

Legal Recruitment News - 14th July 2021

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Good morning and welcome to the July 2021 edition of Legal Recruitment News. It includes our legal job market report, locum hourly rates, careers advice and suggested interview answers.

Legal Job Market Report - July 14th 2021

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

Locum Recruitment - Busy

There is a demand for annual leave cover for most departments in most areas of the UK and this is going unfilled at times, particularly in the property sector. We think a lot of firms discouraged annual leave in June and so an increased number of lawyers taking holidays now. There are locums available in all fields of law, but it is still a lot harder to find locums prepared to travel into offices to work than it is to find remote working locums... We have availability for all fields of law across the UK, although office based conveyancing locum work is still very hard to source for.

Ad hoc assistance is becoming increasingly common in private practice and in house legal departments, with consultants taking on 3-5 different firms and handling work in particular fields of law as it comes in. This can be very cost effective for the firms and also liberating for consultants - who can work extremely flexible hours rather than 9-5. It can also be a bit hit and miss at the moment, with some firms collecting consultants like football stickers but never seeming to have any work..

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

Permanent Recruitment - Busy

There is a clear trend now that follows recruitment patterns being reported nationally - there is a shortage of candidates in all areas of law and at all levels of PQE. On average we get around 80-100 new solicitors, legal executives and fee earners registering with us each month as new candidates. In the last month we logged 42 new candidates. We have large numbers of new vacancies being added, but they actually outnumber the new candidates!

Property vacancies are common at the moment. I am hearing reports of conveyancers at some firms burning out or simply leaving without giving notice due to the working conditions and intensity of the last few months. In these circumstances I doubt very much whether the few residential property lawyers looking for work are going to be particularly enthusiastic to join another firm where the recruitment blurb includes the requirement to be 'hard working' or 'very motivated'. Firms need to think carefully about how to attract in quality candidates at this point in time.

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

Law Firms for Sale - Busy

The market has been boiling away this year but interest from buyers has dropped slightly over the last few weeks. We are seeing an increased number of new firms coming to market - mainly retirement sales of established firms.

Two firms registered this week as follows:

100244 Well established central London Solicitors' Firm looking for a sale. Turnover c.£650k.

100245 North West based HR and Employment Law Consultancy for sale as a going concern. 75 ongoing client contracts in place. Turnover c£135k.

Full list at <https://www.jonathanfagan.co.uk/law-accountancy-firms-for-sale/>. For a confidential discussion please ring 01824 780937 and speak to Jonathan Fagan or email jbfagan@ten-percent.co.uk.

Ten Percent Legal Recruitment Statistics

General Statistics for June 2021 (bracketed number is for June 2020)

New permanent vacancies added: 45 (11)

New locum vacancies added: 34 (15)

New candidates registering: 42 (110)

REC/KPMG UK Job Market Report

(we are members of the panel contributing to this report)

Key Findings

Robust demand for staff drives unprecedented increase in permanent staff appointments

Availability of workers deteriorates at record pace...

...leading to sharper rise in starting pay

KPMG Partner Comment:

"June's data confirms that momentum in the jobs market continues to surge, with improved business confidence leading to record high recruitment activity. As we move towards the final easing of pandemic restrictions, permanent role availability increased at the quickest rate since the survey began in 1997 and temporary roles rose to the greatest extent for 23.5 years. But for the fourth month running we're seeing a decline in the availability of candidates to fill all these new roles and the most severe deterioration for 24 years."



Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives

July 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 – £30-£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 per hour and upwards.
Commercial Property – £37-£45 per hour
Employment Solicitors – £30-£42 per hour.
Family Solicitors – £32-£40 per hour.
In House Counsel: 0-3 years PQE – £35-45 per hour,
In House Counsel: 3+ years PQE – £45-105 per hour
In House Interim Lawyers (SMEs) - £50-65 per hour
Insolvency - £35-55 per hour.
IP - £50-80 per hour
Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence – 3+ years PQE – £25-£40 per hour.
Professional Negligence - £45-£55 per hour.
Wills & Probate – £35-£45 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.

Is it Possible to Sell a Law Firm to a Non-Solicitor Buyer?

This is a call we receive very regularly into our company. At the time of writing it is not possible for a non-solicitor to have ownership of an SRA regulated solicitors' firm set up in the conventional manner - whether as a partnership, limited company or sole practitioner. This is quite a simple message - and one that I have to then spend a lot of time explaining to non-solicitors, some of whom think that owning a solicitors' firm is as straightforward as buying any other business.

