

Lateral Recruiting: Improve Your Success Rate by Asking the Right Questions

By [Jim Cranston](#) on February 23, 2016

When it comes to lateral recruiting, it goes without saying that most firms aspire to improve their success rate. In the Above The Law article "[6 Tips for Smarter Lateral Hiring](#)," author David Lat quickly prioritizes asking appropriate questions during the interview process with his first tip, "Ask the right questions of Prospective Lateral Hires."

Lat goes on to say "to catch misrepresentations or to avoid misunderstandings, it's important for outside recruiters or law firm recruiters to ask the right questions of potential laterals. According to Shannon Davis, director of recruiting at Mintz Levin, people get better at asking good questions with experience — but putting a little thought into it can go a long way."

So what are the right questions? Dr. Phil (McGraw) once said, "the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior." With that in mind, focus your line of inquiry on verifying prior success and the behaviors that helped attain that success. Some examples include:

1. **In looking for a team player who works well with others.** Ask "Describe a time where you collaborated with other partners on a critical client matter. Describe the situation and the outcome."
2. **Verifying business development habits.** Ask "Give me an example of a few business development habits that you feel have greatly contributed to your success."
3. **Handling of difficult clients.** Ask "Tell me about a time when you successfully dealt with a challenging client or significant problem. What did you do to resolve the problem?"
4. **Adding value to client relationships.** Ask "Describe a situation where you proactively approached a client on a topic that resulted in new business. What prompted your outreach to that client?"
5. **Institutionalizing clients.** "Tell me about a unique or creative way that you took a client relationship to another level."

Determine what you want to verify, then craft a question to solicit the result you would expect . . . because the best predictor of future success is prior success. Happy hunting!