



succeed quickly or fail slowly

a high performance framework for recruiters





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## introduction

I was inspired to write this e-book for three main reasons:

- 1) Reading about the embarrassingly high staff turnover figure that the recruitment industry suffers from (in recent years this has ranged between 28% - 45% per annum),
- 2) the common misunderstanding I hear with respect to what constitutes the competencies of an effective recruitment consultant, and
- 3) witnessing the large amount of unproductive activity that many recruiters undertake on a daily basis.

My goal is that in reading this book you will increase your likelihood of succeeding quickly by not making the same mistakes that many, many other recruitment leaders have made before you (including me).

This book is written for the agency or third-party recruiter (TPR), rather than an in-house or corporate recruiter. Nevertheless any recruiter will gain some benefit from reading this book. Also, when I refer to a recruiter in the text I am referring to an end-to-end recruiter, in other words a recruiter who has responsibilities across the three main areas of;

-  **Candidates** – sourcing and interviewing candidates and managing candidate relationships
-  **Clients** – finding suitable clients and building relationships with them
-  **Jobs** – taking and filling jobs

### a warning!

Just reading this e-book is a great start but it is not enough. You have to turn your knowledge into action to achieve better results. Once you have finished reading this book I suggest you write an action plan.

I welcome any feedback about this e-book and you can do this directly by emailing [ross@rossclennett.com](mailto:ross@rossclennett.com) or using my blog at [www.rossclennett.com](http://www.rossclennett.com)

Ross Clennett  
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## why have a high performance framework?

Do you want to succeed quickly or slowly?

Sounds like an odd question doesn't it? Yet when we examine our choices with respect to success and failure (at anything) we have the following four choices:

- 1) succeed quickly
- 2) fail quickly
- 3) succeed slowly
- 4) fail slowly

Clearly any rational human being when faced with the above four choices would choose to succeed quickly ahead of the other three choices, wouldn't they? Yet, that's not what I see in many workplaces I observe.

Unfortunately what I witness in many recruitment companies are consultants, through their daily actions, succeeding slowly or even worse, failing slowly. The most profitable recruitment companies focus on points (1) and (2), above. The least profitable recruitment companies have no such focus and as a result many of their consultants, unwittingly, are spinning their wheels in numbers (3) and (4).

My first experience of (1) and (2) was my first recruitment job, at Accountancy Personnel (now Hays) in London. When I joined Hays, in February 1989, it was made absolutely clear that you were there for an initial three months and if you made the required minimum fees, you stayed on, and if you didn't, you left - simple as that. Nothing personal, no hand wringing, no giving people 'a bit more time', if you didn't make the number you were gone.

Brutal? Maybe.  
Effective? Yes.  
Profitable? You bet!

*Unfortunately what I witness in many recruitment companies are consultants, through their daily actions, succeeding slowly or even worse, failing slowly.*





The Hays way was to throw consultants into the job and to see whether they sank or swam. I improved my skills by watching other consultants do the job (there were 8 of us in an area of about 12 square metres) and just getting on the phone and making heaps of calls to make interviews and cause placements (client visits were the sign of a poor consultant – why couldn't you control your client over the phone?). My formal training consisted of a one day induction program and then the next day I was on the desk making calls and interviewing candidates.

Whether you agree with this method or not, it was highly profitable. At the time of writing Hays had just announced their previous full year results; a net profit of £211 million from a gross profit of £633 million – a phenomenal net to gross profit margin of 33%. A result I would attribute to, amongst other things, having a focus on consultants either succeeding quickly or failing quickly.

Why would you want someone to fail quickly?

It's not that you actually want someone to fail.

What you want to find out quickly is whether being a recruiter is really the best career choice for that person.

If their competencies and motivations are not suited to recruitment, then isn't it best to find out quickly rather than slowly?

No-one likes to fail at anything but if failure is to occur then best that it happen quickly so the person can move on to a more suitable job or career.

A high performance framework is the best of both worlds in that it provides the best possible chance for a person to succeed as a recruiter and it also ensures that whether the person succeeds or not, it happens quickly.

