

Stuart TenHoor Legal Search

Professional Profile

Stuart TenHoor is the president of TenHoor Legal Search. His company works primarily in Washington, D.C., which focus also includes Northern Virginia, the Maryland suburbs and Baltimore. TenHoor Legal Search's primary placement expertise is in 5 practice areas: FDA, Employment & Labor, Government Contracts/Construction Law, Health Care and Trusts & Estates.

Stuart is in his twenty-fifth year of what he often calls "Executive search for law firm standouts." He primarily assists law firm partners (shareholders or members) -both individually and as a group-in moving laterally. His goal is to help these lawyers clarify what they want-the best match for their evolving professional goals-and then begin sifting through the best-fitting options in the law firm marketplace.

Stuart also works directly for law firms. He is often retained by these firms to seek high level talent in a strategic way as agreed upon by them before commencing the search. He also handles searches for companies seeking to buttress their in-house legal shops. He notes that many companies prefer attorneys who have a good business sense, and often give bonus points to lawyers who have worked in-house before.

Prior to entering the legal search field, Stuart served as a professional staff member for the United States Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. He also worked as an assistant city attorney in Alexandria, VA and as an associate at Washington D.C.'s Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson & Hand (much of which merged into the firm DLA Piper in 2002).

After several years working for other recruiters, he headed out on his own and established TenHoor & Helffrich Legal Search Services in 1996. In 2004, the company evolved into TenHoor, Inc. Legal Search Services with Stuart as president.

Stuart has written about placement, job finding and career issues in such publications as the National Law Journal, the Virginia Bar Journal and in the Food and Drug Law Institute's topical *Update* magazine with a 3-part series. Today he comments and blogs on a number of electronic media publications which focus on the "life and times" of today's lawyers.

While retaining his membership in the Virginia State Bar, he admitted that he has focused less on professional memberships of late (although he has been a member of the National Association of Legal Search Consultants and of the Greater Washington Board of Trade). As a BOT member, he was recognized as Ambassador of the Year for his new member recruitment efforts. That year he was also named "Power Player of the Month" which earned him additional recognition in the Washington, DC area's best known group of business leaders.

Personal Life

Stuart was born and raised Grand Rapids, MI. He graduated with a B.A. Cum Laude in History and Accounting from Alma College. Stuart also earned his J.D. from the College of William & Mary. While studying at Alma, he got his first taste of the psychological issues of being in the middle (like in recruiting!) as Head Resident of an approximately 100 student dorm. He excelled in sports there and played for the Scots men's basketball team. He was second team all-league as a junior, first team as a senior. As captain and most valuable player his senior year, he was second in scoring and fifth in rebounding in Conference play. These accomplishments helped "Stu" win an NCAA postgraduate scholarship which recognizes outstanding scholar athletes. Alma has had just 12 such awardees, including 2 in basketball, since the NCAA began giving them out in 1964.

When the legal recruiter isn't working, he's spending time enjoying his two children or spending time outdoors. He loves open water



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swimming and has competed in triathlons for 5 years. He still loves basketball and rooted for the San Antonio Spurs this year even though they lost in the finals. When asked about his favorite sports teams, he cites the 1968 Detroit Tigers, the 1987 Los Angeles Lakers and the 2012 Baltimore Ravens.

He also loves movies and books ("loved Lincoln"-- his favorite historical character). His striking resemblance to Lincoln (in period costume) even spooked some tourists out when they saw him at the Lincoln Memorial one Halloween night many years ago. Two of his favorite books are Zorba the Greek and Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse. He also recommends to all lawyers and anyone looking to excel, Spencer Johnson's The One Minute Sales Person.

Stuart's Successful Career Path in Recruiting and Tips for Legal Recruiters

What does it take to become a successful legal recruiter? "You want to be assertive, but not aggressive or pushy. You don't want to pester candidates, though you have to walk a fine line. Candidates and employer clients often need prodding, but you don't want to be perceived as a nuisance."

