

---

*A Pioneer  
in Legal  
Recruiting*  
**Phyllis  
Hawkins**

---

By Rachel Brooks



Andrew Paul Photography

Not many people can say that they still love their job after being at it for 30 years. Phyllis Hawkins can. After starting out at an employment agency and being told no one would pay a fee for placing a lawyer, she set out on her own and has never looked back.

Now, after 30 years in the business, this one-woman show is still going steady. Over the years she's employed many associates, employing 11 full-time associates at the peak of the economy. "Most of my business comes from referrals, either from attorneys I've placed or law firms I've worked with. I get lots of calls from out-of-state attorneys looking to move to Phoenix."

She works with both attorneys looking to move firms and with firms recruiting attorneys. "I like doing both," she said. "It gives me something new to do each and every day. There is something novel about each placement I've made. It keeps my career exciting."

Over the years, Hawkins has come to really know the Phoenix legal community. "Each firm is different," she says. "It makes my job easier. When someone comes to me in confidence, knowing they need to make a change in their career, I can usually picture the ideal place for them."

Unlike most local recruiters, Hawkins focuses solely on placing attorneys. "I've always loved working with them," she said. "They're so interesting. First of all, I married one. He's now a judge. Secondly, most of our friends are lawyers, so working together seemed natural."

She admits that her personality fits better with attorneys. "I've never been a numbers person, so accounting never quite fit," she laughed. "With attorneys, you have such a variety of personalities. The different practice areas just attract very different people, so it's a new experience every time."

A trailblazer in bringing legal recruiting to the Phoenix market, Hawkins has benefited from the National Association of Le-

gal Search Consultants (NALSC) where she was able to network with recruiters from other locations. She has served on its board of directors and is a past national president.

"Many national firms will only work with recruiters who are members of NALSC," she said. "There is a code of ethics that they require each member to sign and hold themselves accountable to. I was a part of the team that put that code together."

Ethics is, to Hawkins, one of the most integral parts of this industry. "It takes a lot of trust to place your career in someone's hands. You need to be able to trust them, so ethics is a premium."

*"It gives me something new to do each and every day. There is something novel about each placement I've made. It keeps my career exciting."*

So is confidentiality. When partners come to her seeking a new place to bring their practice, she understands and values the trust they're placing in her.

Recognized as the go-to person for working with partners in the Phoenix area, Hawkins notes that "There is more to consider when a partner moves firms. They need to have a practice. I need to make sure there are no conflicts and that the firm is a good fit for both the lawyer and his or her clients. For associates, I'm looking for the ideal firm for them to grow their career."

When Hawkins reads the press releases, announcing a new hire, she has a quiet moment of celebration.

While she enjoys the career she has made for herself, it is not without challenges. "The right person doesn't always exist or isn't always available. It's frustrating to not be able to complete a search right away," she said. "For one client, I actually waited 10 years for the right match. Occasionally, patience is what is needed."

Beyond partner moves and group acquisitions, Hawkins has also facilitated a number of law firm mergers. A feat, she says, few legal recruiters across the country have been able to accomplish in their careers.

Since her start in this field, Hawkins has seen an evolution. "The industry has evolved from a profession to a business," she said. "Years ago attorneys were more willing to do whatever it took regardless of the hours spent to become partners at their firms. And while most younger attorneys are still ambitious, many are now as concerned with achieving a greater work-life balance. I think we're seeing that appear in some of the new positions that have been created in firms to address a variety of needs for both the firm and individual attorney. A few years ago, there was no such thing as senior, staff or contract attorneys. There has been a shift in goals."

Outside of the office, Hawkins is quite the chef, having attended cooking schools in both Italy and France. She also puts her green thumb to work in the garden. She's currently a member of a landscaping committee at both her residences – she lives part of the year in San Francisco where her husband's court is headquartered.

Her passion, however, is her granddaughter, who lives with her son and daughter-in-law in Seattle.

As the economy continues to bounce back, Hawkins is busier than ever. "And I still love what I do," she said.

---

**Phyllis Hawkins &  
Associates Inc.**

(602) 263-0248

[www.azlawsearch.com](http://www.azlawsearch.com)

[phyllis@azlawsearch.com](mailto:phyllis@azlawsearch.com)

---