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## the competencies of success as a recruiter

In most recruitment companies success is compromised right from the beginning because screening, interviewing and hiring potential recruitment consultants occurs against what is thought to deliver high performance in recruitment rather than what actually does deliver high performance.

I suspect that this happens because we don't really understand competencies and therefore we don't recruit against them.

A competency is a specific, measurable action or behaviour that is required for successful performance within a defined context. Specified or nominated 'industry' experience, 'Australian' experience, 'number of years' of experience, age, gender, ethnicity etc are not the drivers of effective job performance, competencies are.

*"Basing hiring decisions on myths rather than realities is, according to our research, the reason that about 55% of people holding sales positions have little or no ability to sell, while another 25% have sales ability are attempting to sell the 'wrong' product or service. The remaining 20% are doing precisely the job that is appropriate for them and their companies."*

Is this quote from recent recruitment industry research? No, this quote comes from a Harvard Business Review article (Job Matching for Better Sales Performance by H. Greenberg and J. Greenberg) from **27 years ago!**

How true is this for our industry?

How many myths do we continue to perpetuate in the hiring for our own staff?

If it is any comfort, this problem has been around for many years? No!

We are just perpetuating past mistakes and very few recruitment leaders seem to recruit their own staff based on anything other than 'gut feel'.

All of us started out without recruitment experience when we entered this industry so clearly something else, besides experience, has enabled us to become successful.

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So what competencies are the most important ones for becoming successful as a recruiter? From my own experience in recruitment, both leading and coaching recruiters, there are **5 competencies** that I would highly recommend you interview against to satisfy yourself that the person you are considering hiring has the best possible chance of succeeding as a recruiter.

Here are my **top 5**:

### 1) influencing & negotiating (the relationship competency)

*"Through their communication with other people do you consistently cause results to go your way in a win/win spirit?"*

Let's look at all the so-called little things that make up a recruiter's day:

-  prospecting calls
-  taking in jobs
-  aligning skill and salary expectations of clients and candidates
-  representing candidates to clients
-  arranging interview times
-  getting offers over the line
-  dealing with counter-offers

These things are at the heart of what we do each day as recruiters. When we've had a great day – these sorts of things have gone our way, and when we've had a crappy day these sorts of things haven't gone our way.

A recruiter's day is a succession of interactions with candidates, clients and colleagues in which we are attempting to have things go our way.

In each of these situations we almost always have no real power, in other words we don't have rank or positional power that we can wield to get our own way in the way that I, as a parent can use to get my young son to go to bed by 8pm. As recruiters we are mostly operating from a position of, at best, equal power or at worst, lesser power.

We get our own way **ONLY** through superior influencing and negotiating skills, not just superior to our own clients and candidates, but superior to the unseen competitors who are also doing their best to influence and negotiate with our clients at the same time.

*A recruiter's day is a succession of interactions with candidates, clients and colleagues in which we are attempting to have things go our way.*





Critically, high performing recruiters use these influencing and negotiating skills in the spirit of win/win. This win/win outcome is accomplished when the candidate and client feel more than satisfied with the outcome to such a degree that they each want to build a long term relationship with the recruiter.

An example of a recruiter who is a champion influencer and negotiator is Graham Whelan, who was a Director at Recruitment Solutions, and is now at Talent2 in Sydney. Graham was nominated last year by Talent2 for Executive Recruiter of the Year in the Fairfax Employment Marketing Awards.

Graham possesses the two crucial building blocks for effective influencing and negotiating; he builds high personal trust and he builds high personal credibility. Graham does this so effectively that some of his current clients, who are Finance Directors of ASX listed companies, were originally junior candidates of his 25 years ago. He is the ultimate example of a high performing recruiter influencing and negotiating for long term win/win outcomes.

## 2) persistence (the optimism competency)

*"Do you keep knocking on hard-to-open-but-ultimately-profitable (client and candidate) doors?"*

This is not just any old persistence. Specifically I am talking about persistence in following a process that has many emotionally challenging interactions.

