

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

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## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

I'm Melissa Shanahan and this is the *Velocity Work* podcast, episode number 149.

This podcast is for attorneys who are running their own firms. We explore tactics, tools, and stories related to pushing past simply lawyering well and into building a successful firm. Working in your firm and working on your business are two very different things. This podcast focuses on the latter.

Hey everyone, welcome to this week's episode. Today we are talking about hiring, but I'm not a hiring expert. But there are some things, there are some things that we should talk about that everyone should be doing and some are and some aren't.

And let's just talk about it because the market is hard out there, the job market. You know, there's all kinds of information you can read about out there and maybe experiencing from the great resignation. And it's tougher right now, the market is tougher right now. And it's pointless to focus on that.

So today we're going to talk about a few things that I notice that have been in active conversations for a long time but now it's even more important than it's ever been before. And I'm going to talk to you about some of the things I notice that some people do and some people don't do, and everybody really should do because why wouldn't you when the market is tougher right now?

Now, there's two aspects that I notice when someone is doing this really well. So the first aspect is actually the writing of the post, we're going to talk about that, the job post. And then the second is over publicizing the post, and we'll talk about that.

Now, writing the post, there's a couple questions you can ask yourself to figure out if you're doing a good job writing this post. The first question is if you came across your post, would you be interested in the job? And I don't mean this generic, you know, we're a fast-growing team that X, Y, and Z. Not that, there's a lot of people doing that.

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

How are you going to stand out among the crowd? What is your post going to say and convey that makes it different from the next posting for a paralegal, or for an attorney, or for an assistant? It doesn't matter what the position is, but how are you going to stand out so that you really draw in the people who are high quality, who are like, "Yep, that. That's what I want to work for."

And I think law firm owners assume that they need to make the benefits package and the compensation package amazing and that's what will draw people in. And listen, that doesn't hurt. You need to be very competitive right now, there's no question about that. But on top of that what else, what can you say about your company? What vibes can you give that will really hint at the culture? Just all of it, really think of it as a marketing piece to the world.

Now, if you think of this as a marketing piece to the world, how would you frame it? What would you tweak about what you say? How can you say what you are saying differently so that it's your voice coming through, not just a generic job post? So if you can bring a marketing mindset to the post, that is the best way to do it.

And if you don't feel like this is your strength or the person in your company who is responsible for putting the ad out, if it's not their strength do a first draft that's really dry. And pass that to someone who's a great writer that can make it come off the page, right? Like give it life so that it is interesting to people who maybe come across it, potential candidates who may be coming across it.

So that's the first thing I'll say is your post needs to be great. It needs to be unique, individual to you and your firm, it needs to stand out, it needs to draw the right kind of person in. And you may have less candidates apply, but the candidates that do apply will be more qualified leads as a candidate for the job.

All right, so that's one thing, is the post itself, in terms of the flair that you bring. The second piece of the post itself is how specific it is. Technically,

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

you want a job posting to be so specific that it sets expectations right up front and helps people identify if that's something that they can really plug into and enjoy and or grow into or not. And many times the job description that is posted in an ad isn't good enough. It doesn't convey enough about the work and the skill sets required.

Now, in my world when I'm working with people, mastery group, private clients, and anyone in between, we talk about accountability charts. Because if you have an accountability chart, you have roles and responsibilities really hammered out, right there in front of you. And so you can see, oh, I need someone to cover these specific things. Then it makes it very easy to put into a job description so that you can put into the ad and draw the right people.

So a couple of things, you know, the flair we talked about with the job posting, but also the specificity for the role. And if you don't know, that's not good enough. You need to know. You need to figure out exactly what these people are going to be expected to do so that it's all clear right up front.

Because the alternative is that you hire someone in for a generalized role, and then you're going to just hand them stuff as they come in. That's not a good way to do it. And the reason people do that often is because they are swamped, they don't feel like they have the bandwidth to really nail down, they don't know exactly what this person is going to do. They're just going to do a bunch of things I decide to delegate to them when they come in.

You do need to know what you would like them to handle. To a point where even if you don't have processes and systems for those things, it's okay. They can help you develop the processes and systems, but you know exactly what you're going to be handing them. You know exactly what they're going to be doing when they step into the role. And that clarity provides comfort for you, and comfort for the candidate.