However.. there is of course a way of selling a law firm to a non-solicitor buyer and that is with the use of an ABS (Alternative Business Structure).

An ABS is either a) an entity that consists of so much regulation to create it blows the mind of most people looking at them or b) a new model of law firm set up some time ago to enable non-lawyers to make money out of law firms. The use of the ABS model over the last 10 years has opened the legal market up to larger businesses and individual investors to take ownership in law firms.

There are discussions within the profession about how ABS firms seem to be able to get away with a lot of things that solicitors firms are unable to. We have had reports from consultants who have worked with both structures to say that anecdotally ABS firms can at times be a lot more loose with regulatory compliance (they don't always appreciate how careful they should really be) compared with solicitors firms who are only too aware of how the SRA can make life intolerable for them if they step out of line.

However the ABS also creates the benefit of a law firm seller being able to sell their practice to a much wider audience than just other solicitors.

How does an ABS assist with a law firm sale?

Very simple - you agree to sell your firm to a non-solicitor buyer, but before the sale completes an

application is made to convert the firm into an alternative business structure (ABS). The sellers remain in situ whilst the conversion takes place. Small law firms can be picked up for relatively low amounts and this type of arrangement benefits the buyer by providing them with an existing structure in place including professional indemnity insurance, clients, a website and a presence. The buyer will of course need to find their own solicitors to run & manage the firm, which is no easy task.

For a confidential discussion about your firm and a rough valuation, please give me (Jonathan Fagan) a ring on 01824780937.

In case it assists - here is a link to our online guide to selling a law firm.

<https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/how-to-sell-a-small-medium-sized-law-firm-by-jonathan-fagan-ten-percent-legal/>

Interview Question 48 – Explain the organisational structure in your last company and how you fitted into it?

Advice

This question requires you to understand the structure of your last company from top to bottom and give a short succinct answer outlining how you fitted within it. Do not try to build yourself into something you are clearly not. This is not what the question requires. The interviewer is simply asking you to outline the structure so he can gain an understanding of the level of your seniority for responsibility.

Examples of Answers

“As regional manager I reported at all levels. There are six directors and one group manager who sits on the board. Below this are five regional managers, each with a team of ten lower level managers responsible for the various departments. Each of the lower managers has ten department heads who each have an assistant working with them. Below that level is the workforce.”

Or:

“I work as a crew member, reporting to a team leader who in turn reports back to a store manager. Above the store manager is a group manager who is responsible for a number of stores, usually four or five. Obviously my role does not require me to have many dealings with anyone beyond this level but I understand the group managers report to regional managers who in turn are responsible to the Board of Directors at Head Office in Middlesex.”

Contract Manager or Legal Counsel - Tailoring Job Applications

A recent query in to us has been from a contract manager working in-house for a large multinational, and wanting to apply for jobs where the job title is legal counsel or in-house lawyer. He was wondering how to frame his job title when the work he was doing was exactly the same as in-house legal counsel dealing with commercial contracts, but that recruiters may overlook him because the word lawyer is not in his job title.

You Say 'In House Counsel' and I Say 'Contracts Manager'

Our advice to this contracts manager was to be a little bit flexible with his job title. The same advice applies to anybody applying for work, in that when you make a job application you should always try to assimilate to the role and the company you are applying to. If the business is looking for a contracts manager then wherever possible you should try and use this term on your application and CV. If the company is looking for an in-house legal counsel to deal with commercial contracts then you should, whenever possible, include those words on your CV and in your application.

Specific Sector Experience Can Be a Negative Factor

The same applies of course to all job applications - and it is particularly an issue amongst company commercial lawyers, who may have done a wide variety of types of law in lots of different sectors, but struggle to convey specifics for a particular role. Quite often someone with a high level of experience in a specific sector not related to the role they are going for will have a CV completely overlooked for a post. This is because even though the solicitor is more than capable of covering the work, the company have simply read the copious realms of information about the sector experience and decided that the candidate is a non-starter.

Job Titles Matter

Of course it's easier said than done if your job title is contracts manager and the job is for an in-house legal counsel, because when the company you have applied to asks for a reference from the firm you have been working for, then chances are it'll come back to say that you have been a contracts manager. However, the risks of this are outweighed by the fact that the job descriptions are really quite interchangeable in most settings and if you do not use the same terminology then it's possible that you may not even get to the stage where anyone is asking for your references.