Recruitment is relationship selling not product selling so we have to persist in following a process of:

calls, calls, and more calls,  
visits, visits and more visits,  
interviews, interviews and more interviews ... and  
networking, networking and more networking.

We all know the key marketing activities that deliver our own success. What makes a high performing recruiter is one who persists with these activities in the face of many emotionally challenging situations. The optimist keeps going ("the next call could make my whole week worthwhile"), the pessimist stops ("why bother, nobody's at their desk today").

One of the best examples of persistence is Bianca Monsonogo, or now known by her married name Bianca Luck. Bianca joined my Sydney temp accounting team at Recruitment Solutions as a 23 year old graduate with no corporate experience. Initially she really struggled with the demands of being a recruiter and it took her a long while to become effective.

*The optimist keeps going ("the next call could make my whole week worthwhile").  
The pessimist stops ("why bother, nobody's at their desk today").*





She had plenty of challenging situations in dealing with colleagues, clients and candidates who were, in almost all cases, older and more mature than she was. Bianca continued to stick with the job and she continued to persist in doing the key emotionally challenging activities. As each year passed she improved her results significantly.

Bianca has just had her 10 year anniversary at Recruitment Solutions, now under the ownership of Chandler McLeod, and she is one of the top billing consultants in the whole company and from what I estimate, that puts her annual margin or GP in the vicinity of seven figures.

What Bianca does fantastically well is that she doesn't let herself get sidetracked by a few so-called failures. When she gets thrown off the horse, she just dusts herself off and gets straight back on. She doesn't go into her shell, she doesn't distract others with her issues, she doesn't bemoan how unfair a client or candidate might have acted, she just gets on with the things that make the biggest difference to her result – persistence in putting herself in constant communication with clients and candidates.

### 3) achievement drive (the sales motivation competency)

*"Are you prepared to be accountable for and own both activity and result targets, as well as stated company values/behaviours?"*

All high performing recruiters understand the metrics that underpin their high performance. They understand the link between high pay-off activities, such as calls and visits and results. They love setting and achieving goals, no matter how small. For example, arranging 3 visits before they have their first cup of coffee for the day or winning a new client in a direct pitch against the incumbent recruiter. The champion recruiter is hungry to achieve, not primarily for financial reasons but for the desire to be the best and recognised as a top performer in their market.

The standout person in demonstrating the competency of achievement drive is Nicole Underwood. Nicole is currently the General Manager of Entrée Recruitment in Adelaide, recently having returned from maternity leave.

Nicole was the first consultant I hired when I moved from Sydney to set up Recruitment Solutions in Adelaide at the beginning of 1999. Just gone 21 Nicole had already completed her degree, by the age of 19 she had bought her first property based on the money she made selling Foxtel subscriptions door-to-door and had already accumulated nearly a year with another recruitment company. It was clear she was one driven woman.

*The champion recruiter is hungry to achieve, not primarily for financial reasons but for the desire to be the best or recognised as the top of their profession in their market.*





Nicole wasn't interested in excuses, she was only interested in results. She understood the link between activities and results and worked hard to make sure every one of her interactions with clients and candidates was both memorable and of high quality. It would have been easy for someone so young to be intimidated by dealing with candidates and clients more senior than her but if it fazed Nicole she never showed it. She relished the challenges of beating her previous results which created a very focused culture around her.

Being a very visual person Nicole had clear visual prompts to keep her on track to her goals as well as pictures of the car and house that she aspired to buy when she achieved her targets. Did Nicole get that car and that house? You bet she did and she's not yet 30.

#### 4) judgement & decision making (the prioritisation competency)

*"Do you make effective choices within appropriate timeframes that lead to desired outcomes?"*

There are many competing priorities in a recruiter's day; screening ad response, interviewing, taking references, arranging visits, deciding which candidates to recommend to our clients, chasing clients for feedback, and researching companies, just to name a few, let alone the necessities of life like coffee, lunch and Facebook!

