

# NALSC® 2026 Fall Symposium

**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 24**

**AT THE AUSTIN OFFICES OF JACKSON WALKER**

**6:00-8:00pm CT Welcome Networking Reception at Jackson Walker**

Welcome by [Liz Gilman](#), Director of Lateral Partner Recruiting at Jackson Walker LLP

Welcome by [Meghan Pier](#), Senior Director of Legal Recruiting at Jackson Walker LLP

*We greatly appreciate our generous host and sponsor Jackson Walker LLP*

*Also, a special thank you to Platinum sponsor Kyth*

**FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 25**

**AT THE HILTON AUSTIN**

**8:00am CT Breakfast, Registration and Exhibitor Booths Open**

*Branded totes sponsored by Chambers as well as Practus, LLP*

*Custom badge lanyards sponsored by SurePoint® Technologies*

*Breakfast sponsored by Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP and Falcon Rappaport & Berkman LLP*

**9:00-9:15am CT Welcome**

[Melissa Peters, Esq.](#), Founder of MP Legal Search and NALSC President

[Jonathan D. Neerman, Esq.](#), Firmwide Hiring Partner of Jackson Walker LLP

**9:15-10:10am CT Opening Session: “Legal Trends and Recruiting Wisdom from Law Firm Leaders”**

Moderator: [Melissa Peters, Esq.](#), Owner of MP Legal Search and NALSC President

Panelists: [Jeff Cody, Esq.](#), Global Managing Partner of Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP

[James Hays, Esq.](#), Hiring Partner of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP (Houston)

[Jonathan D. Neerman, Esq.](#), Firmwide Hiring Partner of Jackson Walker LLP

[Christa Sanford, Esq.](#), Firmwide IP Chair of Baker Botts L.L.P.

Join this panel of influential law firm leaders for an insider’s look at the realities of lateral hiring, firm growth, and recruiting strategy in today’s evolving legal market. After a brief overview of key trends shaping the legal industry, panelists will unpack how they evaluate lateral candidates—what financial and business metrics matter most, what instantly raises red flags, and how firms are balancing competing priorities amid shifting economic pressures. The discussion will also explore the often-challenging question of culture fit: what signals suggest a lateral will truly integrate, and what lessons firms have learned from hires that looked strong on paper but ultimately fell short culturally. Rounding out the session, panelists will share candid, actionable wisdom for legal recruiters on how to stand out, build trust, and become indispensable partners to law firm hiring teams.

*Opening Session sponsored by Holland & Knight LLP*

**10:10-10:30am CT Coffee Break and Sponsor Tables**

*Coffee break sponsored by Brown Rudnick LLP and Cozen O’Connor P.C. and Potomac Law Group, PLLC*

**10:30-11:15am CT “A Data-Driven Discussion on Laterals Who Stick”**

Speaker: [Rob Griffiths](#), Analytics Consulting Director at Pirical

Law firms spend six figures or more recruiting and training top associates and partners, yet too often these attorneys leave within their first year- sometimes before they even become profitable. This revolving door of talent places significant strain on firm resources, culture, and the recruiters tasked with filling the gaps. What’s more, many firms don’t even realize the scale of the problem. One Pirical client struggling with new hire success shared: “It blows my mind nobody in the firm has noticed this has been happening.” In this discussion, we will show how empirical evidence and granular insights can illuminate the factors behind “laterals who stick,” using anonymized data from dozens of leading law firms. These insights can help firms maximize new hire success and enable recruiters to place candidates more effectively.

*Sponsored by Pirical*

11:15-11:35am CT **Coffee Break and Sponsor Tables**

*Coffee break sponsored Davis Wright Tremaine LLP and Goodwin Procter LLP and Troutman Pepper Locke LLP*

11:35-1:05pm CT **Concurrent Breakout/Roundtable Sessions** (two rotations so attendees can attend two topics)

Breakouts are more content-driven, while Roundtables are more interactive and attendee-driven.

**Breakouts** taking place concurrently with Interactive Roundtables:

• **“What Candidates Aren’t Saying: Financial Doubts That Can Kill Deals”**

Speaker: [Niraj Chhabra, CFP®, MBA, CLTC, CRPC®](#) of SideBar Advisors

Partner and other senior level deals often fall apart not because the offer is uncompetitive, but because the candidate (or their spouse) loses confidence that the move supports family stability. While search consultants may sell compensation, platform, or growth, candidates are privately weighing household cash flow, income volatility, capital contributions, and long-term risk.

As advisors who specialize in working with attorneys, we hear concerns candidates rarely voice to search consultants. This program helps identify when objections reflect financial uncertainty rather than lack of interest, and uses a values-based framework to reveal when what is being offered does not align with what the candidate and their household actually need to feel confident moving forward.

