

Big Biller Secrets

Presenter: Nathan Hanks – Former MRI Network #1 Producer

Nathan Hanks ranked #1 out of 5,000 peers in 44 countries within the MRI Network, the world's largest professional search organization. He boasts the astonishing record of over \$3 million cash-in in one calendar year. He broke his firm's all-time record for company production, won awards for client service, and created a national ERP software practice producing \$30 million in revenue with more than twenty Fortune 500 clients. Prior to working in the software and recruiting industries, Nathan built a national sales force for an international retailer of luxury consumer goods and was twice named National Trainer of the Year and "Top 10 Producer" with annual production of over \$10 million. This Big Biller is sure to give you some immediate tips and takeaways to implement into your business – today! Every recruiter, new or tenured, that is interested in a lucrative, life-long career will benefit from this critical information!

In this session Nathan will discuss:

- The techniques that separate him from her competitors
- The biggest lessons learned in his career as a recruiter
- What motivates him during a slump
- What a typical day looks like and the metrics he follows
- Advice he would give to someone who wants to take their practice to the next level

Meeting, Week 1: “Big Biller Secrets” by Nathan Hanks

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, break this episode into two different segments. Pause the video at 30:33 in and then resume the next week. After both meetings, ask your group for their key takeaways and insights that they pulled from the episode. Review the following below to fill in the gaps.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS SESSION:

MARKET MASTERY: Nathan attributes his early and widespread success to his creation of a niche. In order to avoid being a jack of all trades and master of none, you must define your specialty and then 'become a celebrity' in that niche. There is an article written by Jeff Kaye, who Nathan referenced, at the end of this Facilitation Guide for those who would like further explanation on the subject.

CREATING VALUE FOR CLIENTS: Being great at search is part of the value you can provide. However, to truly break into that next realm and become a Big Biller, what other value-added services can you offer to your clients to separate you from other recruiters? You must first identify what *how* your hiring authority is measured, and from there you will be able to speak their language.

NOBILITY: Are you making this a noble business? If I asked everyone to raise their hand if you felt that you operated from a place of nobility in your everyday business interactions, everyone's hands would be raised. But if I asked if you've ever pushed a little on a deal to close because *you* needed it to, or if you ever lost your cool with a candidate or client because they did wrong by you, or if you ever told a candidate that you could help them find a job and then stopped calling them back...there may be a few hands raised there as well. Make your business a noble business and you will reap the benefits – both professionally and personally.

WHY VERSUS HOW: When the why is strong enough, the how figures itself out. This begs the question – for you to be a recruiter, “What is your why?” This may seem like too esoteric of a question, but if you really think about it, there is a *why* behind everything that we do. You have a career as a recruiter. Why? You want to earn a living – but you could do that with any job. Why a recruiter? You like the ability to make an impact on the lives of candidates and business of clients. Why? Keep on in this process until you get high enough that you have a global understanding of why you have chosen this path. When you lose your way, or perhaps get in a slump, remember to go back to your why. No matter how much of a slump you are in, your why usually has not changed.

TRIPLE THREAT: If you don't have a clear vision of where you call can go, your call won't get there. Nathan brings three things –

Industry Value: Nathan demonstrates this by sharing with them something that he knows is currently happening in their own organization. This instantly demonstrates market mastery and can garner immediate attention. What do you know, that they don't know you know?

MPC: Bring with you a candidate that can provide immediate impact on their organization. Be able to quantify how rare this MPC is, specifically why you wanted to make the match with this organization, and perhaps even the first name of the candidate.

Recruit: Remember that every hiring authority is also a candidate. If you aren't able to impact their business, don't overlook the ability to impact their career.

ARE YOU KLEENEX?: Nathan talks about building your brand. This is a crucial component to being a Big Biller. A great test of this looks like this: if you were to take a random poll of 100 candidates (or hiring authorities) in your niche and asked them “who is the best recruiter in _____ space” – how many times would your name come up? You'd hope that it would at least come up a handful of times from those clients you've done repeat business with, but who else? If you know that at least 50, 60, even 75 of them would say your name, you've built a brand. If not, you are the Orange Fanta of the industry – aspire to be the Coca-Cola!

WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER: Do you have a system to track the information gathered on every single call you make? Do you have a way to quickly pull information from one search to another? If you are reinventing the wheel each time you conduct a search, there is software that can greatly increase your ability to know your market – with no extra work from you.

