



TEN STEPS TO DOMINATING YOUR MARKET

AND OWNING YOUR NICHE

I just moved into a house in southern Oregon after traveling the past four years in a giant RV. We love our new digs because we are in a pretty remote area. My wife Jeska won't even let us get a TV in our house (she's smart). And honestly, my advice to you as well is this – turn off the TV, and especially, turn off news – it's usually bad. Get outside. Get Healthy. Most importantly, become grateful for all that you have. If you are in this profession, you have SO much to be grateful for. We make a difference in people's lives. (usually for the better) We help our clients achieve their goals by solving urgent and critical problems. What we should be most grateful for is this: you, and only you, get to decide what your W2 is at the end of the year. No one is in control of your earnings except you.

Your market sucks? I guarantee there are recruiters out there billing huge numbers in so-called "depressed industries" like construction, automotive, and financial services. Someone out there is getting creative, perhaps jumping into mergers and acquisitions. If you need to, change markets. I saw Jon Bartos start up three different markets in three years and build them each to \$1M+ annual billings. But then again, Jon is...well, he's Jon Bartos. The dude has a mini golf course in his office, and a hockey rink in the empty space next door.

The best way to build a high-billing practice is to recruit within a niche and become the absolute best recruiter on the face of the Earth in that niche. You want to own your market. All top billers do it. Regardless of whether they recruit in IT, Accounting, or Healthcare – they are POWER BROKERS in their industry.

When you call a potential client, you should understand that they view recruiters as sales people – which we are! By nature, salespeople usually start with zero credibility and cause their prospect to be on the defensive. Think of any salesperson that has ever approached you. If you ask a prospect if they have any openings before establishing your credibility, the answer will almost always be NO, even if they just got \$87M in funding specifically to be used for EXPANSION.

What Value Do You Offer?

The quickest way to build your credibility is to build some rapport and exhibit some kind of value. Why should they talk to you when they get twenty of these calls from recruiters every week? Your value proposition should answer this, and being able to communicate it confidently and succinctly is crucial.

Here's mine, and it's in the signature line of every email that anyone from my company ever sends:

"At Rayboy Insider Search, our mission is to partner with our clients and candidates to help them achieve their goals by building long-term relationships based on trust, professionalism, and results. We specialize in the storage market and are industry insiders. We've focused exclusively on storage for the past 10 years and have placed over 400 top sales, technical, consulting, and management professionals with both large industry leaders and startup companies. We don't believe there is another search firm who knows the industry and can provide a better service than we can."

I'm from the Jeff Kaye school of market specialization, which uses the **FILL** methodology. You specialize based on **Function, Industry, Location, and Level**. For example, your niche might be placing CFO's with IT companies in the Bay Area. There is a member of Pinnacle Society who bills huge numbers only placing Executive Administrative Assistants with F500 Companies in Atlanta.



You have to differentiate yourself, otherwise you will not be successful long-term. These clients want to work with someone who understands their business. The more you know about their market, and **what talent looks like** in their market, the better you understand their business and the more successful you will be in your marketing/recruiting efforts.

Becoming a Market Master

So - how do you go about becoming a Market Master? It doesn't have to come from industry background. When I started recruiting, I literally didn't know what I.T. stood for. Within a year of laser-focus in my niche (and more importantly, 5+ hours a day on the phone), people thought I'd been doing it a decade.

Before I go any further, know this. Everything that I write, everything any trainer ever says, means NOTHING if you forget one key point. **This is a phone business.** You can have the best marketing plan on Earth. Dominate your niche better than anyone. If you make 1-2 hours of phone calls a day, you will suck. Maybe not compared to some of your peers (who actually just suck worse), but certainly compared to your potential. Try getting 4-6 hours a day on the phone. **If you double your phone time, you double your billings.** It's that simple. I will bet my 2011 cash-in on it. (that's saying a lot; it's going to be my best year EVER)

So, commit to burning up the phone. Next, here are ten steps to becoming the most well known recruiter in your market.

Step 1: Identify ALL of the companies in your niche. Divide up and categorize by sub-sectors. Know exactly how many companies compete in each sub-sector of your niche. Keep in mind; *the bigger you make your world, the harder it is to make a match.* I personally believe your niche should be between 50-300 companies, but no bigger than 500 companies MAX. If there are on average ten potential contacts to market to per company, that's 5,000 contacts. If you call each target three times in succession (leave two VM's to get a live conversation for example), once a quarter, that's 15,000 marketing calls you'd need to make over the course of about 60 business days. I don't know anyone capable of making 250 marketing calls in one day, ever, let alone every day for a quarter. On the other hand, if you size your niche properly, you could connect with EVERY SINGLE PROSPECT on a quarterly basis. *After a few quarters, they stop ignoring you. They start to realize you aren't another flash in the pan, but are here to stay.* Opposite to common practice, it would be a better idea to start with a very tight niche and expand out, rather than start big and narrow down.