*Breakout sponsored by Fennemore and Kelley Drye & Warren LLP and Rimon*

• **“The Devil is in the Details: An Insider’s Guide to the LPQ”**

Moderator: [Mitch Satalof](#), CEO of Juris Placements, Inc. and NALSC Immediate Past President

Panelists: [Lesley Adamo, Esq.](#), Head of Strategic Growth & Initiatives at Lowenstein Sandler LLP

[Tina Solis, Esq.](#), Partner at Nixon Peabody LLP

Learn how to separate substance from spin when evaluating lateral partner candidates. This session explores the LPQ (and NALSC’s Universal LPQ), client portability, firm economics, and strategic fit. Go beyond the surface to understand the “why” behind the questions and learn how to evaluate the candidate’s answers. The goal is to equip recruiters and law firms to ask sharper questions, assess candidates more effectively, and drive more successful lateral moves.

*Breakout sponsored by Baker McKenzie and Nixon Peabody LLP and Quarles & Brady LLP*

• **“Beating the Counteroffer: How to Anticipate and Head Off Counteroffer Acceptances”**

Moderator: [Stuart TenHoor, Esq.](#), President of Stuart TenHoor Legal Search and VP of Strategic Planning at NALSC

Panelists: [Jeff Delaney, Esq.](#), Partner, Chief Recruiting Officer and Global Co-head of Corporate & Securities at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP

[Victoria Gamble](#), Founder at Gamble Partner Placement

Counteroffers can derail even the strongest lateral deals. This session examines how search firm and law firm recruiters can work together to anticipate and neutralize them early. Discover the five common issues tempting candidates to accept a counteroffer and the strategies that keep deals on track through resignation and beyond. Learn how to act as career advisors, not just intermediaries, by asking the right questions to diagnose motivation early, coaching candidates through their resignation and possible counteroffer, and understanding the rare occasions where accepting a counteroffer makes sense. Law firms reveal how counteroffer acceptances work out over time and how they view candidates who accept them.

*Breakout sponsored by Ashurst Perkins Coie and Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP and Husch Blackwell LLP*

**Interactive Roundtables** taking place concurrently with Breakouts

- **“Winning the Talent War: How Law Firm Recruiting and Marketing Teams Are Partnering to Attract Top Legal Talent”** moderated by [Phil Flora](#), Vice President of Sales at SurePoint Technologies and [Jessica Grayson](#), Chief Growth Officer at Stradley Ronon

- **“Interview Preparation”** - Best practices from both sides of the table, moderated by [Alyssa Lerner, Esq.](#), Co-Managing Director at Palmer Kent Associates and [Carryn Sheen](#), Director of Legal Recruiting at Holland & Knight LLP

- **“What Law Firm Recruiting Professionals Like/Dislike”** - Legal recruiters and law firm recruiting professionals discuss submission and follow-up strategies, opportunistic hires, law firm policies, and other questions about working well together. Moderated by [Tiffany Ambrose, Esq.](#), Partner at Principle Recruiting and [Kat Davis](#), Director of Firmwide Recruiting at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP
- **“Tricky Ethical Landmines and Handling Recruiter Misconduct”** - Learn about the most common ethical landmines/tricky situations, how and when the NALSC Code of Ethics® applies, and how law firms can best address recruiter misbehavior. Moderated by [Dan Binstock, Esq.](#), Partner at Garrison and NALSC Chair of Ethics and [Karen Kupetz, Esq.](#), Director of Lateral Partner Recruiting at Loeb & Loeb LLP
- **“Building a Multi-Million-Dollar Recruiting Practice”** – Learn how top recruiters scale their desk, build client relationships, and grow revenue. A candid discussion about business development, candidate cultivation, long-term brand building, specialization vs. generalization, financial aspects of running a search firm, and building a highly successful and sustainable search practice, moderated by [Gary Miles](#), President and CEO at Miles Partner Placement

*Roundtables Honorary Sponsors: Adams & Reese, LLP; Akerman LLP; Allen Matkins Leck Gamble Mallory & Natsis LLP; Arnall Golden Gregory LLP; Baker & Hostetler LLP; Bass, Berry & Sims PLC; Benesch Friedlander Coplan & Aronoff LLP; Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod LLP; Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC; Cox, Castle & Nicholson LLP; Duane Morris LLP; Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP; gunnercooke LLP; Hogan Lovells Cadwalader; Jackson Walker LLP; Jones Day; Lowenstein Sandler LLP; McGuireWoods LLP; Moore & Van Allen PLLC; Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP; Norton Rose Fulbright LLP; Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP; Polsinelli; Reed Smith LLP; Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP; VedderPrice P.C.; Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati; Womble Bond Dickinson*

#### 1:05-2:00pm CT **Luncheon and Door Prize Drawings**

*Luncheon sponsored by Crowell & Moring LLP and Michelman & Robinson, LLP  
Door Prize Drawings sponsored by The Cluen Corporation*

#### 2:00-3:00pm CT **KEYNOTE – “What Today's Rainmakers Do Differently”**

Speaker: [Ted McKenna](#), Co-author of *The JOLT Effect* and Co-Founder and CEO of Selling Innovations

There's a growing problem facing providers of professional services: declining loyalty. Today's clients are less likely to choose a recruiter with which they have a pre-existing relationship, even a long-standing one. This dramatic shift spells trouble. Traditional business development approaches are increasingly more unproductive, and sometimes counter-productive to the goal of building a healthy, sustainable business.

