

Legal Recruitment News - December 2019

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Legal Job Market Report

Legal Recruitment - busy market

Each month we run a comparison between the last calendar month and the same time period in 2018 to see if there has been any noticeable difference. In October we saw a 32% increase in the number of new permanent vacancies and a 145% increase in the number of locum assignments.

So how was November 2019 compared to November 2018? We saw a 40% decrease in the number of permanent vacancies registered with us and a 28% decrease in the number of locum vacancies. Work dropped off in the second week of November, slightly earlier than previous years, but we think this is mainly due to the General Election.

Locum work has completely dropped off now that we are almost up to Christmas as most clients and firms have better things to do than buy and sell houses or have their wills drafted. As the predominant area for locums is conveyancing this tends to be a very quiet time of year for all. Wills & probate has been particularly quiet for the whole of 2019 and we wonder if there has either been a significant cornering of market share by one of the new internet disrupters or firms have simply managed to take on sufficient permanent staff in order to get the work completed generally. A large shortfall in private client lawyers occurred just around the time of the 2008-2010 recession - firms had reduced headcount in private client departments some years prior to this and there has seemed to be a shortfall ever since. On the commercial side we have seen an increase in the use of our Interim Lawyers platform by in house departments large and small. In House departments seem to be prevaricating on permanent recruitment decisions and this has remained the same throughout 2019. Maternity cover roles become more relevant and always seem to be our busiest area until Christmas.

Statistics

General Statistics for November 2019 (comparison is with November 2018)

Current live vacancies: 1073
New permanent vacancies added: 19 (32)
New locum vacancies added: 10 (14)
New candidates registering: 72 (50)

November 2019 – Live Jobs (comparison with October 2019 in brackets):

London vacancies: 187 (190)
South East: 453 (459)
South West: 99 (99)
Midlands: 79 (81)
North West: 114 (113)
North East: 78 (78)
Wales: 49 (49)

We have 34 law firms for sale at the moment with a couple more coming to market this month - [for details of current law firms for sale please click here to view our list.](#)

Candidate Database Statistics - November 2019

London Candidates: 3057
Midlands Candidates: 1191
North East Candidates: 850
North West Candidates: 986
South East England Candidates: 4825
South West England Candidates: 512
Northern Ireland: 21
Scotland: 63
Wales: 390

Hourly Rates of Pay for Locum Solicitors and Legal Executives

Christmas is coming and locum rates have dropped..

December 2019 Locum Solicitor Rates

Residential Conveyancing Locum Solicitors – 1-5 years PQE, £28-33 per hour (no variation for central London).

Conveyancing Locum Solicitors & ILEX – 5-35 years PQE, handling all levels of conveyancing including managing a department – £30-37 per hour, including central London.

Commercial Property Solicitors – 1-40 years PQE – £32-55 per hour - average is £40-44 per hour.

Wills & Probate Solicitors and Legal Executives – 3-35 years PQE – £35-50 per hour, going up to £55 per hour. Average currently around £45.

Family Solicitors – 2-40 years PQE – £30-34 per hour+. Care work - usually around £35-40 per hour (very rare).

Civil Litigation Solicitors and ILEX– 1-35 years PQE. £28-35 per hour. These rates cover mainstream litigation.

Commercial Litigation Solicitors – 3+ years PQE – £35-75 per hour.

Company Commercial & General Commercial Solicitors – 3+ years PQE – £35-85 per hour.

Employment Solicitors – 3+ years PQE – £28-45 per hour.

Personal Injury and Clinical Negligence – 3+ years PQE – £25-£40 per hour.

In House Legal Department Rates: 0-3 years PQE – £25-40 per hour, 3+ years PQE – £40-90 per hour (very wide range due to the nature of in house work).

Local authority rates: see article below with feedback from a local authority locum.

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

KPMG & REC Report on Jobs

The KPMG and REC UK Report on Jobs is compiled by IHS Markit from responses to questionnaires sent to a panel of around 400 UK recruitment and employment consultancies (including the Ten Percent Group).

Key Findings

Solid drop in permanent staff appointments, temp billings rise only slightly

Vacancy growth eases to 93-month low

Pay continues to rise as candidate availability falls again

Comment from KPMG:

"Businesses are still waiting to hear that starting gun, and until there is some certainty around Brexit and now the election, employers continue to stall on creating vacancies and making permanent hires. It's not just businesses that are being cautious, however, and over October we've seen jobseekers become increasingly nervous about making a career change. The lucky few that do find jobs are continuing to demand higher pay as reflected in the rise in starting salaries and temp pay. The IT and computing sector threw caution to the wind last month as the best performer in vacancy growth. Meanwhile, the medical sector is not far behind, and we also saw a sharp increase in the demand for temp staff in this sector."