High performing recruiters clearly understand the concept of opportunity cost and make all their decisions each day on that basis. In other words they know which activities are their highest priority and they devote the appropriate amount of time to each of these activities. High performers are overwhelmingly PROACTIVE not REACTIVE.

Undoubtedly Andrew Marty, ex Morgan & Banks, and currently the Managing Director of SACS Consulting in Melbourne, is one the masters of this competency. I was at SACS for just short of a year and Andrew never ceased to amaze me with his capacity to do so many high pay-off activities throughout his day. He delegated effectively, he didn't waste time in conversations, he quickly understood which jobs he should take on and those he shouldn't and he phone screened candidates with maximum efficiency. Certainly at times he could risk sounding a bit clinical but that's one of the tricks of this competency, being efficient without becoming robotic or losing your humanity.

*High performers are overwhelmingly*  
**PROACTIVE**  
**NOT**  
**REACTIVE.**





## 5) coachability (the feedback and learning competency)

*"Are you open to feedback and will you take that feedback on board and immediately change your behaviour/actions to improve your results?"*

A job in recruitment is a fast moving job – 6 months as a recruiter is like 2 years in another job. You have to learn so much, so quickly just to survive the first 6 months.

I started my recruitment career in London as a 22 year old fresh faced Aussie off the boat who knew nothing about London geography, had never worked in a corporate job, and had barely passed Introductory Accounting in the first year of my economics degree. I went home each night for the first two months with a throbbing behind my forehead and ache between my shoulder blades. There was so much to learn. I barely survived when many didn't. I learned quickly, mainly because I made so many mistakes, and even though my base salary was a measly, even then, £7,500, it was still better than working in a London pub for 2 quid an hour.

I took all the coaching, no matter how much my ego resisted because I wanted to be a better, much better, recruiter. Although it took me longer than I would have liked to become a high performing recruiter, I continued to improve my results each year until I became the highest billing recruiter at Recruitment Solutions, seven years after I started my recruitment career.

And what's even more revealing is that in the 4 years since I stopped working as a recruiter I've learned just as much again about recruitment as I did in the previous 14 years.

The opportunities to improve yourself in this industry are endless, if you are willing to learn.

The evolution of the recruitment industry has been relatively modest. Many recruitment companies today are doing basically what they were doing 30 years ago; chasing clients for jobs, running ads, interviewing candidates and attempting to place the right candidate in the right job as quickly as possible. However due to demographic shifts, globalisation, skills shortages and technological change, the recruitment marketplace is changing rapidly. The importance of learning, and its role in high performance, will only increase over the next decade.

*A job in recruitment is a fast moving job – six months as a recruiter is like two years in another job.*





Do you want to just perform in a vacuum or do you want to be a top performer who continually lifts the bar of their own performance, a person who uses external benchmarks for excellence as much as they use internal benchmarks? Do you prefer to stay ignorant and be a big fish in a small pond or are you hungry for feedback and learning even if this makes you realise you are currently more of a big fish in a small pond?

### Performers v Learners

Performers focus on doing things well and avoiding failure. In order to avoid the risk of less-than-perfect performance, they avoid activities where practice and the risk of making mistakes, will be necessary to develop mastery. Instead performers stick to what already comes easily (their natural abilities), thereby inhibiting the development of new capabilities. As a result, they don't commit to endeavours that might require a higher level of performance than they believe themselves capable of offering (ie they see their abilities as FIXED and not capable of improvement).

Learners focus differently. They are driven far more by curiosity than by the concern with how others perceive their performance. Their concern thus is with action ("what happens if I try this?") rather than with how their results are judged. Mistakes become simple feedback, rather than symbols of failure. They adjust and try again to reach their goals. Learners tolerate a lot of frustration and mistakes on the road to accomplishing what they want. They do not judge themselves as failures for not getting it right the first, the second or even the third time. As a result their capabilities continue to expand (ie they see their capabilities as unlimited and always capable of improvement).