Step 2: After thoroughly researching the companies in your market, select the top 10% of those companies you potentially would want to work with. Pick a minimum of ten targets, even if your niche is small. Part of your research should involve talking with people in your niche – lots of people. You should be having 10-20 conversations a day, 50-100 per week, 200-400 business conversations a month with professionals in your specific niche. It's impossible not to gain a massive treasure trove of knowledge and market insight with this type of focused effort. Ask what companies they'd be most interested in hearing about opportunities with. Ask them who they've heard are great organizations with positive cultures. Ask who their fiercest competitors are. Figure out what companies you simply are unable to yank people out of.

Those are all companies that you will be able to attract strong candidates to. Even in a down economy, **TOP TALENT IS ALWAYS HARD TO FIND!!!** Explain this to your clients. They think because there is 50% unemployment in Detroit that A-players are going to come knocking on their door! This is the gospel we need to be preaching every day. They don't need us to get the unemployed – *they need us to get the #1 guy from their competitor that doesn't even know their opening exists.*



So you sell this to your client – “I bring you top talent!” But if you show up with the same unemployed prospects their internal recruiter found, you ruin your credibility and waste your time. In order to truly attract great talent, *you need to work with clients that have a great employment value proposition* – a great opportunity to sell. What is exciting about them? What is unique and different? What are the growth opportunities?

How do you find such great companies? Talk to a few hundred people in your niche, and you will hear the same names popping up. There are also many startups that could potentially be great clients that are not that well known. *Follow industry websites and trade press daily to stay up to date* on these prospects, as well as reports on M&A, funding, layoffs, executive movement/hiring, etc. You need to be the first one talking about the big news the next morning if you want to be known as the industry insider.

Likewise, you may frequently hear, “*don’t waste my time with this company.*” Make those your biggest sources. Have your internet researcher target them and fill up your database with every single person company-wide in the types of positions you place. Hit them with mass emails. *Gain market Intel that you can use to twist the knife when discussing motivation for change (MFC).* Knowledge is power. Eventually, you are sharing things with them about their company they are not even aware of. It’s amazing how well you can build rapport if you ask about a specific MFC common to their company before they ever bring it up. You truly sound like an industry insider.

Back in 2001 when I was still in my rookie year, I was fortunate to receive a federal directory from a candidate I placed out of a tier-1 market leader. I spent the next month calling every single person on that list as many times as it took to GET THEM ON THE PHONE- 50+ sales people, 50+ sales engineers, and at least a dozen managers. I might not have had active opportunities at that time at the level they’d potentially move for. However, by gaining mountains of insider info and developing those relationships across that organization, a SOURCE, it has catapulted my entire career. I gained immeasurable knowledge of their federal practice, account strategies, largest deals, quotas, comp plans, cultural issues, even how they handle counter-offers. (VP-three-levels-up calls, invitation to the headquarters to find a way to make it right, if you say no, they escort you out with security at your side) Most importantly, I developed long-term relationships with the true A-players, which has helped me dominate the federal storage market ever since. Furthermore, as these top players eventually scattered to other companies in the industry, they’ve taken me with them, and have become some of my biggest clients.

Step 3: Define what an A-player in your market looks like. In most cases, this will be a top performer in a similar job with a competitor. Be able to demonstrate this knowledge. This is paramount to you having any kind of credibility in the eyes of a potential client.

Step 4: Find an A-player open to making a change, and take him to market. They don’t have to work with you exclusively. They don’t have to sign an agreement. Ideally you will develop some kind of trusting relationship with them so they will share their true MFC and what they want next step in their career. In the end, they just have to be undeniably good, and open to interviewing. They are using you to show them opportunities. Use them to dangle in front of prospects. Use them to prove that you know what top talent looks like and that you have access to and relationships with them. Showing a prospect a true A-player from a competitor is probably the fastest way to gain their attention and build your credibility. Actions speak louder than words.

Have a script for both voicemails and live presentations. Solicit your A-player’s help in building their value proposition to a prospective employer. No one can sell the A-player better than him or herself. For the non-believers in scripts, record yourself with and without a script, and decide which sounds better. Your “uhms, aws, you knows” somehow disappear with a script. The first seven seconds should be their name, yours, your company, and your phone number.



Here's an example from one of my mentors, Nathan Hanks, who dominated the SAP market for several years:

"We are going to be working together, here's why. The _____ industry is a small world and I'm going to be here for a long time. I have a candidate I think you'll be interested in... If you'd like to discuss him, call me; if not, call me, because I am going to find someone eventually that you will need and I'd like to know what that is."

While many may disagree, my first goal with my A-player isn't necessarily to get them on an interview. What are the odds of cold-calling a VP of Sales, with a player in Chicago, at the exact moment he is actively searching for someone in that location? Possible, but unlikely. More often, what happens is that he might say, "Well that guy sounds great, but I could really use a guy like that in NY and LA..." BAM! You are right into the Job Order. Most skilled recruiters can carry this through to taking a solid search assignment. *The most important piece was showing the prospect that you knew what top talent was for him.* You understand his business and could potentially help solve his problems.