Comment from the REC:

"The labour market is strong but permanent placements have now dropped for eight months in a row, and vacancies growth has fallen to its lowest level since January 2012. One bright spark is the temporary labour market, which continues to provide flexible work to people and businesses that need it during troubled times. Ending political uncertainty and getting companies hiring again is vital – but we must also look to the long term future of work. "

Local Authority Rates for Locums - a view from a local authority locum

A locum with experience of the local authority market very kindly emailed us over an outline of their experience of the locum market during their career to date.

"I am responding to your request for feedback on locum rates. I worked as a locum employment solicitor for local authorities [for 10 years]. All roles were through an agency. I often worked on large employment tribunal cases and would be involved in recruiting other locum solicitors so I have some insight into their hiring processes.

My initial roles (Northern England) were paid at £18 and £21 respectively although this was because the agencies concerned misled me about market rate. I found out that [one council] had initially taken me over other locums as I was so cheap!

I then worked at [a West Midlands Council] for around £32 per hour, although I was able to negotiate a higher rate due to the need to live away from home.

I eventually ended up at a [North West Council] for around £40 an hour and then [a Yorkshire Council] for £45 per hour. The feedback from agencies was that I was at the top end of local authority rates for employment work.

The bottom fell out the locum market (for employment solicitors anyway) around 2008. I had managed to negotiate the high rate at [a Yorkshire Council] as they knew my work but procurement took over the management of hiring locums and tried to force everyone onto set rates. I was offered £28 per hour which I refused. I then worked at [a West Midlands Council]. I was on £28 as a senior solicitor and a junior locum solicitor was paid £24. Most local authorities were offering similar rates at the time - this was the first time I had periods of no work since I'd first started working as a locum. I was offered a job at an [East Anglian Council] for £28 and I think I was offered a similar rate to return to [a West Midlands Council].

My last locum assignment was in 2014 in [a Northern England Council] and I was paid around £32. At that point I decided to stop working as a locum because it was no longer lucrative.

There had been some scandal where a local authority had paid one of their locums around £90 (allegedly!) as he was a friend with a senior officer at that council. It seemed to have some impact on scrutiny of local authority pay although in all honesty, the recession was the bigger factor in pushing pay downwards and those rates don't seem to have recovered.

Generally most local authorities had set rates after 2008 and there was less flexibility to push those rates for an exceptional candidate. One of the ironies of public sector work is that generally the legal teams are able to get the client teams to pay the cost of instructing counsel whereas the costs of a locum are met by the legal department which is working to a tight budget - therefore the legal team will get a locum as cheaply as possible in the knowledge that they can use counsel for more complex work."

We would like other comments from current and former local authority locums - what hourly rates have you come across in local authority locum roles and in which general locations in the country? **You can email us at jbfagan@ten-percent.co.uk**. All correspondence received in strictest confidence by Jonathan Fagan, Managing Director of Ten-Percent.co.uk Limited.

The dangers of posting your CV on job boards

We're often contacted and asked, "should we post our CV onto a job board so that we can attract employers and potential jobs to us rather than us having to go and find work ourselves?"

This may seem a really good idea – if employers can access a bank of CVs they can see that you fit a job and come and headhunt you. You could find yourself in a new role without actually having to apply for any jobs, as employers will be contacting you. This is often marketed as the easy way to recruitment and the modern way of finding a job, and for employers to find staff.

In reality it is our experience that often the opposite is the case. The CV banks we have access to are generally made up of candidates desperate for work who have little experience or no experience, or have something to hide in their background. We rarely see candidates with CVs stored on job banks that are actually those we think would fit a specific vacancy. There are very often issues with these types of candidates and in almost 20 years I don't think we have ever been able to recruit by sourcing a CV from a job site CV bank.

An incident this week has led us to issue strong advice on not posting your CV onto a job board of any description, but instead to apply directly for specific vacancies as and when they crop up. I

should add that there is no problem submitting your CV to reputable recruitment consultants of course..

One of the problems with putting your CV onto a CV bank is that you have absolutely no control over who sees your details. So for example if you are working at a small company in London who decide to take out a subscription for the job board that you are registered with, then there is nothing to stop them from seeing that you have your CV lodged on the CV bank, and furthermore that you have been applying for jobs. You may not know this but certain job sites log when you last looked at vacancies or logged into your account, and they display this information to any potential employers so that they can see how fresh you are in your search for work.

