

Big Biller Secrets

Presenter: Stephen Provost, Co-Founder of Prestige Scientific

Stephen Provost is the Senior Partner and Co-Founder of Prestige Scientific. Since Prestige Scientific's inception, Stephen has led the firm to complete over 500 executive searches for Life Science clients nationwide from senior management to C-level. Those clients have included venture funded biotechnology firms to public large pharmaceutical companies.

At age 25, Stephen was hired to start the Boston office of a privately-held national search firm. Stephen became one of the top Search Consultants in the country and was hand selected by the CEO to assume management oversight within his first year. After his quick rise to management, Stephen led his office to become the second most profitable division of the company before its acquisition by a private equity firm.

In this session, Stephen shares how he was able to make placements in every month in his first year of search, to his creative ideas to get call-backs, and much more.

Meeting: “Big Biller Secrets” by Stephen Provost

If you are reviewing this episode with a team, watch the entire Episode and ask your group for their key takeaways and insights. Review the following below to fill in the gaps.

PICK A LANE: What do you want to be known for? Stephen, in his early years, was known for being the last one in the office and last one to bed. He may not have been the first to rise, but he picked one lane that he would dominate as it related to work ethic. What's yours? Keep in mind that time in the office does not solely predict success; pick a lane such as a certain number of new candidates generated per week, or a certain number of outbound client development calls per month, or total new interviews – and then be fierce about staying in your lane and dominating it. Be honest with yourself – how many days per week can you truly say you are confident you outworked your competition?

SEEKER: Stephen sought out others to support him in his pursuit of being fantastically successful in search. He did not wait for them to come to him; rather, he invested in his own career by being a part of associations and programs designed to help elevate his network and game. What was the last thing you did on your own to further your career – without anyone encouraging or mandating you to?

DEPTH: Go deeper in the conversations with candidates and clients. Beyond the surface, what are a few of your “ringer” questions you know will shift the dialogue into a more meaningful, intricate discussion?

- *Since being at your current firm, what achievement are you most proud of? What about throughout the duration of your career?*
- *When you were first drawn to this industry, what compelled you? Why did this industry or vocation strike you as being the calling for your career?*
- *At what point in your career were you most challenged? What circumstances were at play at that time to challenge you?*
- *When you retire, what do you want to be remembered for? What legacy do you want to leave to the next generation of leader in your firm?*

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QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS: Jeff Skrentny has a NLE TV Episode discussing the importance of developing significant client relationships, as Stephen does here. How well do you know your best client? This test can show how they think of you as a vendor – or a partner. If clients want to work with people they like, this simple exercise can shine a spotlight on what you think you know versus what you should know! Answer the following questions as they pertain to your best client – the one that is the primary contributor to your billings and placements:

“Rate your Relationship” Quiz

- Your primary point person - how long have they been working for the client company?
- Do you know their cell phone or home phone number by memory?
- Within \$1,000, how much have you billed with that client so far this year?
- Exactly how many candidates have you placed there so far this year?
- What are the first names of the last 5 people that you placed to work at the company?
- What college or university did your hiring authority graduate from? If they didn't, do you know if they have any hang-ups or issues with not being a college graduate?
- Is the hiring manager married? Do they have a significant other?
- What's the spouse's name?
- Does the hiring manager have children from this, or past, relationships?
- If so, what are the names and ages of the children?
- Where did the hiring manager work immediately prior to this position?
- When you go to the hiring manager's workspace, what's the single, most noticeable status symbol you see in their office?
- Does your client drink alcohol? Does, or will, your client drink alcohol at lunch?
- Have you ever taken, or do you regularly take, your client out for their birthday or employment anniversary? Do you know what both of those dates are?
- When and where was the last vacation they took? Did they enjoy that vacation?