Step 5: Work similar searches that will give you recyclability of your efforts so you are not starting from zero every time. After calling great candidates with potential opportunities every couple of months, a similar phenomenon will occur as with client prospects. They will eventually return your call. You have earned a small bit of respect, but at least the door is open. Bust through that door and use your market knowledge to start developing rapport. Over time, after talking to hundreds and even thousands of candidates, you may start to make a name for yourself. Focus on a niche, and you can hit that thousand industry connects in two months. Spread yourself wider, and it might take two years.

By committing to your niche, you will develop relationships with the prospective candidate pool, and also be the first recruiter to be sent referrals. *Clients will see the need to work with you because you shorten the time-to-fill cycle.* You can leverage your efforts on previous searches because the companies in your niche are usually looking for similar types of talented individuals.

Step 6: Organize your database so that you, or your researcher, can quickly identify the right talent for any given search. Utilizing the FILL methodology, I have my database broken down into rollup lists. For each major market location (NY, Dallas, Chicago, Denver, etc.) I have five separate rollup lists broken out by function – Direct Sales, Channel Sales, Management (any type), Pre-sales Systems Engineers, Post-sales Systems Engineers. These are the types of roles I place most often; my bread and butter. (anyone who wants to compete – I believe in abundance. At the same time, bring it on...) I also have individual rollup lists for specialized functions such as Business Development/Alliances, Professional Services, Consulting, OEM Sales, Marketing, or International.

When I get a search for a sales rep in NY, I already have over 1,400 sales reps that sell storage to end user customers in NY already on a single rollup list. Now, not all of them are necessarily qualified, nor would all of them be interested in any given search. You have to invest the time (DURING PLANNING TIME, NOT PHONE TIME!!!) to review the candidates' qualifications and career goals and individually select the top targets for this particular role. This may take some time, could even be 2-3 hours or more for this single search. That said, by making a target list, usually comprised of 50-100 candidates, I narrow my sights to only contacting candidates I know are qualified and whom I believe I can potentially get interested. Also, I already have a relationship with most of these candidates, so it's a lukewarm call to begin with. Any single person from that list I get on the phone, I'm confident I can get on an interview with my client. Shooting with a sniper rifle, versus spray and pray.

However, based on my relationships with the top candidates, and a specific process, I don't even have to make the 50 calls.

Step 7: Maximize the value of your time, focus on high dollar activities, and out-source everything else. My admin/researcher Christina will send out a mass email (which I usually write, lots of "sizzle," pique the curiosity) to a target list. During the day, as a dozen or so responses trickle in, I'm focused on pounding phone calls on a different search. Christina is going through and categorizing the responses, replying back to those who show interest, asking for updated resumes, scheduling times for a conversation with me to discuss further. I end up making 8-10 calls to candidates that have already replied with interest, and we know are already qualified. This almost always will yield me 3-5 candidates that I can present to a client. Average turnaround from when I take a Job Order to when I'm presenting candidates to a client and setting up interviews is usually 48-72 hours. *You can't beat speed. It's what our clients want.* It's what the job boards, and the internal recruiters, and the cheap 15% recruiters do not deliver. If you can drastically shorten your clients' time-to-fill cycle, you are providing true value. Your competitors can't touch that!

Step 8: Make lots of phone calls....plan during planning time.....

Step 9: Make lots of phone calls....plan during planning time.....

Step 10: Make lots of phone calls....plan during planning time.....

Now you've got the recipe.

The two magic ingredients that make it work are Effort and Attitude.

Charles Swindoll has said, *"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company. A home. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. **Life is 10% what happens. And 90% how I react to it.**"*

This **IS** going to be the best year ever. Turn off your TV, and go make it happen!



About the Author:

Jordan Rayboy's career in recruiting began with MRI in May 2000. He went on to win Regional Rookie of the Year at age 20, followed with three Regional AE of the Year Awards, and was eventually ranked one of MRI's Top-10 worldwide producers out of 4,000+ recruiters by age 25. He earned the company's CSAM (Certified Senior Account Manager) distinction and spoke at numerous CSAM conventions and regional meetings. He is a trainer in NLRT's Big Biller video series, has been part of the APEX Mastermind Forum, and has been interviewed by XtremeRecruiting for their BigBiller series/e-book. In 2009, Jordan was elected as a new member to the Pinnacle Society, an elite consortium of 75 of the top recruiters in the industry. Since starting up Rayboy Insider Search (RayboyIS) in late 2006, Jordan Rayboy has commanded the industry's first virtual search firm run entirely from a giant RV. He travels full time with his wife Jeska and dogs Roxy, Whistler, and Rogue. So far, they've made it to 44 states, six Canadian provinces, and both coasts of Mexico during their adventure. If you'd like to talk recruiting, travel, or life with Jordan, feel free to email him at jordan@rayboyis.com.