So with the job posting, highly specific with the job description, and your own flair. Market it, like how can you stand out the post itself? Now that we've talked about the posting, the other piece that I really wanted to talk

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

about today, but felt ridiculous to start talking about that until we had just touched on the posting, is this idea that you need to over publicize the job post. You need to get out there in a way that is big and loud, and in every avenue you can possibly think of.

People don't do this enough. And again, it's usually because they're swamped. But that isn't an excuse or a reason to not really go at this. Now, here's what I mean by that. Most of the time, when I'm talking to someone who has a ho-hum attitude about the market and about the job that they need filled, they will have posted one place, maybe on LinkedIn. And maybe a second place, let's just say Indeed.

And they've put their feelers out. They asked their team to put their feelers out, and like there's just not good candidates coming in. And you know, it's the market. This is the market that we're in. And it's very not taking the reins where you could take the reins, right?

Versus someone else who needs to fill a role. And yeah, they post it on LinkedIn, yeah they posted on Indeed, yeah they posted on all these other outlets, and some local in their communities. Yes, they are asking their team members to put the word out. And maybe they've incentivized team members, if we end up hiring someone that you've referred, here's what we're going to do, to create excitement within the team to help find the right fit.

And then there's this other concept that I learned from my client, Ben Hudson, so then I looked it up and learned about it. It's Adam Grant, it's his concept that he presented in the book, *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success*. And in this book he talks about this concept of weak ties versus strong ties.

And most of the time people will put out feelers within their strong ties, their strong network. And they forget about their weak ties, sort of the periphery of their network. And how some of the best candidates come from the weak ties because in your strong ties, the community that you're closest to, many

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

of you are looking for similar positions to be filled and growing, you're in the same world.

But going to your weak ties, you are talking to people who aren't in your close proximity in terms of your network, and they have worlds. Like each of them have their own worlds that they're really tight with. And the results can be much greater by going out to the weak ties with the broadcasting of your need for hiring.

And so I was thinking about this, we were talking about this on a call, that is just such a really great way to think about it. Because when I say over publicize, it's important that you don't just bank on one or two avenues to get your candidate to come through the door, the one that's going to work. That doesn't make any sense in today's world.

You have got to be standing from the mountaintops shouting about it in a way that might feel like it's just, that's why I'm using the word over publicize. It's not really over publicizing, it's just seriously publicizing it and not banking on one little thread or two little threads or channels to get your right person.

In today's world you have got to do more than that and you've got to be more than that. And you've got to have a better, bigger energy around what you're trying to fill. Your enthusiasm needs to shine through. And your culture, your vibe needs to shine through, through the job description. And so by talking to weaker ties, that is where you can open yourself up to a bigger world of opportunity to find the candidates that you need to interview for the job that you have open.

I have an example of this for myself last summer when I was looking for a candidate. I found a great candidate through a weak tie, so to speak. And it was someone that ran a co-working space that I worked out of before I had my son. And I reached out to her, she was such a friendly face and I just thought she sees people coming through that space all the time.

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

And I reached out to her and I said, “Hey, here's my job description. If you know anyone that might be interested or if you know someone that's a good fit, I would love to be connected with them.” And lo and behold, she emailed me right back that day and was like, “You know what? So weird, there is someone I think would be a really good fit for this and she's working out of this space today. She's actually not here that often. But today, she's here.” What? Like, I created that opportunity and we hired her.

And then another one was I told my chiropractor that I was hiring and said, “Hey, I have this awesome job. I would love to pass on the job description. Our company is really exciting. The work we do is really cool. This position is going to be awesome. I'd love to pass you the job description if you think you might know anybody that would fit it.” And he's like, “You know what? There's a couple of people I would totally pass that to.” And one of the people we didn't end up hiring, but was a really good candidate that we interviewed.

So that's when I was learning from Ben, my client, about the weak ties versus strong ties concept. It was like, oh, I've done that. And I know plenty of clients who have done that. And that's how they've found great candidates. So don't kid yourself with this, it almost feels like there's so many things you could do in order to over publicize. And so it can get overwhelming and you don't really feel like you have the time to do it.

But I'm telling you, if you schedule 15 minutes to super think, which I've done episodes on super thinking. But to give your brain fully undistracted time to focus on ideas and brainstorm around how many different ways can you get this job posting out into the world in order to find the right candidate? Or asking yourself, what are all the different ways I can bring in this candidate, I can find them and bring them in? Your brain will produce and generate a bunch of ideas.