But top performers have figured out a different, surprising approach that's redefining what it means to be a rainmaker in today's professional services market. Based on the world's first in-depth, quantitative study of professional services partners, *The Activator Advantage* identifies five statistically-defined types of professionals—Experts, Confidants, Activators, Debaters and Realists—and shows how and why only one these – Activators—drive consistent growth in the current environment.

Packed with eye-opening data, counter-intuitive insights, and robust case examples, *The Activator Advantage* provides the roadmap for any recruiter or firm leader looking to chart a path to greater client and candidate retention, revenue growth, and firm profitability.

Ted McKenna is a best-selling co-author of *The Activator Advantage: What Today's Rainmakers Do Differently* and *The JOLT Effect: How High Performers Overcome Customer Indecision*, and is a sought-after speaker and advisor to sales, business development, and customer experience teams around the world.

An accomplished researcher with work appearing frequently in the pages of *Harvard Business Review*, Ted is now Co-Founder and CEO of SellingInnovations which provides research-based training, enablement and advisory support to B2B commercial organizations. Ted is also a founding partner of DCM Insights (DCMi), a company that uses data and research-backed frameworks to help professional services firms improve business development. Prior to co-founding DCMi, Ted held numerous executive leadership positions in product, strategy, research, advisory, and enablement for Tethr, Russell Reynolds, and CEB (now, a part of Gartner).

*Keynote sponsored by Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP and Sterlington, PLLC*

3:00-3:20pm CT **Coffee Break & Exhibitor Booths** *Coffee break sponsored by Bracewell LLP and Hanson Bridgett LLP and Seyfarth Shaw*

3:20-4:05pm CT **Section Session for Legal Recruiters Only on “The Nuts and Bolts of Candidate Outreach (Episode 2)”**

Co-Moderators:

[Amanda Brandenburg](#), Founder & CEO at OpusLex Partners

[Jeff Glassman](#), Founder of Elevate Recruiting Group LLC

Back by popular demand, here is Episode 2! This lively session will focus on candidate outreach strategies other than cold calling (which was covered in Episode 1 at the Annual Conference). Possible topics include email, texting, social media, other modes of communication, crowd-sourced scripts that work (or don't) and why, generational differences, communications preferences, and more. Through real-world examples and interactive discussion, participants will gain actionable tools they can immediately apply. Audience participation will be strongly encouraged for a dynamic, hands-on learning experience.

*Sponsored by Bullhorn and Federate Legal Inc. (Recruiter Partnerships Division) and Firm Prospects*

**Section Session for Law Firms Only on “Innovative Strategies for Integrating Groups as well as Individual Lateral Hires”**

Co-Moderators: [Shannon Davis](#), Chief Legal Recruiting & Integration Officer at Mintz

[Meghan Pier](#), Sr. Director of Legal Recruiting at Jackson Walker LLP

Successful group and individual lateral lawyer integrations require more than onboarding—they demand intentional culture-building, collaboration, and long-term engagement. This session explores people-first strategies for integrating teams that arrive as cohesive units as well as small groups and individual partners, counsel, and associates. Learn how to create a shared vision for the future, accelerate productivity, foster belonging, and drive retention in today's evolving BigLaw environment.

*Sponsored by Loeb & Loeb LLP and Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky and Popeo, P.C. and Morrison & Foerster LLP*

4:05-4:30pm CT **Champagne Toast, Coffee Break and Sponsor Tables**

*Champagne toast/Coffee Break sponsored by Greenberg Traurig LLP and Offit Kurman, P.A. and Robinson & Cole LLP*

4:30-5:15pm CT **“Sticky Recruiting Situations”**

Co-Moderators: [Jordan Abshire, Esq.](#), Managing Member of Abshire Legal Search, LLC

[Toccarra Brooks](#), Chief Strategic Recruiting Officer at Eversheds Sutherland

Our final session of the day will address your burning ethical and business questions relating to legal recruiting in an interactive and educational forum. Come prepared with a list of your sticky situations and let our team of experts, along with a roomful of colleagues, offer their words of wisdom in a “what would you do?” format. This is sure to be a lively discussion to cap a full day of learning with NALSC.

*Sponsored by Eversheds-Sutherland and Goulston & Storrs PC and Latham & Watkins, LLP*

5:15-7:00pm CT **Mingling & Merriment Closing Reception**

*Cuisine sponsored by Kyth*

*Libations sponsored by Chambers; Pirical; Practus, LLP; and SurePoint® Technologies*

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