*Speak the Truth and Point to Hope (The Leader's Journey to Maturity) by Lisa J. Marshall (Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2004), page 121 & 122*

*Do you want to just perform in a vacuum or do you want to be a top performer who continually lifts the bar of their own performance?*





## the recruitment process

Are certain competencies more responsive to development and others less so? The research unequivocally tells us the answer is 'yes'.

Research on competencies would indicate that those competencies most accurately described as 'motive' and 'trait' competencies, as distinct from 'knowledge' or 'skill' competencies are those most resistant to quick development.

Looking at the competencies I have espoused as the 'Top 5' the 3 that are more motive or trait competencies are, 'persistence', 'achievement drive' and 'coachability'. These are the 3 competencies that I recommend you completely satisfy yourself are competencies possessed by any potential recruiter that you are considering investing your valuable time and money in hiring and developing.

I'm not going to go through a step by step recruitment process, however I would offer the following 2 pieces of advice:

### a) find evidence of the competencies

Once you have selected a person for interview then ensure you ask **evidence** based questions, not **opinion** based questions. These questions should do two things;

- ❗ allow you to validate the information provided on the resume relating to what the person claims to have done or achieved, and
- ❗ uncover information, not provided on the resume that is relevant to their suitability to the job (competency or motivation-wise)

No matter what competencies you are interviewing someone against, make sure that you score each person on each competency and have it clear in your own mind what minimum level of each competency you require before you will hire anyone for that job.

Most importantly identify the competency that is most critical for success in your team or organisation and be ruthless in eliminating anyone from your consideration who doesn't match up in this area, regardless of how they measure up elsewhere.

*Research on competencies would indicate that those competencies most accurately described as 'motive' and 'trait' competencies, as distinct from 'knowledge' or 'skill' competencies are those most resistant to quick development.*

*Identify the competency that is most critical for success in your team or organisation and be ruthless in eliminating anybody from your consideration who doesn't match up in this area, regardless of how they measure up elsewhere.*





Two of the most respected and successful recruiters in Australia say it all for me:

“At Morgan & Banks we were not looking for people who were tiptoeing through life towards death. Rather, we wanted those with a very long blue flame coming out of their posteriors. In other words, we wanted people who thrived in a demanding and performance-based culture because they had significantly higher levels of energy and motivation than most. The incremental effect of this energy was enormous, because when you get a critical mass of high performers, they attract others like them, and spit out mediocrity.”

*Flourish & Prosper by Geoff Morgan & Andrew Banks (Penguin, 2005), page 103*

Clearly, **achievement drive** was a non-negotiable factor in being hired as a consultant at Morgan & Banks (and no doubt just as important at Talent2)!

## b) don't rely solely on an interview

Interviewing, by itself, is less than perfect in providing the information we need to make an informed hiring decision (although, astonishingly, many owners and managers of recruitment companies hire recruiters based on nothing more than an interview).

There are three additional steps you can take to bring more evidence to the decision making table;

- i. a verbal reference from the candidate's most recent up-line report plus any other verbal references you regard as appropriate and valid
- ii. a psychometric assessment that makes an objective analysis of the compatibility between the requirements of the job and the strengths and learning style of the candidate  
(see [www.profilesinternational.com](http://www.profilesinternational.com) for an excellent example of such a assessment tool)
- iii. on-the-job shadowing, where the candidate shadows two or three consultants across half a day, or so. Many candidates know how to 'perform' at interview so the process of consultant shadowing over an extended period of time is more likely to bring out authentic responses and reactions that reveal the 'real person' in the candidate more so than predictable interview questions

In my own experience as a leader of recruiters, I found (iii) especially effective in knocking out the 'looks-right-is-wrong' candidate.

*Astonishingly, many owners and managers of recruitment companies hire recruiters based on nothing more than an interview.*





## establishing a high performance framework

A high performance framework is like a map. You don't have to have one to get where you want to go but it certainly helps.

Any rational person wants to succeed quickly rather than slowly, and certainly every business owner unquestionably wants their people to succeed quickly rather than slowly. Given this logic surely wouldn't every recruitment company in Australia have such a success 'map' for their consultants?

