

The Uncovered Secrets of Million-Dollar Billers

In the world of executive [recruiting](#), success is ours for the taking. So why do some people achieve superstardom and others quit in frustration? What does it really take to become a multi-million dollar biller?

Obviously, it's not going to happen for everyone. Only the top half of one percent of all [recruiters](#) bill over a million dollars a year. Most people are unable or unwilling to climb to that level. But with focus, passion, and drive a very few will get there.

Recently four of the industry's most respected producers spoke with me about their professional philosophies and strategies. They are all at the top of their game: each consistently bills over \$1 million a year, averaging \$1.5 million in annual billings over the last seven years. The secrets of this elite group read like a detailed job description, one that is powerful enough to change your life.

I. Characteristics of a Million-Dollar Producer

Competitors

Million-dollar billers are fiercely competitive... in all aspects of life. They monitor their standings against other offices and recruiters. Not only do they compete with one other, they constantly try to beat their own numbers, pushing themselves hard to be better at what they do. They watch their metrics and are never content to let a bad month stay that way. They aren't just top performers in the workplace. Paul Millard was a professional hockey player. I train year round to maintain my national ranking in the pole vault. Those who are drawn to the intense nature of top-level recruiting are born competitors who want to win at everything they do.

High Activity Levels

Not to be cruel, but if your boss has to repeatedly remind you to get on the phones, you probably aren't on your way to record-breaking recruiting success. Million-dollar billers are passionate about this business. They know that phone time is their chance to spin hay into gold, to make the contacts, to build the relationships that ultimately drive their productivity. They prioritize, filling their days with high-value activities. They are in the office to produce. They have the best phone times and the greatest amount of send-outs... without even thinking about it. They naturally generate high activity levels.

Ambition

Million-dollar billers have a huge appetite for success. While an average producer may be content with \$300,000 a year, a superstar would call that a good month or an average quarter. They launched their careers determined to become the best at this business, learning all they could about recruiting and its leaders. They've met, and often exceeded, their professional expectations. They have raw ambition and it drives them relentlessly.

Focus

Million-dollar billers concentrate on what needs to be done to bring in revenue on a daily basis. When they walk into the office, it is with laser-like focus. They always concentrate on the deals that are closest to money. They look closely at daily, weekly and annual goals, and focus on the best ways to achieve them. They constantly reassess and regroup based on those evaluations.

Sacrifice

High achievers are willing to do what it takes to succeed. We've all employed moderately successful account executives with the potential to be superstars. But they walked out the door every afternoon at 5 p.m. whether they had hit their numbers or not. Leaders in this industry aren't ruled by time zones and time clocks. They are the first in the office and the last to leave. They are only satisfied when the search assignment is filled. The truth is for every choice you make in life, you also make a sacrifice. I have a friend who invites me to play golf every Friday. I've never taken him up on it. I give up that opportunity because I need to be in the office making it happen. Sure, I could leave anytime I want. I own the place. But high achievers don't regret the choice to excel, whatever the cost in time and effort.

Persistence

They make it happen. If a million-dollar producer is approaching the end of the month and the numbers aren't there, they don't give up. They figure out a way to get it done, identifying and rectifying the issues, and move on. One slow summer month this year, I was \$80,000 short of my goal with only five days left to meet it. Failure not being an option, I came up with a solution, implemented it, and met my goal. I looked at all the deals closest to money, created a higher sense of urgency with my clients and candidates, and focused on closing them. High achievers don't put their tails between their legs and back off...Ever.

Fear

Every top producer has it. In the pits of their stomachs, it is a sense of fear—fear of not being successful enough or fear of failing—that keeps them running. If you don't have fear, or if you don't honor it, you will lose your edge. It is what keeps exceptional recruiters going when someone else would walk out the door. It is what drives them to conquer adversity, to bounce back from a slow week with renewed determination. If you don't have fear you are complacent. Complacency is the enemy of a million-dollar biller.