WHO DO YOU WANT TO WORK WITH?: Do you know the 15 companies that you want to work with this year? What about next year? If you have them in your sights, create a monthly or quarterly marketing plan to go after each of those companies. Your possible script could sound like this:

“Hi (name) it’s (recruiter) with (firm). I specialize in the (FILL) area. My track record stretches over the last (#of) years as we’ve placed (# of) candidates in the last year alone. I align myself specifically with a select group of clients each year. In the last 12 months, I’ve worked with (name drop hiring authorities and clients) to successfully fill critical openings and topgrade their current team.

In creating my business partnership plan for this year, I am calling you specifically because of your reputation in the industry. I know you have several key projects on the horizon with (insert your industry knowledge). My short-term objective is to get an understanding of how I can earn the right to be a valued consultant to (their firm) – if there are no critical hires that you have right now, I’m fine with this turning into a long-term objective. But at the end of the year, I want to have the kind of relationship with you that I’ve built with (other key clients). Where do we start?”

If the initial answer is no needs at this time, make sure you create a follow-up schedule that continues to make that hiring authority feel that they are on your radar screen for good.

DOES YOUR RECRUITER KNOW: One of the best tips in this entire section is right here. Do you have two questions that you can ask your clients to ask recruiters? One should be allowing them to demonstrate their ability to define this space, the other should be a technical question about how to screen what they are looking for. The key to all of this is that it will force you to elevate your game as well – because you can’t throw out a question that you yourself can’t answer!

ARE YOU THE BEST?: Can you say with confidence that you are the best recruiter in your space? Are you being honest? If there’s one thing that Big Billers say with confidence, it’s that they are the best recruiter in their space. That means that they know every player, know every company, know every trend, and know every latest happening in their industry. If you aren’t there yet, make it your mission to be able to confidently declare that you are the *best* recruiter in your space.

Meeting, Week 2: “Big Biller Secrets” by Nathan Hanks

Resume the video at 30:33 and watch through the end. Ask your group for their key takeaways and insights that they pulled from the episode. Review the following below to fill in the gaps.

HEY REAL QUICK: Nathan talks about the concept of ‘squeezing the orange’ - what are some ways you can grab just a little extra information on every call you make? The easiest way is at the end of the call, once you’ve essentially wrapped up and exchanged contact info, to ask “*hey real quick* –” and then insert your squeeze question. Some ideas:

- Who was the last person to leave your organization?
- The last recruiter who called you – what were they calling about?
- Who is responsible for hiring at your firm?
- What organization have you heard a great buzz about in the industry?
- What associations do you belong to?
- I know (insert another name of someone at their firm)’s name but don’t know what they do – what are they responsible for there?

The power of the ‘real quick’ question is that it’s easy to answer, you will experience essentially no resistance because it’s tacked on ‘quickly’ at the end of the call, and you’ll squeeze just that one extra drop of information out of every call.

DO YOU WANT TO KNOW: There are some great questions in here to ask when you are getting shot down on your initial pitch. Expand and add your own:

- Do you want to know who in town is hiring, and for what?
- Do you want to know what people in your role are making in your location?
- Do you want to know how to be viewed as an asset within your company?
- Do you want to know what your peers are doing to separate themselves from the pack?
- Do you want to know when the “Michael Jordan” of your industry becomes open to new opportunities?
- Do you want to know what your competitors are doing to gain a higher market share in this economy?

GO THE EXTRA MILE: Nathan said it best – there’s not a lot of traffic on the extra mile. What can you do for your clients and candidates that nobody else is doing? Provide professional training for their sales team, send them relevant articles that will help them do their job better, or personalize a gift and send to them.

WHO ARE YOUR FRIENDS?: There's a concept of never eat alone – but who are you eating with? Big billers? Mentors? Are you reaching out, proactively, to the bigger names in our business? You can't wait for them to find you – take a proactive approach to your development.

SILENT INTERVIEWER: This is a great way to truly understand your client and the placement process. The more of this you do, the more you'll be able to identify potential red flags in your current deal as well as predict ones sooner in future deals. It's something that isn't widespread in our industry, and your clients may appreciate you taking the extra time to understand their process.