In my experience you would be lucky to find one in three with such a success 'map' or high performance framework. *Why isn't it 100%?*

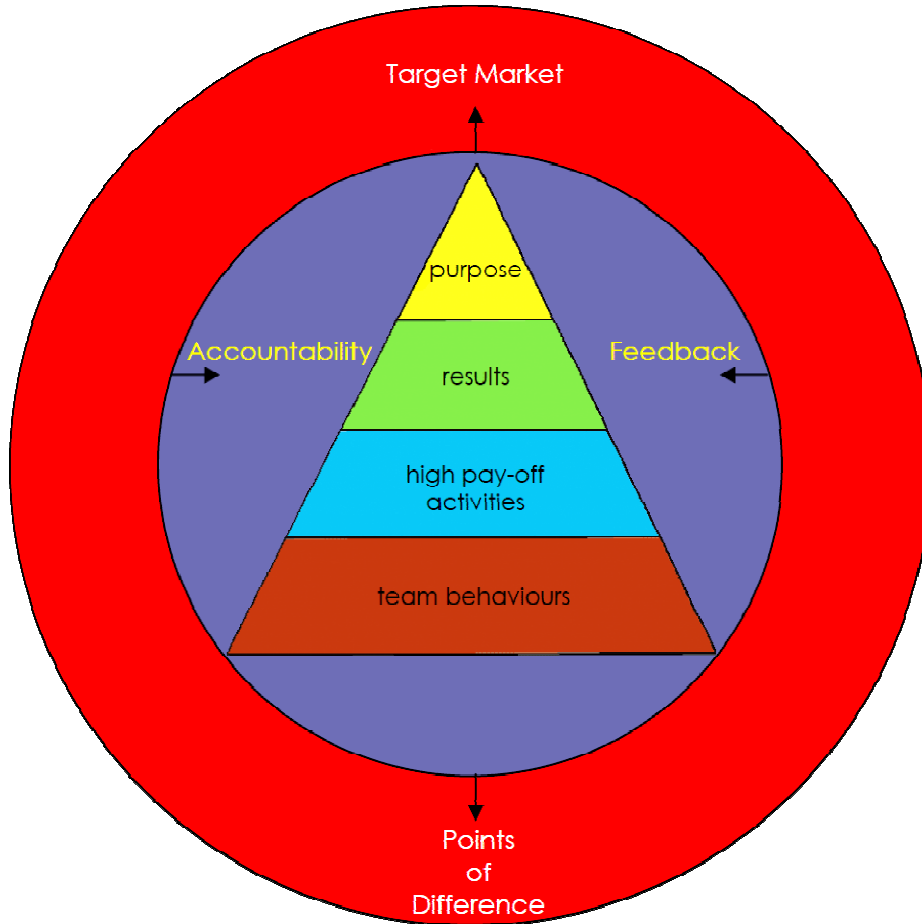
Very simply it's because most recruiters, and a lot of owners, think having a high performance framework, or success map, means micro management! Please don't confuse the two things, they are not the same. The difference is in the way a leader implements and uses a high performance framework.

Below, I have provided a diagram of a high performance framework as well as examples in each category of the framework loosely based on my time at Recruitment Solutions as a temporary accounting consultant in the Sydney CBD.

There are many different ways in which you can create such a framework, I am simply providing one example that I know works for me and others.

*A high performance framework is like a map. You don't have to have one to get where you want to go but it certainly helps.*





**purpose**

To generate and fill temporary accounting vacancies in the Sydney CBD and surrounds

**results**

a) annual gross profit/net margin	\$634,000
b) Job filled ratio	89%
c) Weekly filled jobs	6
d) \$100k plus p.a. clients	3
e) Average net \$ margin	\$12.70 p/h

**high pay-off activities**

i. Weekly Prospect calls	50
ii. Monthly prospect & client visits	28
iii. Monthly floats out	20
iv. Monthly networking functions	3
v. Weekly referred candidates	8

- team behaviours**
- ✓ All meetings start on time
  - ✓ Customer waiting time in reception is a maximum of 3 mins
  - ✓ All incoming calls are to be taken
  - ✓ All calls are returned within 24 hours
  - ✓ Daily team job meetings commence at 8am and 12.15pm, sharp
  - ✓ We are 100% accountable for any commitments we make, whether they be to internal or external customers
  - ✓ We are respectfully honest with all our customers
  - ✓ Email is our communication tool of last resort
  - ✓ Unless it's logged on the database it didn't happen
  - ✓ Work stops for the week at 5pm Friday and we celebrate our wins and commiserate our (very few) losses!

