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Review of Managing the Recruitment Process

Gary A. Munneke

Pace Law School, gmunneke@law.pace.edu

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For the practitioner

Managing the Recruitment Process.
By Christine White and Abbie
Willard Thorner.

Law and Business, Harcourt Brace
Jovanovich. \$45.00. 350 pages.

Reviewed by Gary A. Munneke, assistant dean and assistant professor at the Delaware Law School and chairman, American Bar Association Committee on Professional Utilization and Career Development.

It is widely recognized in the legal profession that the process by which lawyers are hired has undergone fundamental change in the past two decades. The change in the recruitment process has paralleled and been influenced by other changes in the way law is practiced in the United States today. Until now, no book has attempted to describe, much

less analyze, the recruitment process for lawyers. In *Managing the Recruitment Process*, however, Christine White and Abbie Willard Thorner attempt to do just that.

Both authors have experience as managers of the recruitment programs in major Washington, D.C., law firms as well as directors of law placement during their professional careers. In fact, it is their very expertise that produces the book's only real fault—for some readers there is simply more here than they might care to know about legal recruiting. For these readers, short articles in legal journals may be the best sources of information on the subject.

For an individual or an organization that employs lawyers and is serious about doing the job well, the book is essential reading. It is truly the definitive text in an area in which good information is genuinely needed.

White and Thorner begin with a review of how legal recruiting has devel-

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oped in this country. They follow this with a bare-bones description of what it takes to have an effective recruitment system.

The authors shift their focus from the theoretical to the practical, discussing in painstaking detail the organization and operation of a recruitment program. They identify the people who manage the process, defining roles and alternative structures. They address problems such as record keeping, communications with applicants including offers to recruits, and the administration of summer programs. These chapters strike a balance between the theoretical and the practical. White and Thorner suggest that rejection letters "be brief, to the point and simple. . . . The potential for error multiplies with employer attempts to customize rejection letters. . . ." They then provide a number of concrete examples demonstrating the general point.

The less ingenious reader could run an entire recruitment program just borrow-

ing the forms and letters included in *Managing the Recruitment Process*. The wiser reader will understand that the authors are presenting concepts and examples to be pondered, not simplistic formulas to be taken for granted, although the volume can be read as a "how-to" book.

The chapters on "Interviewing" and "Information Evaluation and Review" are worth special mention. Interviewing and evaluating candidates involves specific skills and techniques that can be learned and developed. White and Thorner correctly point out that these skills are critical to the success of the recruitment process. Yet they say interviewing and evaluating are but a part of the larger process and must be viewed from that perspective. They offer many specific suggestions on how to develop these skills and how to teach them to attorneys and managers involved in recruitment.

It is apparent that the authors have

experience in large law firms, and this book does not attempt to hide the fact. Smaller firms, corporations, agencies, and other legal employers may want to say that this book is not for them. That would be a mistake, because much of the book deals with ideas that apply to every employer who engages in this process. It would have been impossible to write the definitive text on this subject without addressing the problems of employers who hire significant numbers of lawyers on an annual basis. That it addresses the needs of the infrequent recruiter is a credit to the authors.

It might seem unlikely that a book on recruiting could provide interesting reading, but it does. Whether the reader wants to lift a few forms, garner ideas for implementation in a large or small recruitment program, or gain a broad perspective on a fascinating aspect of the legal profession, *Managing the Recruitment Process* will provide worthwhile enlightenment.