

Law Firm Hiring Models: No Longer “Par for the Course”

By [LawVision](#) on February 26, 2013

Every year about this time I experience the same hallucination – By the time the cold Chicago weather breaks, I’ll be a good golfer. It never works. Try as I might, my best intentions to take a few lessons always fall by the wayside and other than buying new golf clothing & shoes, I end up being the same lousy golfer (albeit better dressed).

Calling the pro shop last week, I recalled a conversation with a recruiting director at an AmLaw 200 firm in 2008. When I asked her how the firm’s summer associate program was going, she responded “Ask the pro shop”. Huh? Turned out their summer associates felt entitled to expense new gloves, balls, clothing – and even some new golf clubs – to the firm at a recent golf outing. She was exasperated, and we launched into a then-common conversation about the “entitlement generation”.

Fast forward to 2013. Gone are the fancy golf outings, lavish dinners, and baseball games. Heck, *gone are the summer associates as well!* According to NALP’s recent [Perspectives on Fall 2012 Law Student Recruiting](#), law firms continue to bring in small summer classes, with median and average class size barely increasing from recession-era lows. Offer rates coming out of summer programs remain high, but they fell by more than a point from the previous summer. Not surprisingly, acceptance rates for those offers set another record high.

Here’s an interesting observation: According to [Peer Monitor](#) (a Thomson Reuters monthly financial benchmarking service), spending on recruiting is actually.... Increasing! Recruiting expenses were up 19.4% in 2012 and 23.4% in 2011.

Here’s another interesting observation: **Firms are not returning to the old model of hiring.** Savvy firms are gaining a competitive advantage via their hiring models. Even stalwart firms that thought the recession was a “blip” on the radar screen are lamenting the end of their traditional hiring methods.

Firms rethinking their hiring models have about as many options to choose from as ways I can improve my golf swing- **A lot!** Whether they refocus on lateral hiring, contract/temp-to-hire attorneys, project attorneys, staff attorneys, alumni relations, interview training, marketing, personality testing, or non-traditional positions like pricing directors, the right mix will be different for every firm.

It’s clear that law firm hiring models have changed significantly since that conversation I had in 2008. I only wish I could say the same for my golf game.