This means that potentially your employer can also see when you were last looking for a job and they may not be overjoyed to find that you were last logged in 24 hours before, when they thought you were quite happy in your current role.

There are just too many risks involved with CV uploading and storage because there is so little control for you over exactly who sees your details and when.

A few years ago we took the decision with our own job board Chancerylane.co.uk that we would not enable CV uploads onto the system. Instead CVs are only sent directly to vacancies you apply to. Whilst Chancery Lane is a small and fairly specialist legal job board used primarily by Ten Percent Legal for its own vacancies, we think this is the best policy.

Interview Questions & Answers Series and our CV Review Service returns

Each month we include 2 interview questions and model answers for popular (or unpopular) interview questions, with advice from our Managing Director. If you would like an ebook with over 50+ of these questions and model answers, please email Jonathan Fagan at jbfagan@ten-percent.co.uk and we'll send it over to you - no charge.

You can also view our free online legal job interview training videos on our website - <https://www.ten-percent.co.uk/interview-advice/>. 100 minutes of advice on technique, interview styles, dealing with technical questions, etc.. Some of the footage is a bit grainy, but the advice is good!

Interview Question 31 – Describe a time when you had a number of conflicting demands on your time and how you dealt with this.

Advice

This question is quite an easy one, but it is important not to fall into the trap of giving a general answer instead of a specific one. The question has asked you to describe a time, not a circumstance that you regularly find yourself in.

Try to think of a specific occasion when you have had to deal with a number of conflicting demands on your time, which for most people would be every hour of every working day, and give a specific example as to how you dealt with it. It is not really a competency based interview question but more of one requiring you to give a specific example backed up with evidence as to how you handle such a situation.

Be very careful not to give any negatives in this answer. It is important to make sure any answer is positive and has no negative connotations.

Examples of Answers

"Whilst working as area manager for Boots one of my colleagues covering a number of stores in the next sector was suddenly taken ill in the run up to an important conference where they were expected to present their findings on a study recently undertaken in their area.

Senior management felt that an interim manager would not be able to handle the level of intensity of the post and I was asked to take over the presentation of the findings as well as manage my own area and my colleagues. In order to do this I immediately delegated all non-essential or urgent tasks to members of my team after holding a meeting to determine how we could do this, and concentrated on the main actions required which included the presentation.

The outcome of this decision was that the presentation went ahead smoothly, my colleagues and I experienced an increased workload but as a result of my decision to delegate all tasks were completed within time and on budget.

Interview Question 32 – Describe a time where you failed to sell an idea that you knew was the right one.

Advice

This is a negative question and one that wherever possible should be avoided. It does not matter how you answer the question, the answer you give will have to result in you providing the interviewer with evidence of a negative point. With this in mind it is worth trying to avoid answering the question at all if you can although this again can raise a negative point if it can be shown that you failed to provide an answer. If there is something positive that you are able to dress up as a negative then perhaps that might be the way to do it.

Examples of Answers

"When I was a junior manager in my first role following university I was given a research project to undertake for the company to identify a new technique for a manufacturing process. As there was little work to do at the time apart from this project I spent considerable hours looking into the problem and came up with what I thought was the perfect solution.

I presented this to senior management who were very impressed by the findings but unfortunately the situation at the time with the strength of the unions within the company determined that the process I had developed could not be implemented as it would negatively impact on the workforce. I was vindicated many years later when union power waned at that plant and the process I had come up with many years beforehand was duly implemented. So although I failed to sell the idea at the time it was because the political situation within the company was wrong for implementation."

Inappropriate interview question – are you the type of person to cry if someone shouts at you?

We do see some gems of interview questions coming our way, and this one is our favourite at the moment. Are you the type of person to cry if someone shouts at you? What a question, and perhaps the person asking it was really testing the interviewee to see how they would respond.

Would the interviewee burst into tears, get defensive, get cross, run out of the room, admit they were the type of person to cry, or something else? Ok, that perhaps was the nice way of looking at the interview question, because in reality this is an absolute shocker. What on earth possessed the interviewer to ask a question like that?

The interviewee would immediately wonder whether the reason this question was being asked was because the interviewer knows full well he is going to be shouting a lot at the interviewee. You would logically think whether or not you wanted to work for an employer who thought it was okay to check whether you minded being shouted at. You would also wonder whether the interviewer was slightly deranged and thought it was perfectly acceptable to shout at his employees, and therefore considered his question to be perfectly reasonable.

So how (as the interviewee) should you deal with this question?

Firstly I would strongly recommend ending the interview and thanking the interviewer for their time. This is such an inappropriate question on a number of levels that it's not a good sign of a long lasting future working relationship!

