

## Your Career - Don't Go It Alone

The old adage that, "it's not what you know, but who you know" often holds true. In the case of pursuing a career, who you know can certainly help you get your foot in the door.

Deciding to pursue a specific career or personal goal is not always an easy decision to make, which is why taking the time to talk to someone who has knowledge in your area of interest is a wise first step to pursuing a dream. It doesn't make much sense to ask a doctor how to pass the Bar exam, or to talk to a zoologist about the current state of fiber optic technology.

Having a frank conversation with someone who has exposure to a specific field can provide a realistic look at what your career path could entail. Speaking with an expert can provide practical advice on what kind of training, personal characteristics and even lifestyles are important for someone to succeed in a given career.

### Finding a Guide

The key to finding a good guide for your dream is relatively simple: seek out someone with experience with the industry and/or career choice you have selected; make sure this person has the time, energy and willingness to listen to your dreams; and most importantly, make sure this is someone that you feel comfortable confiding in. There are plenty of places to find a suitable guide. They can be found in professional societies, university campuses, local chambers of commerce and even online web communities. But one of the most untapped resources for career seekers are the recruiters who specialize in the various careers available to today's workforce.

### Industry Insight

Why recruiters? They know what companies are hiring, and they also know what types of positions are in highest demand, as well as the criteria top employers are looking for in employees. If you want an inside look into any industry, a recruiter can be a wealth of information, because they're always interacting with both talented professionals and companies that are hiring. And, in today's economy, there are specialized recruiters for just about any profession you can think of. Areas of expertise vary from technical to legal fields, and there are even recruiters who specialize in writing or working with stagehands for theatrical productions! With so many specialized recruiting firms, there's bound to be one that can offer you guidance with your career of choice.

Some view recruiters as a means to an end, and find their services necessary only when faced with finding a new job. But successful professionals will tell you that one of the best ways to find new growth opportunities in your profession is to keep in touch with one or maybe a few recruiters who truly understand what you do, and who you feel comfortable confiding in.

### The Right Guide

A perfect example of a positive recruiter relationship is that of an athlete's relationship with a sports agent. As anyone who has seen Jerry McGuire knows, athletes rely on their agents for much more than contract negotiations. Sports agents offer pep talks, negotiate endorsements, find out what their peers and competitors are doing, and basically take care of the parts of an athlete's career that does not pertain to winning the game.

A good recruiter is much like a good sports agent; not only does a recruiter find people jobs, but they also offer support, help with raise and promotion negotiations, and keep their contacts abreast of what is going on in their industry. And a recruiter can brag about your accomplishments and potential in ways that you cannot easily speak about yourself to a prospective employer.

Whether you're looking to become the next Kobe Bryant, or want to get your start in computer programming, there is a recruiter out there with the knowledge and the willingness to help you take the first step towards fulfilling your dreams. It is crucial to make sure the recruiter understands you and your goals, and that he or she is trustworthy. The relationship is never a successful one if there is not trust on both sides, or if the recruiter really doesn't have an understanding of what it is you want to do. Make sure you ask your recruiter about their experience and their background, and how long they have worked with a particular industry.

These are the types of questions that will help you determine if you've found someone to be a career guide, or if you need to keep looking. And keep in mind that most recruiters do not charge job seekers for their services; most are paid by client companies upon filling a position, so be wary of any recruiter who asks for your money. A good recruiter can be a career-long guide who helps you navigate your career path, so take advantage of this valuable (and free) resource.  
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