What motivated Stuart to become a recruiter? "I've always been in the middle, bringing different interests together." That started with basketball, as his favorite part of the game was passing the ball well and giving assists. He also realized while working in the US Senate that he loved using his constantly expanding rolodex to bring ideas and people together. And his business logo is a triangle which represents the triathlons he loves and the 3 parts to a placement-the employer, the candidate and him.

Even little things played a part in his transition from practicing attorney to search consultant. "My mom said I had to learn to type so I took a class in 10th grade. I liked it so much (he types around 80-90 words a minute still today) that I ended up typing faster than everyone in mom's typing pool!" He typed his law school exams and now, often using a headset, he can type fast enough to keep up with candidate's or client's de-briefings after an interview.

While practicing law at Verner Liipfert, a partner confided in him, sharing that his skill set might not result in promotion to partner. He suggested Stuart seek out his neighbor, a DC recruiter. "After I spoke to the recruiter, it sounded so much like what I did on the hill I thought it would be fun and challenging. I liked working on multiple projects at a time." After several months of reflection, he decided to jump into recruiting and joined Williamson & Neal.

I asked Stuart about what is he known for professionally. "I am known for managing the fine line between assertiveness and aggressiveness very well and advocating for my candidates to the fullest extent possible. He's been told he has an encyclopedic knowledge of law firms and the comings and goings of partners in the Greater DC geographic area. Despite all the law firm moves into new office space over the years, Stuart say he's unable to walk down streets in the DC legal districts without pointing out where the law firms he has represented reside.

Stuart discussed his strengths and weaknesses as a recruiter. He emphasized that he is knowledgeable about the legal market and able to match his candidates well. While it's quite challenging to find the best cultural, economic and practice fit for his candidates, especially in this market, he loves the huge rush of making a great match. "It's a win-win situation, while litigation was quite frequently a lose-lose situation. I have one client with whom I just placed my 25th lawyer and I take great pride that only 2 have left the firm during the 10 years I have been placing candidates with them."

As for weaknesses, the legal recruiter noted, "I do a lot of 'pro bono' work with candidates I will never place... perhaps too much." Young attorneys from his alma mater often seek him out for guidance which he offers when he can. "Unfortunately I cannot place everybody who contacts me," because he says that the best recruiters actually work with a sliver of the huge numbers of lawyers in private practice, corporations and the government (which is certainly a key factor in DC).

So what is Stuart's advice to new recruiters? "You have to develop thick skin because many of the top candidates you contact for your employer clients are often quite settled in where they are and may not be open to a career discussion at 8 am. You need to challenge

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yourself. I love to find that gem of a candidate." Several times he's been able to double a candidate's salary which, in conjunction with a great new job, has endeared him to those candidates for many years.

Stuart notes that about 50% of those he places were not looking at the time of his first call. He recommends trying to give value first to those he reaches out to for the jobs he seeks to fill. "Once they realize you know your stuff, candidates will listen because this is such a challenging market." With the spate of law firm dissolutions the past 5 years, "good lawyers need good recruiters more than ever before." Helping lawyers navigate the tricky waters of finding the best career options in this climate is Stuart's passion.

Considering his first twenty-five years of experience in the legal recruiting industry, many readers may want to know where Stuart sees the legal field in the next five years. The candid recruiter admitted, "I don't have a crystal ball, but firms that know how to provide value to clients in this market will keep their lawyers busy and their law firms humming. But it is a challenging market for lawyers and recruiters alike."

What does Stuart look for to find the right fit--what makes a great candidate? "I try to find out a candidate's goals. I won't work with a prospective candidate who says his only motivation to move is to make more money." Stuart says candidates must show motivation, particularly in their practice area. They need to stand out and take steps to obtain recognition for their work.

He notes that dozens of lawyer rating entities have sprung up--"the US News effect" Stuart calls it. But it's better to be recognized than not, whether it's Chambers or the XYZ survey. "I look for confidence, a solid track record and the willingness to consider my argument about why another employer may be a better fit once I've clarified their goals. Frankly, I'd rather have a candidate who takes a while to call me back after an interview." Stuart says it means he or she is a busy, productive lawyer who realizes client work comes first. He has observed that the best ones (candidates) perceive most accurately how they have been received during the interview, "and not everyone does!"