Passion

They believe in what they do. Million-dollar billers love this business. You can hear it, feel it and see it in everything they do. Recruiting energizes them. They don't do it simply to make ends meet, but because they believe it is the best career in the world. They know they create incredible value for both candidates and clients, and they aren't afraid to talk about it. Top recruiters have earned the right to be listened to. They sell opportunity: the chance to make professional dreams come true.

Above-Average Selling Skills

People get phone calls every day from recruiters. You only get one chance to break away from the crowd and you'd better be prepared to do so. You mustn't sell just a market or a position, but most importantly, yourself. Million-dollar billers are great listeners and great persuaders. They build high-level relationships where real value is added. My personal value proposition, the reasons someone would want to do business with me versus anyone else, is so strong that I would be shocked if a client or candidate did not want to partner with my firm and me.

II. Individual Pathways to Million-Dollar Success

Your time is money...spend your hours in the office on high-value activities—\$500 an hour phone time versus \$5 an hour data entry. When faced with obstacles, get over them...find a way to make it happen. Define success high... find the best recruiters in your market and try to emulate and surpass them. Don't ever settle for mediocre results. Be willing to do what it takes to win. Develop a strong value proposition in a market... make sure there is a powerful reason to do business with you.

– Jon Bartos CEO of Jonathan Scott International,

The biggest challenge is getting it done the first time... once you know you can do it, you get hungry for more. Focus on a couple major accounts and make yourself invaluable. Become your clients' staffing department... a business consultant who provides complete solutions. Seek balance: never lose sight of the other things in life. – Eric Jacobson, CEO of ITT Services,

Become a self-improvement junkie so you are continually getting better at what you do. Push your professional comfort zones... if you bill \$150,000 one month, go for \$155,000 the next. Develop a strong base of clients...it is too risky to rely on one or two major accounts. Be a great pre-closer... don't waste time on bad candidates or bad clients. Your focus should be where the money is... retained searches are your bread and butter. There isn't just one way to do things... find the best way to get the job done and then do it better. Be your own worst critic... at the end of every week; ask yourself what you could have done to make it a more profitable one. You command above-average fees.

– Paul Millard, CEO The Millard Group,

Specialize in an industry that you know inside and out... Scofield was president and CEO of a major retailer prior to becoming a [recruiter](#). He has in-depth industry knowledge that sets him apart from other recruiters. Know your market... be conversant about the monthly and quarterly results of entire industry. Objectively listen... don't insert unwarranted biases and opinions into the process. Establish you have earned the right to influence others ... share your background, experience, your value proposition. Know when to fire your candidates and clients... Scofield had a bad experience with a major home supply retailer. The \$2 million dollar deal he thought he had turned out to be \$172,000, resulting in three bad months. – Larry Scofield, CEO The Bayside Group,

The secret to success is to get in front of the solution versus standing behind it... create the opportunity versus acting as a supplier. Become an essential part of your clients' decision-making team... designing and implementing the very structure of their business. Add value on a daily bases by working on staffing concepts, goals, and objectives with your clients. If you deliver "A" talent whose value exceeds your fee, in the long term you will have more business than you know what to do with.

–Patrick Sylvester, CEO Banister International,

III. A Million Dollar Connection

The top producers I spoke with are my professional mentors, friends and associates. We gauge our own success by comparing our national and international rankings against one another year after year. But we also share a professional connection. We each came of age in the business as part of the MRI Network. We see each other at national events, call each other when we have questions or potential revenue-sharing opportunities, and act as a mentoring group. For recruiters who want to break into the million-dollar billing range, a partnership with a global organization like MRI can be powerful.

The secrets of million-dollar producers: simple, straightforward advice from a few of the most talented people in the industry. Take it and carve your own success in the greatest profession in the world: recruiting. A business where the right players—equipped with the right strategy— can win big.

About [Jon Bartos](#)

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