- accountability**
- Monthly team meetings to review team results and set goals
  - Weekly one-on-one's to review activities and set goals
  - Quarterly business reviews for individual consultants
  - Six monthly performance reviews for individual consultants
  - Annual retreat for team business review and future planning

- target market**
- Large to medium corporates within the Sydney CBD and south of the CBD to the airport (eg Botany, Waterloo, Mascot, Redfern, etc)
  - Known as a fair employer
  - Will understand our role as market experts
  - Will provide exclusive work

- feedback (coaching)**
- Team leader will review two interviews and two client visits per month
  - Team leader will provide at-the-desk coaching on a daily basis

- points of difference**
- Reliability: We have candidates who only want to temp and currently have 183 temps who have worked for us at least once before.
  - Fit: We work with 37 of the ASX Top 150 companies, so we have temp staff that are not only the right technical fit but are also the right cultural fit for a high performance work environment.












## purpose

What is the big picture focus of this position?  
This should be one sentence that captures the heart of the role.

## results

What exactly is the person to achieve that demonstrates they are fulfilling the purpose of their job?

These should be the key, measurable outputs of the role. In recruitment this will almost always include an annual billings or gross profit or net margin figure. There are many other outputs that you could or might measure such as

-  job filled ratio
-  key account billings
-  jobs generated: exclusive jobs v contingent jobs
-  average \$ margin per hour (for a temp recruiter)
-  average % mark up/margin per hour (for a temp recruiter)
-  client paid ads sold
-  candidate referral to client interview ratio

*What is the big picture focus of this position?*

*What exactly is the person to achieve that demonstrates they are fulfilling the purpose of their job?*





## setting goals or targets – why bother?

What does the research on goal setting tell us about the importance of setting goals?

In 1996 Edwin Locke at the University of Maryland reviewed 30 years' research into the relationship between goal setting and performance on work tasks. Over 40,000 people had taken part in these studies. The participants ranged from children to research scientists. The studies took place in eight different countries, with time spans of between one minute and 24 years, and with laboratory and field studies.

These were just some of the findings;

- The more difficult the goal the greater the sense of achievement
- The more specific or explicit the goal the more precisely the performance is regulated
- Goals that are specific and difficult lead to the highest performance
- Commitment to goals is most critical when goals are specific and difficult
- High commitment to goals is attained when:
  - the individual is convinced the goal is important
  - the individual is convinced that the goal is attainable (or at least progress can be made toward it)
- Goal setting is most effective when there is feedback showing progress in relation to the goal
- Goal setting mediates the effect of knowledge of past performance on subsequent performance
- Goals stimulate planning
- Goals affect personality
- Goals serve as standards of self-satisfaction










*Adapted from Solution Focused Coaching by Jane Greene and Anthony M. Grant (Pearson Education, 2003), page 58*





## high pay-off activities

What activities will be the most important ones that contribute to achieving the desired outputs? In recruitment, regardless of whether it is temp or perm, white or blue collar, CBD or suburban or regional you will find that the high pay-off activities vary very little. They are likely to be drawn from a list such as the following;

-  prospect calls
-  prospect visits
-  client calls
-  client visits
-  networking functions attended
-  candidates prospected
-  candidate prospect meetings
-  candidates floated/reverse marketed  
(no job or job not listed with you)
-  candidates referred to jobs (job listed with you)

Notice that I have not included interviews in the above list? This is because any high-pay off activity (input), by definition, leads you closer to a key result (output). An interview doesn't do that. You could interview candidates indefinitely and not be any closer to a placement unless you refer the suitable candidates you interview to clients. Hence I would always include referred candidates as a high pay-off activity ahead of interviews.