However, this may be an interview with a firm where you really want to work, for all kinds of reason, or you are desperate for a job and this is the only interview you've had in years. In these cases practicalities may need to take the place of what is fair or right, and instead you need a strategy for dealing with the question.

Our advice would be (assuming you haven't walked out of the interview in disgust), to look surprised and say no you cannot recall ever crying over something that happened at work, because you are very good at keeping work issues in context, but similarly you haven't ever known anybody to feel the need to shout at you in the workplace, as your work has always been exemplary, completed on time and to the satisfaction of your employers. You could add that shouting at colleagues is never something you have experienced before and you would wonder if the person shouting required medical assistance. You could perhaps follow this up by asking the interviewer if they have ever shouted at their employees and see what they say...

Failing this, you could stand up, tip the desk over, flip the bin on top of the interviewer's head, stamp on his laptop and kick a couple of windows in. You could then grab him by the collar and ask him if he has ever cried during an interview before. Naturally I should include a disclaimer to say that we have written this last paragraph in jest..

How much should I charge for a guest blog entry on my blog?

We often get asked by PR companies and agencies whether we will accept a guest blog article written for our blog by one of their "expert bloggers". In 20 years we have not found one suitable article we would accept on our pages as paid content.

I always write back to ask how much they would be prepared to pay. The vast majority of companies have absolutely no idea how much they should be charging and neither do they intend paying anyone. All they know is that there are influencers out there and their clients are paying them to get content written on to the internet. A recent survey, sent to us as a press release (possibly one of the only useful ones we've ever had!), indicated that most bloggers charge £250 for a guest blog to be included on their website. A small amount charge £1000 or more, but it seems the vast majority are charging £250 or less. This would make sense because the vast majority of blogs in the world get very few visitors, and indeed very few bloggers could possibly describe themselves as influencers. I appreciate there are lots of people out there who describe themselves as influencers, but whether or not they actually have any sway with anybody, particularly the overwhelming majority of people who never read their blog, is another matter.

With this in mind, it is important to think about the consequences of allowing a guest blog. Years ago there was a technique for pushing your website up the Google search engine rankings by

paying to be part of a syndicate, and allowing blog articles to go onto your website in return for blog articles by you going on to other websites. The vast majority of these blog articles were automated and written by robots rather than by humans. Google developed a sophisticated technique for identifying these and punishing every website that ever even contemplated this kind of arrangement. It resulted in quite a few demotions for some fairly well known companies in the rankings.

The danger of allowing paid content on to your blog is that it diminishes the overall value of your blog. If readers get to an article and notice that a) it's not written in your usual style, and b) appears to be a puff piece for a company promoting a product, then it is unlikely they are going to be particularly impressed. So it is important to bear in mind that if you do sell guest blogs on your blog you may damage your overall value to potential leaders, and this could have a long term effect on the commercial viability of your blog compared with if you had not taken the guest articles in the first place.

Obviously if you are getting offered guest blogs at £250 per month and this pays the bills and contributes towards your time and effort in writing the blog in the first place, then it may well be worth accepting them, but think about the last time you read The Guardian newspaper or The Daily Telegraph and got to the bit where it says 'paid content' at the top. Did you read this, were you impressed that the paper was taking these kinds of articles, and what overall effect did it have on your view of the journalistic integrity of that particular newspaper? I would suggest that paid content may well make a few pounds here or there, but unless you are earning huge amounts of money off it, it is probably worth thinking about very carefully before you accept the money being offered.

Low Cost Recruitment for Solicitors - Ten Percent Unlimited and Chancery Lane

We offer not one but two lower cost budget recruitment services.

1. 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.

2. ChanceryLane.co.uk

Our online jobs board. We have used this ourselves for years as a useful source of candidates from time to time. It is picked up by Google Jobs amongst other aggregators and has been around for over 10 years. This year we have decided to allow anyone to post onto the board for just £50 per vacancy. No time limit - keep the vacancy live for as long as it takes you to recruit! For details please visit www.chancerylane.co.uk or give us a ring on 0800 246 5001.

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 Transcription

TP Transcription Limited is our wholly owned subsidiary offering outsourced typing work by legal and medical secretaries since 2003. We work on thousands of hours of recording every year for law firms, companies, the NHS, academic institutions and individuals. Try the service out - email or whatsapp your recording to anna@tptranscription.co.uk, visit www.tptranscription.co.uk or call 01745 813306.

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 19 years ago. So far over £100k 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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Legal Recruitment News is produced by TP Legal Recruitment - you can view all versions of the e-newsletter at www.legal-recruitment.co.uk.

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