



# LATERAL INTEGRATION: WHAT MARRIAGE AND DATING CAN TEACH US

By Meghan Koransky

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Finding the right lateral match is a lot like dating. There is the excitement of early conversations, optimism about shared plans, and the hope that both sides have finally found “*the one*.”

Like any relationship, lateral hiring can work out beautifully ... or not at all. By drawing comparisons to marriage and dating, we can better understand why some lateral moves fail, and others succeed. Here are ten lessons that relationships can teach us about lateral integration.

**#1 “To thine own self be true.”** For lateral moves to be successful, both sides need to know what they want. Firms should establish thoughtful hiring goals, expectations, and candidate selection criteria.

**# 2 Be realistic about what you can offer.** Relationships cannot be built on empty promises. Hiring committees need to be thoughtful about what they can offer candidates and where they stand in comparison to peer firms.

**# 3 Let your friends know you are open to meeting someone special.** Sourcing candidates through friends and acquaintances provides instant vetting, shared commonalities, and built-in trust. Even if a potential match seems off on paper, give it a chance. Your friend may see something you do not.

**# 4 The first date is a motion to dismiss and not summary judgement.** During initial meetings, candidates do not need to share every detail about their background, and firms do not need to run through an exhaustive list of questions.

**# 5 Even if it feels like love-at-first sight, there is no need to rush.** In the initial stages of interviewing, everyone presents the best version of themselves. Both sides gloss over caveats, such as exaggerated client portability, unclear expectations about compensation, or signs of internal disruption. Get to know each other before heading toward long-term commitment.

**#6 “When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time.”** Keep an open mind but recognize when it is time to move on (e.g., a significant client conflict) regardless of chemistry or overall fit. Look for red flags, such as high maintenance behavior, evasive responses to questionnaires, lack of follow-through, and less-than-glowing references.

**#7 Honesty and candor are essential.** For lasting happiness, expectations need to be aligned. This means discussing difficult but important topics, such as:

- How will origination credit be handled?
- What resources are available to support integration?
- Which existing clients could pose conflicts?

**#8 So are mutual respect and commitment.** When a lateral joins a firm, daily realities become more important than promises made during recruitment. A firm that announces a new lateral partner but provides no introductions, cross-selling opportunities, or operational support is like a spouse who never does the dishes. A lateral who refuses to adapt to new systems, billing expectations, or cultural norms creates resentment.

**#9 Stay on the same page.** Just as couples check in with each other, firms should schedule regular touch points with laterals. By actively listening, these meetings help laterals feel supported and smooth out any bumps in the road.

**#10 Celebrate anniversaries big and small.** Whether it is hitting performance goals, or successfully leading a client team, recognizing achievements strengthens the bond between the lateral and the firm. Celebrating milestones helps reinforce the value laterals bring to the team.



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