And some of them may seem like piddly and small. Do it. Do it, find ways to do it and get your team to help if you need to. But do those things. You will thank yourself later for actually giving yourself the 15 minutes of space to think deeply on this. And then your job is to schedule time to actually

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

execute on what you came up with. But it's important, right? If you have a job open, you need that job filled, it's important. It will stunt your growth if you don't, otherwise, you wouldn't have an ad for it out. So really go for it.

Another way to think about this is a question I ask my clients consistently when they feel stuck, or like I don't know what to do. If your life was on the line, like you had 30 days to find an amazing candidate or lights out for you, you would go find that amazing candidate. I swear to you, we all know you would go do it.

And we don't bring that fervor to the job of finding someone, we don't bring that energy to it because we're usually really busy, right? We're swamped with other things. And so putting an ad out feels like that's all you can do. But listen, don't let your brain fool you into thinking that it's going to take some ungodly amount of time that you don't have.

What it does take is an ungodly amount of energy. It takes a deep commitment to shining really brightly out in the world and in corners that maybe you wouldn't normally shine. You got to go do those things. You got to do that. It actually doesn't mean it's going to take a ton of time.

It's probably going to take less time than your brain wants to think upfront. But you'll never give it a chance because you won't go down that path because your brain is like, "I don't have time for all that all I can do is spit out a job posting here and here and maybe tell people in my circle." It's not good enough. These days it's not good enough.

If you want to find somebody, you got to market yourself well. You have to have flair against the next job description for something similar. And you need to over publicize. And the reason I say over publicize is just to get your brain on board to know like more, more, more, more, more. Where else? Who else can I tell about this?

So over publicize is just a term to be able to get your brain to see like it's not good enough yet. I haven't overdone it yet. I haven't overdone it yet. It's really important to not bank on just one channel or two.

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

A couple other things, one is don't be in a hurry. I know, trust me, I'm experiencing this inside of Velocity Work as well. And I'm talking to my clients who experiencing this for themselves. We all wanted this person hired yesterday. That is partially because there isn't enough time being taken to like really take this seriously and give the space that it needs. We hire too late. We take these efforts too seriously too late.

As you grow, that is a lesson you learn and you start earlier, and earlier, and earlier, and earlier because of this pain point that you feel when you just need someone right now. So that's one thing is, you know, don't be in a hurry. And part of that is you got to start earlier than you think you need to start. That's just true. If you want to find good candidates and you don't want to be hustling for it, you got to start earlier than you think you need to start.

And the other piece about being in a hurry is you'll make calls that are emotional instead of based on facts and a good fit. And that's not worth it. Never, very, very, very rarely, hardly ever does that work out to be worth it for you and your firm in the end. So do not be in a hurry, do not make hasty calls.

A couple of other tips I have that I think everyone should look into is you can find people to help facilitate ease and flow in this process. So a couple of resources out there that are top of mind for me right now is Molly McGrath, her website, [hiringandempowering.com](http://hiringandempowering.com). And she does recruitment services that are really strong. And it's her main focus right now, especially because the job market tends to be, it's so much more competitive.

So she is really thriving with the recruiting side of her business. Look into her, talk to her. Is it a good fit to work with someone like her? If you are an attorney and you were looking for really qualified staff, great staff, good fits, she can be an awesome resource for you.

So another resource that is out there who I've heard so many good things about, I actually met in person at the ABA tech show this year is Randa

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

Prendergast. She has a business, like she's known as the attorney whisperer. So if you go to [facebook.com/attorneywhisperer](https://facebook.com/attorneywhisperer), no dashes or anything, then you'll find her business. And you can book a call there to see if that'd be a great spot to go to. She places paralegals into law firms. So that's another great resource that I've met recently.

Another one that once you find some candidates that you are considering hiring, then Jay Henderson of [realtalenthiring.com](https://realtalenthiring.com) Definitely, definitely reach out to him because I've talked about him before on this podcast, but he is an ally with making the right call.

And I cannot tell you from my own experience at this point, and plus every client that I know that's used him has experience where they think it's a good fit. They're pretty sure and then they get on the phone with him and it's like, oh my gosh, yeah, no, this is the reason that probably this is going to be a really tough relationship in the long term with this hire.

Or someone who you just can't read, having him go through, like it's a quick assessment that the person has to take, the candidate has to take. Having him look at the assessment and say, okay, here's the read on them. And it helps you make decisions based on more facts and not feelings, and that can be a great move. So please, I cannot say enough good things about Jay Henderson and his company, [realtalenthiring.com](https://realtalenthiring.com).