Misleading = Bad Idea

We would normally advocate being very careful not to mislead anybody or state an untruth on a CV or job application, but to just be flexible with the way you describe your role. For example, you could include the terms 'commercial contracts' alongside your description of yourself as legal counsel, so for example you could state your job title as legal counsel (commercial contracts manager), or commercial contracts manager (in-house legal counsel).

There are so many different job titles now that essentially describe the same thing, that some employers are quite aware that the work you do as a commercial contracts manager if you are a qualified solicitor is going to be very similar to if you were an in-house legal counsel working on commercial contracts, if not exactly the same.

Advice

Our advice would be not to get too caught up with the job titles, but to try and instead concentrate on your experience and tailoring it to the job you are applying for. We get a lot of job applications from in-house counsel who send us off generic lists of work they have done without actually thinking about the role they're going for. So many are unsuccessful because although they probably have the experience, their CVs don't reflect the experience that the company who are recruiting are looking for, and without this detail then recruiters don't tend to put them forward and HR departments don't tend to recruit.

Final Note

One of the problems with in house legal recruitment is that very often it's done by non-qualified lawyers who don't really understand the work being done by commercial contracts lawyer or in-house legal counsel, so are looking for key words instead of looking at the actual experience in the round. NB I have to confess that sometimes I pick up legal CVs and don't actually have a clue what

the person applying for the role does even though I'm a qualified solicitor!

Your role as a job applicant is to make everyone's life easy by stating all the information that a recruiter needs at the top of your CV or in your job application. Always try to provide the recruiter with a paragraph of information about yourself that is specifically relevant to the role you are applying for.

Is Age a Factor on My CV?

This seems to be a recent discussion that has arisen and we are starting to notice an increasing number of applicants for legal jobs in particular where dates of birth have been removed from CVs together with the dates of education. There have been discussions in the media about employers actively discriminating against older job applicants but also evidence of companies looking to recruit and interview blind without viewing dates of birth.

I thought it might be worth writing this article simply to outline our current experience of age discrimination as opposed to previous articles we have written over the years on the same subject, as I think attitudes have changed in the workplace to age over time.

Blatant Discrimination is Rare

The first thing to say is that we don't often come across blatant discrimination when we are recruiting for law firms and in-house legal departments. It is much less rare to get a call from a partner or owner of a law firm looking to recruit who will say to us that they want somebody aged 25 to 40 and no older, or they don't want to recruit any old people who will just sit there and get paid without doing any work, or they don't want a young woman in a job because they're worried she might go off on maternity leave for quite a long time. These examples are all things we've come across over time, but not in recent years. Perhaps employers are a bit more careful in what they say to us these days..

Age Not So Relevant

Over the last 20 years there has been a real change in attitude towards age as a factor when it comes to recruitment and employers seem to be more focused on candidates at particular salary levels, actual experience and whether someone is a good fit for a job, rather than looking at an age to determine whether or not they would be suited.

The discussion has become more about the job and the candidate rather than the age of the candidate and whether or not someone is suited to a role based on their previous experiences, whether this is too much experience or too little experience.

Tailoring Applications

This is a bit of a recurring theme in my writing, but think the key is to tailor your CV and application for the role you are applying for, and do not send in a generic CV for job applications when the CV is not tailored to the job you are going for.

So for example, if you are a senior solicitor looking to get out of the high pressure of a senior job and want to instead look at a junior job with a similar level of responsibility and also salary to boot, it is absolutely no point sending in a CV highlighting your leadership qualities and all the experience you have had to date. This will not work at all and is most likely to end up with an instant rejection, because any employer looking at it will see immediately that you are over-qualified for the role. They want to see a CV from someone who is at the level of experience they are looking to recruit,

which means that your CV needs to reflect this.

Similarly a poorly written CV from someone with 40 years' experience is going to get rejected, not because of the person's age but because the employer cannot see the information they need in order to make a decision. We get a lot of senior solicitors who have the most dreadful CVs - poorly written, big gaps and a complete lack of information. Some can get away with it, but others simply get no work.

In summary, I suspect the best way of looking at rejections from roles is to look at whether or not the way you presented your experience actually meant you came across as the right fit for the job you were applying for.

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-para-legal-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/>

Low Cost Recruitment for Solicitors - 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.

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 Translation & 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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