

Building a great permanent desk

Many times over the past few years I have been asked "what is the secret to building a great permanent desk?". In this article I will share with you some of the things I have learned about running a high revenue perm desk from both my own personal experience as well as from those that I have met during the past five years running The Recruitment Training Company. Next month I will share the secrets behind running a high revenue temporary desk.

1. Big perm billers measure their statistics. The old adage of *you can't fix what you can't measure* stands true. My belief is and always has been that key performance indicators are in place to help me be successful. If you don't complete KPI reports for your manager, then create your own. You should be tracking the following:

Dials: connects if this one blows out, you probably need to address getting past the gatekeeper or revisit your prospect list to ascertain if the account is really worth your time chasing.

Connects: visits if you are getting through to the decision maker but not getting a visit, then you need to review your call structure, how you overcome objections and how you close.

Visits: jobs on if you are getting quality visits but not converting them to opportunities then you need to look at your visit structure and also review how you close – do you ask for the business?

Jobs on: placements how many jobs are you managing at any one time – could you use your time more effectively? What is the point of listing 30 perm contingent roles if you are only filling 6 or 7? Big Billers only list roles that they know they can fill quickly.

Ever had a month when you have felt that you have worked really hard, but it's not reflected in your placements? It's probably because part of the process has fallen down. By measuring your statistics, you will know exactly where your time is going, and if you are getting the result that you should based on where you are spending your time. Measure yourself against yourself, not someone else as the latter will cause you much stress.

I recently had the pleasure of spending a day with a high billing consultant who had hit a

brick wall. She couldn't work out why she was working so hard for less. She was working contingently, but had 5 "gold" clients who always called her first. She has contacts throughout the market that she works within and had jobs listed from many first time users. Her reputation was such that it had been fairly easy to get candidates and she filled jobs very quickly as she understood her market and her client needs. This had all changed when the candidate flow dried up. She was now floating more rather than filling the jobs listed with her but felt that longer term, this was not the solution. I felt that she should move two of her gold contingent clients to retained clients and then decide who she didn't want to work with and headhunt from them to fill the retained roles. She didn't feel comfortable doing this because she felt that her clients would not use her exclusively as they had been successfully getting quality candidates by working contingently. We then looked at identifying where she could headhunt from. The outcome of the day was that she learned some proven headhunting techniques and had also identified how she can increase her billings whilst not moving too far outside her comfort zone. She now spends 20% of her day making headhunting calls to quality candidates that she knows she can place.

2. Big perm billers work on more retained than contingent roles. If you read last month's article, you will know that I am an advocate of working retained in the current market. If you would like to read it go to www.trtc.com.au, select The Training Room and click on the Sept 06 article.

3. Big perm billers are expert time managers. Understanding the opportunity cost theory is essential to being a big perm biller. If you are undertaking an activity, it is at the cost of undertaking something else because you can't do two things at the same time. So, if you are spending your time canvassing for new business, it's at the cost of interviewing, taking reference checks etc. Therefore, big billers make sure they get a result from everything they do. Focus on the urgent and important tasks first, then the important/non urgent and so on. Read Stephen Covey's Seven Habits of

Highly Successful People, for more information on the four quadrant model.

4. Big Perm billers believe their own story! Having a strong self belief is essential to being successful. If you don't believe your own story with all your heart, then it will be pretty difficult to convince your clients and candidates to believe it. You must believe that you are worth every cent that you charge and that working retained is better than working contingently for everyone involved.

5. Big perm billers stay ahead of the market and know their competition. In times of economic boom (like now) we work differently to how we would work during an economic slowdown or recession. You should now be safeguarding your client base ready for the slowdown in 2007. Knowledge is power in our industry – keep your friends close but your enemies closer! Know exactly what your competitors are offering your clients, how often they are canvassing your clients and who in particular is making the approach. Ask your clients and candidates for information on your competitors but remember never bad mouth your competitors to anyone.

Building a high billing desk is about gaining the skills and knowledge required to be successful and then implementing what you have learned. Watch successful consultants within your office, read books, listen to CD's and attend any training session that you can. Take on board the points mentioned above and you will be well on the road to becoming a big billing permanent consultant. ■



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