, usually on a Monday morning. We are always happy to answer any questions by email at no cost (we post our answers on our blog). [To request a session please click here.](#) Feedback on our legal career coaching service (established in 2001) [can be found here.](#)

CV Guides - no charge

CV Guides - [take a look at our CV guides](#) - all available at no cost online. <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/cv-advice/>

Articles include: CV Myth - fitting a CV onto two pages, 20 second guide to writing a CV, Adding Extra Value, CV Writing Tips for Senior Solicitors (if you don't bother reading this it basically says write a lot more!), CV Writing for NQ Solicitors, Skills Sections, 5 Common Mistakes to Avoid, CV Writing for Locum Work, Avoiding Waffly Nonsense, Lying on CVs, Applying for Jobs after 25 years in the same role and many, many more. We have been writing CV guides for almost 20 years so there are quite a few.. Full index here - <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/cv-advice/>

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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 Typing

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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 20 years ago. So far over £125k 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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