So how many answers did you get right? 14 or 15 means that your client does not view you as a vendor, but sees you as a collaborative partner and friend that they genuinely like doing business with. They will fight to give you their business, and see you as an integral component for their success. They will enthusiastically write you a letter of reference, they tell others about your service without you asking. This client willingly becomes a champion for your success! Don't ever



take this client for granted; constantly court them for their future business, and thank them regularly for past business!

12 or 13 correct answers means your client views you as a vendor, albeit one they still like and enjoy doing business with. They might even call you first with their business; still, because you have not taken the time or energy to really know them outside of the office, you could be vulnerable if they make contact with another recruiter who does do this. You are so close to locking this one in for the long term; what is the last component necessary to move you up to the highest relationship level?

Falling down to 10 or 11 answers means you are purely a vendor; you satisfy a business need, and you probably do it adequately. However, this client does not make referrals on your behalf, probably gives someone else their business first, or possibly even wish someone else completed their business instead of you when you do wrap up a deal with them. You are a business necessity. What are you going to do to upgrade this relationship? When?

And 9 or less? You are more than likely viewed as a necessary evil; there is little joy in doing business with you, or this relationship is at the very beginning. You should feel vulnerable, and be looking to make this a closer relationship or find another relationship to replace this one because eventually this one will be lost. If it is a new relationship, do not stop marketing yourself aggressively to this client contact. They don't feel comfortable with you yet – another client visit is in order – stat!

STAY IN TOUCH: Stephen shares his Long Term Placement Follow Up strategy; have you implemented something similar within your practice? Even if it's years later and they have moved on, call your past placed candidates (and the past hiring managers) and ask them to summarize:

- What specific impact the candidate had on the company when hired
- What were the challenges
- How did they overcome them
- What were the metric-based results

ICE COLD: Try to warm those cold calls a bit by finding a candidate on the inside of a prospective company to connect with first. That candidate may be able to give you the inside track on the who, what, where, when and how of hiring. Stephen's questions that garner a warmer cold call include:

- What convinced you to join?
- What are some of the future goals for the company?
- Who heads the department for the role I'm inquiring about?
- What do you know about them?
- Are you part of their hiring process? If so, where are they in the process?

THE DANCE: We all know the importance of having an effective introduction. Numerous scripts have been created, tested, and modified over the decades – all in search of the magic bullet. There may be no universal “what works 100% of the time” introduction, but Stephen shares his that already sounds different than most scripts we've ever heard!

- *"Hi David? Steve Provost, how are you"*

- "Good how are you?"
- "Good..." Use pattern interrupt to make the call memorable, but to also break the ice, lower the guard a bit, and be REAL right from the start. Stephen pretty much says anything that comes to mind – or anything that has worked well in the past
- "I'm a little hungry, but it's that time of day again" or "I'm staring outside and it's beautiful outside here. I can't wait to get out for lunch" or "I was out of the office on a boat yesterday and I'm still trying to figure out my sea legs." Point is, speak to them like a person.

HAPPY: One of the most common responses that recruiters face on a daily basis are candidates constantly professing how absolutely happy they are in their current situations! So much employment bliss just running around in the world...yet we all know there is more that rests just beneath the surface. Stephen's effective response:

"It's refreshing to hear you're happy. I talk with a lot of people that aren't - so it's nice to hear that, but that was only one of two reasons why I was calling. The second was to just get a better understanding of what utopian type role you'd like for me to at least pass by you in the years to come. I looked at my 401k today and I'm going to be around here for at least another 25 years, so I want to be selective when I call in the future. When I call again, I want to make sure that I'm at least adding some value to your day."

LEAD THE WITNESS: When asking for referrals, don't expect the prospect to know every direction in which they can go. Stephen leads them in a variety of directions to get their thoughts flowing – how can you do the same?

- Someone who just knows about (A, B, or C)
- Someone from a past job
- Someone with a long commute
- Someone with a glass ceiling currently
- Friends in your association
- Former colleagues that left the company
- Someone that you think may have the ability to advance quickly