

Harvest Time

It's fall, and all around the country, harvesters have been setting out into the fields, seeking to gather up the bounty of this year's crop. But these field workers are wearing pinstripes, not overalls; they are cultivating for the legal market. From the granola valleys of California to the ivy walls of Massachusetts, the sun has risen on the 1991 recruiting season.

But what can a law firm do to ensure it reaps its share of "the best and the brightest" law students? One answer is to employ the recruiting techniques that have proven successful for other organizations. Of course, some adaptation may be required.

The Military Model: If the armed forces can convince people to risk their lives, surely law firms can convince people to risk their eyesight, stomach linings and personal relationships. Thus, adoption of military recruiting techniques should guarantee firms a ready supply of troops.

As with the military, the first step of any campaign is a catchy recruiting slogan. Gone are the days of recruiting posters presenting a solemn, white-haired senior partner, pointing and declaring, "I Want

You." Instead, modern firms more persuasively could advise that they are looking for "A Few Good Drones," offer the opportunity to "Bill All That You Can Bill," and remind that "It's Not Just a Job, It's an Indenture."

Firms could use these slogans in advertisements planted in the publications that law students read most: Gilberts, Nutshells and *Mad* magazine. These ads could depict first-year associates in action: conducting client reconnaissance, mapping out case strategy, waging battle in courtrooms, and engaging in other equally unrealistic situations.

Like the military, firms could also entice recruits with the opportunity to "see the world." Firm recruiting facilities could be decorated with colorful travel posters capturing the romance of an on-site deposition in a Pittsburgh rendering plant or the thrill of a three-day linoleum trade association meeting in Newark.

Similarly, firms could emphasize the sophisticated training they offer, providing recruits extensive opportunity to operate high-tech equipment such as photocopiers, shredders and coffee makers.

The Cult Model: Firms conscientiously objecting to militarist practices alternatively can follow the lead of religious cults, targeting students who, despite good grades, lack self-esteem. Rather than con-

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ducting on-campus interviews, recruiters could approach potential candidates in airports or on street corners, offering them unconditional love and acceptance (pending review of their transcripts, of course).

These recruiters would be easily identified by their extremely short haircuts and ritualistic costumes, including jacket and pants or skirt of matching dark fabric, blanchard shirt with tight collar, ceremonial neckpiece of repetitive pattern, and waist sash cut from the hide of an animal. They would walk, head down, chanting, "I have no life—I live to bill. I have no life—I live to bill."

In their discussions, recruiters would attempt to persuade potential disciples that they are better off isolated from family and friends, and that any desire to engage in normal recreational or social activities is a sign of spiritual weakness. They would, instead, be encouraged to devote, without questioning, all their waking hours and thoughts to the work of the group and the maintenance of a cosmic level of profits per leader.

Firms adopting the cult model, however, must be constantly vigilant against deprogramming efforts by frustrated competing employers. There are countless stories of students who, after having accepted offers, were whisked away to endure hours of allegedly remedial psychological treatment, being told by a succession of interviewers, "You don't want to work in Seattle. You want to see sunshine. ..."

The Professional Sports Model: Still another option for firms seeking the Darryl Strawberries and John Elways of the legal world is to adopt recruiting approaches used by professional sports teams. Firms could replace recruiters with traveling scouts, scouring the academic countryside for prospects who exhibit the skills critical for law practice—belligerence, argumentativeness and compulsivity.

Hopefuls could be called up to the main office for a tryout to demonstrate their ability to field questions, catch short typos, block unwarranted discovery and hurl long invectives.

Once a firm identified a candidate worthy of signing, it might consider offering an incentive bonus,

guaranteeing the phenom (or his or her estate) additional compensation should the candidate lead the firm in hours billed in his or her rookie year.

Alternatively, just as Reggie Jackson was wooed with the promise of his own candy bar, a firm could promise that a stellar student's name would grace a career-enhancing product, such as a lens cleaner or a remedy for gastrointestinal distress.

Like some teams, firms in remote locations must compete for talent with those in major metropolitan centers that offer excitement, glamour and pastrami they cannot possibly match. The solution: "Sell the city, sell the firm."

This can be done positively, by referring to benefits such as the reduced need for costly exterminator services or the local practice of allowing associates to actually leave the office during daylight hours.

Alternatively, such firms could point out the negative side of big cities by posing

a series of thought-provoking questions: "Are you tired of seeing the air you breathe?" or "It's 10 a.m.—Do you know where your car radio is?"

Following the lead of many professional teams, law firms might want to consider mandatory drug testing for recruits. Candidates would risk rejection if their results failed to indicate the presence of significant amounts of aspirin, Maalox or caffeine.

The professional sports model has obvious implications for lateral hiring, as firms also could consider filling their needs through inter-firm trades. A firm seeking to develop a personal injury practice might swap one of its excess late-evening relievers for another's "hit-and-run" specialist. Firms, however, should be mindful of the possible adverse reaction of a new lateral hire who somehow finds out that he was merely the "lawyer to be named later."

Whichever model a firm chooses, like any organization seeking new talent, law firms need to educate graduating students about the unique opportunities each firm has to offer.

As the poet William Blake advised: "In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy." ■