How does the businessman tackle obstacles? "I try to take it one step at a time. If my goal is to get three placements going over a one month period, I break down the steps to accomplish that and put in the time, every day--nights and weekends included!"

Where does Stuart derive his confidence? "Coming back from difficult circumstances and the thrill of having made big deals happen and knowing I can do it again is reassuring." Stuart says you can't excel at his job if you're anxious and afraid.

Stuart also loves the "persuasion part." "That's the one thing I learned from law school that has helped me the most in my job." Persuasiveness is about preparation and knowledge and Stuart strives to always be prepared. "If you remain relaxed and confident in what you do, your chances for success are much greater."

Stuart's Mentor and Mentoring Others, Facing Obstacles, His Passions and Most Inspiring Influence

Does Stuart have a mentor? He said Bobbie McMorrow is one of his most impressive mentors. Bobbie is the co-founder of the prestigious consulting firm McMorrow Savarese. For more than twenty years she has been recognized as one of the leading law firm mergers and acquisitions professionals in the nation. Bobbie has been featured on Lawdragon and in The American Lawyer. Her writing frequently appears in the Daily Journal, California's largest legal news provider. Additionally, his former college professor, Dr. MJJ Smith at Alma, was also a great mentor. "He sparked my interest in the law and taught me to think and cultivate a nimble mind," recalls Stuart.

Has the recruiter faced any obstacles in his life? In 1987, Stuart was diagnosed with an acoustic neuroma, a benign brain tumor, and needed 2 operations, 6 years apart, to fully remove it. His greatest regret, even more so than left-sided deafness since then, is that he can no longer make a symmetrical smile. "I'm physically incapable of what I expect from each of my candidates...a great smile!!" he said somewhat wistfully. "But that experience made me much stronger and more able to keep things in their proper perspective--that unsuccessful phone call or candidate who turns down that 'perfect' job is not a life threatening or permanent situation."

What causes is he passionate about? Stuart is passionate about maintaining hearing health for everyone. He rarely attends loud music concerts now because of his fear of jeopardizing the hearing in his good ear. A few years ago, while attending a U2 concert, his body

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shook from the reverberations coming from the speakers. "People are blasé about the importance of protecting one's hearing." Stuart is eternally grateful that he can hear out of his right ear and has turned this disability into strength. "I am a better listener with just one good ear than I was when both worked!"

Non-Profit Organizations, Motivation, Favorite Quote, and Stuart's Goals

Stuart currently volunteers for the Pinnacle Empowerment Center, an organization that provides women with support and the resources they need to achieve success in their careers. He will be conducting a workshop this fall to help woman who are re-entering the workforce hone their interview skills.

He has been active in the Acoustic Neuroma Association, a patient formed group that helps its many members and non-members who seek its assistance cope with the many challenges of the diagnosis and aftermath of treatment. He was on the Board of Directors for several years and says it's the best organization he's ever been a part of.

The search consultant's pro bono orientation also included work for the Post Conviction Assistance Project. During his last 2 years in law school, Stuart worked with prisoners with regular visits to the federal penitentiary in Petersburg, VA, where he assisted inmates with habeas corpus petitions and other legal issues. The project also involved him helping inmates at the state level.

What motivates Stuart to excel in his chosen field? "My professional purpose in life is to help people get what they want in a career context. I help individuals advance their careers by helping them clarify where they want to be." Why does the recruiter find his position rewarding? "Professional satisfaction is so integral in our society. Playing a small part in helping lawyers achieve this goal is very gratifying.

Stuart's favorite quote is by Abraham Lincoln: "Things may come to those who wait... but only things left by those who hustle."

Does the Alma College alumnus have goals? "My goal is to continue to flourish in the legal search world and to continue enjoying the many great things in life. I've never been to Hawaii, so that's a goal, and I plan to do an open water swim in the Sydney Harbor next January." The recruiter added, "I can enjoy doing this for many years to come. I'd miss it too much if I stopped." However, then he smiled and said, "I am always open to opportunity, just like my best clients and candidates!"