RECORD YOUR CALLS: If one of the biggest billers in our industry's history recorded his calls and gave to others to wordsmith, why aren't you? It's one of the most painful yet absolute *best* way to improve your game.

CONFIDENCE: Quick takeaway here that needs to be pointed out – did you notice how Nathan opened the call? Not 'hello, my name is' or 'good afternoon, Joe, I'm happy we finally got the chance to connect' – it's 'Joe, Nathan Hanks, how are ya' and delivered with confidence and ease. Nathan gives you the feeling that you cannot shut him down – he deserves to be having this conversation.

GET REFERENCES: Once you finally get someone on the phone, solicit referrals. Ask for references, find moles who are the insiders in every organization, and turn one name into 10 – all on the same phone call.

GIVE YOURSELF FOR FREE: This is one of the most unique ways to position yourself on a marketing call. Give yourself a deadline, pound the phone, and deliver results. Not many recruiters would put themselves out there like that – nor would they be able to deliver if they did.

ENERGY: Nathan didn't cover this, but you surely picked up on it during this session. His energy is nonstop. He doesn't turn off. He talks with passion which comes through on the phone. He has a magnetic personality and people want to be around him. Can the same be said about you? Are you magnetic through the phone?

MARKET MASTERY: THE MANTRA OF DENNY CRANE

For those of you unfamiliar with the hit TV show *Boston Legal*, Denny Crane is that character played by William Shatner (Captain Kirk). Denny exudes self confidence so much so that he uses his own name like a mantra every chance he gets. He uses “Denny Crane” as a way of validating any opinion he holds. It may as well be synonymous with the American Bar Association in his mind. Now, of course, Denny Crane is fictional and acting like that as a recruiter would usually get you hearing a dial tone after a few minutes of self aggrandizement. However, the real point here is that expertise enhances credibility. Expertise in our profession is garnered not only by being an expert in recruiting but also in the market you serve.

In my opinion, a superior recruiter is one who has the ability to be an active participant in their client’s industry and is a master of that client’s market. Therefore, your market must be small enough that you are able to maintain a level of dominance in terms of industry expertise in that segment; however, it must also be large enough that it can provide you with enough space to accomplish what you want and need to accomplish. For example, if a recruiter says that they have a lot of experience in the healthcare field, that is a very broad area—he or she cannot possibly be an expert in the entire realm of healthcare recruiting. Rather, a skilled recruiter will focus on a specific area of healthcare, such as recruiting for hospitals or pharmaceutical companies.

The acronym FILL—function, industry, location, and level is a great way of ensuring the appropriate market mastery. A successful recruiter has to have the right combination of those four criteria in order to ensure that they truly understand their client’s market.

For example, an individual in healthcare may only recruit for hospitals (Industry) and only do so in Nursing (Function) in the Southwest (Location) and only at the director level and above (Level). The only searches the recruiter would ever work on would be in that segment. If there are fewer than 500 hospitals in our recruiter’s target area, it will not take long for that recruiter to get to know every Chief Nursing Officer, Director of Emergency Room, Critical Care, etc. —what their reputation is like; how those hospitals run their departments; and what the culture is like. As a result, not only can that recruiter quickly identify candidates who work in similar environments to that of their client company, they can also identify the individuals that are going to be best suited for that environment—as opposed to another recruiter who many work on only two hospital searches in a given a year; as well as two for the drug industry; two for the medical device industry; two for the diagnostic industry; and two for the hospital equipment industry. You cannot have the same level of expertise throughout all of those industries. Some recruiters may claim to specialize in hospitals only, but then work across many different functional areas. However, this breadth can make it very difficult to develop an appropriate level of market mastery. Therefore, what differentiates a true market master from 95 percent of all recruiters is their level of in-depth experience and specialization. To illustrate this in an arguably unrealistic example may be oversimplifying but it will illustrate an excellent point. That said, review this market below:

* There are 50 companies that make widgets (fictional object!)