Those are resources that I'm hoping is helpful for you as you are thinking about hiring, and as your firm is growing, and you're opening up positions. Listen, separate yourself from the crowd and shine that light from that post into every corner of the world you could possibly think of.

Strong ties, yes. But weak ties, all the people in your weak network, so to speak. And maybe incentivize your team, get them excited about the possibility of that as well. And they can do the exact same thing. And so then that opens them up to their weak ties and their networks.

And get help when you're thinking about it. So yes, over publicize, but then get help through the process. Maybe hooking up with Molly McGrath is a

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

great idea. Maybe hooking up with Randa Prendergast is a great idea if you need a paralegal. Maybe using Jay once you get people into your funnel as a candidate and you're getting closer and closer to making a decision, having them take that assessment that Jay offers and getting his words of wisdom around it.

And I'm giving you ideas here. You probably, if you sat down for real and thought just for 15 minutes about all the ways that you can maximize this process and get the best client in. And if your life was on the line, 30 days you got to find this person, you would be well on your way to finding the right person instead of just like ho humming around.

And it doesn't always feel like your ho humming and around because you put effort into the job description. You post it on sites, which takes some time. It's like the whole thing, it takes some time, right? So it doesn't feel like you're ho humming around but I'm telling you, most of you are. I'm telling you, I talk to too many law firm owners about this and their process behind it is like weak sauce. Come on, let's go.

All right, let's recap this episode. The first thing, do not indulge with your mindset around what is going on in the world and this narrative that everything is tougher right now with the job market. Okay, take that as a fact, and then now what, right? Like stop focusing on that. It is what it is, now what? So get your head in the game.

The second thing is write a job description that stands out, that has flair, that feels like you, that would actually draw someone in. And I didn't give this tip earlier but Ben Hudson, the guy I was talking about who turned me onto weak ties versus strong ties, he said in his post, starts it with, "Do you hate hourly billing? Do you wish you could just do the legal work and not have to focus on business development?" You know, he starts with those kinds of things.

And he said something about this job might be for you if you like the Oxford comma. Like that's funny, right? And of course, it went into more depth

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

about the actual job, but that's the kind of thing that draws in the right kind of people more often. Okay, so writing the job post is a thing.

The next thing that we talked about was over publicizing the job posting. Over publicizing, do not rely on one to three channels to get the candidates that you need. You might get the candidate from those first one to three most obvious channels that you are going to post the job.

But open up your world of opportunity to other candidates, really great candidates, get a deeper pool of people. And do that by, yes, you want to focus on strong ties with your network and who are your strong ties and how can you tell them about the job? But then also the weak ties, the periphery of your network. Let them know too. Talk to them. Be willing and offer to pass them the job description or the job posting.

And yeah, just get out there, get way outside your comfort zone. Talk to everyone about it. Look in your local community for additional channels to maybe post some things. Really get creative, and to do this, because it feels like oh my gosh, I don't know all the channels I should take. Schedule 15 minutes to answer the question, have your brain answer the question, what are all the ways I could find an amazing candidate? What are all the possibilities?

And I have a friend who also says I'm going to come up with 50 bad ideas because it takes the pressure off of having to have good ideas. So what are 50 bad ideas on getting the most amazing candidate into our firm? So schedule time, focus on that, and then go execute on all the ideas that you had. Because you do not know where this amazing candidate can come from.

Do not be in a hurry and get support where it feels smart. So look into resources that are out there for law firm owners to be able to find really great candidates. Molly McGrath is one I mentioned. Randa Prendergast is one I mentioned. And Jay Henderson is one I mentioned. And there's so many great ones out there. But those are the three that are top of mind for

## #149: Hiring the Right People for Your Firm

me right now, I've had great conversations with and I think you can't go wrong by having a conversation with them.

All right, everyone, get those people in. They need to be in your firm. It'll be amazing. Yeah, get out there. Go do it. Have a wonderful week. I'll see you here next Tuesday.

Hey, you may not know this, but there's a free guide for a process that I teach called Monday Map, Friday Wrap. If you go to [velocitywork.com](http://velocitywork.com), it's all yours. It's about how to plan your time and honor your plans, so that week over week, more work that moves the needle is getting done in less time. Go to [velocitywork.com](http://velocitywork.com) to get your free copy.