** There are exactly 20 widget makers at each company (so 1,000 total widget makers)

*** The industry boasts a 90% retention rate (VERY CONSERVATIVE) and 5% growth rate so that there will be 150 positions filled/job changes in the market. (15% of 1,000)

**** You make 10 of the 50 companies your clients and the other 40 your sources and assuming an equal distribution of need your clients would fill 20% (10 of 50) of the 150 positions or 30 jobs (this is also VERY CONSERVATIVE because usually a few companies will do most of the hiring and therefore the 10 a good recruiter selects will probably do twice as much hiring as the others if not more)

***** Your client fills 10 of these 30 positions with other recruiters or on their own and you get 20 of the 30. Now let's assume your average fee is \$20,000. This would mean that you would bill \$400,000. If you double the market then it would rise to \$800,000. If you double the market and moved the fees to \$25,000 you would bill a million bucks.

Now, some questions to ponder:

- 1) How long would it take you to speak with every possible hiring manager at all 50 companies? A few weeks?
- 2) How long to speak with all 1,000 candidates? 3, 4, 5 months?
- 3) How long to take a candidate profile on every single widget maker? A year or two?

So, within six months, every possible hiring manager has talked with you multiple times and almost every potential candidate has talked with you at least once. Now flash forward three years. You have completed a candidate profile on every widget maker. The only new entries in the market are those fresh from one of the three widget making schools, and you know all the professors there well. You begin developing relationships with students in their senior year of widget making school. When you get a search, you enter the criteria in your well built database with detailed search codes and typically generate a pool of 15-20 viable targets on every search. So, to complete a search takes 15 phone calls. I can keep going, but I suspect you get the picture. Now, of course this example is fictitious just like a widget but nevertheless I think demonstrates the point that true specialization and market mastery provides great rewards.

If you could not call every possible company in your market in the next year then this is a good indication that you need to shrink your market. Budweiser would never give a rep a territory with bars that would not even get one sales call made in a year and the same should be true for your business.

I realize this may sound counter intuitive but less usually means more in recruiting. To prove this, simply find 10 recruiters who regularly do 500k+ and I suspect you will find 8 or 9 are very niches specialists. They may give a more generic answer simply to lessen the competition, but go search the postings on their site or job boards if they actually use them and then see how similar they usually are.

As a market master, most every search you take is for the same type of position, so you have recyclability with the candidates you recruit. This provides for a deeper understanding of the people in your market, their reputations, their departmental structures, compensation and benefit packages, and the like. As such you know more about the market than the people in it or any “consultant.” This level of insight generates a snowball effect (Denny Crane effect if you like) where the success you have in completing a search, will get you more similar searches, and the more you get, the more you fill. The more you fill, the better your expertise and resulting reputation. The better the reputation and expertise, the more clients will be willing to retain you if appropriate at higher fees and more favorable terms.

The search industry is finally acknowledging what other industries have known for decades—people want to hire specialists. Patients no longer see an orthopedic surgeon; they go to a surgeon that specializes in specific areas such as the spine or the shoulder. Beer companies hire specialty reps that deal with specific distributors such as big box stores, restaurants, or convenient stores. The drug industry does not just have one pharmaceutical sales rep that details all products; it has a rep that details cardiovascular products, and another that handles oncology products.

Recruiters must therefore become experts in their space, as companies increasingly rely on search firms to be experts not only in the generalized world of search, but in the world of search in a specific industry, a specific function, a defined geography, and at a specific level of candidate.

In closing, many people may think that this is ok in the good times but express concerns like “what happens if the market and number of searches begins to dry up? Then you will wish you were not so niched.” I would respectfully disagree, and that actually in the tough times, the more generalized recruiter dies. When a company needs 100 people, they will talk with virtually any recruiter. When they only need 15, then they will only use a select few. However, when they only need one or two then they will not want but one or maybe a couple recruiters. Darwin figured this one out some time ago, so did Denny Crane, and so can you!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Jeff Kaye is President and CEO of Kaye/Bassman International and Next Level Recruiting Training. This former Management Recruiter National Recruiter of the year has helped build the largest single site search firm in the country with annual search revenue in excess of \$18M. His firm has won national awards for philanthropy and workplace flexibility as well as having been named the best company to work for in the state of Texas in 2005, 2006 & 2007. Kaye/Bassman has retained over 30 search professionals whose annual production exceeds \$400k. The same training that helped build this successful firm is now available through Next Level Recruiting Training.*

They have recently introduced new distance based learning programs and an entirely new subscription based program through an innovative delivery medium called NLE TV .To learn more about these programs or their other offerings please check out www.nlrtraining.com or www.nextlevelexchange.com . You can also email Jeff at jtk@nlrtraining.com.