I recommend that you identify your Top 5 high pay-off activities and then identify the quantity of each activity that needs to be achieved over a specific timeframe. The timeframe you use will be one that is the most use with respect to that activity.

The key relationship with activities (inputs) is to know, by tracking them, how they flow through to results (outputs). As a rule of thumb the higher the volume of activity the more likely it is that a shorter timeframe will be useful to you. In other words a weekly target is recommended for prospect calls whereas a monthly target for visits would be more suitable.

This enables you to understand your ratios and plan your time accordingly. For example: how many prospect visits, on average, do you need to go on before you generate a job? How many candidates, on average, do you need to refer to a job before you make a placement?

*The key relationship with activities (inputs) is to know, by tracking them, how they flow through to results (outputs).*





## ratios

Ratios are critical indicators of effectiveness in a way that raw figures aren't. For example filling five permanent jobs in one month, for a total of \$38,500 in fee income isn't particularly helpful in understanding a consultant's effectiveness until you know one additional piece of data – how many jobs the consultant worked on during the month. If the consultant was working on 6 jobs then you could reasonably conclude the consultant was working at a high level of 'job fill' effectiveness (the job fill ratio being 83%), whereas if the consultant had worked on 25 jobs during the month then you could reasonably conclude that the consultant was working at a low level of 'job fill' effectiveness (the job fill ratio being 20%).

Job fill ratios are the single most useful statistic to understand when taking an average recruiter to a much higher level of performance.

In recruitment the most common outcomes are:

- 1) you fill the job (and as a result get 100% of the available fee)
- 2) you don't fill the job (and as a result get 0% of the available fee)

The 'job filled' ratio shows you your opportunity cost (ie missed fee income). In other words, using the example above if the recruiter who filled 5/25 jobs had doubled their fill rate (ie to 40%) they would have generated nearly \$80K in income.

## exercise

Add up the total potential fee income of all the jobs you (or your team) worked on in the past six months. Then subtract your actual fee income. The figure you have left is the value of the work you did for ZERO fee return (ie for free). Now – what skill improvement (not greater luck or more time), would have halved the work you did for free?

Do you know what skill improvement that is?

If not, you should because that's where all your cream is!

In other words, if you identified and rectified that skill deficiency then you wouldn't have to generate a single new job to dramatically increase your fees and therefore your total remuneration (assuming you are on an incentive scheme).

You just fill more of the jobs you already have! Sounds simple, and it is, it's just that most recruiters have little clue as to their job filled ratio and as a result do far too much work for too little financial return. Enter – burnout and disillusionment. Exit – one recruiter, who fulfilled only a fraction of their potential.

*Job fill ratios are the single most useful statistic to understand when taking an average recruiter to a much higher level of performance.*





Ratios for high pay-off activities point to your effectiveness (or lack of it) and as such are the important indicators of where coaching time is best spent. For example if Roger Federer has lost a match to Rafael Nadal and Federer's points-won-on-first-serve ratio was 63%, below the 78% he knows is the level at which he wins all of his matches, and he knows that his first serve is a high pay-off activity (a critical input that leads to outputs being achieved) then the area of his game where Federer seeks coaching would clearly be his first serve.

At his next practice session Federer would spend relatively little time on any other part of his game because that would be a low pay-off activity, not useless, but not the best way to improve his results in the fastest way. As a coach I am always keen to know the ratios of the recruiters that I am working with. Spending five minutes reviewing crucial ratios will give me 80% of the information I need to know in recommending where coaching time is likely to be best spent.

### team behaviours

What are the non-negotiable behaviours that constitute the team's (or organisation's) culture? It is critical to establish these explicitly. I will never forget the day I joined a new company and called an 8am team meeting and when 8.01 ticked over I was the only one in the room. The culture I had come from ensured an 8am meeting commenced at 8am sharp. At my new employer, it served as an approximate starting time.

At Recruitment Solutions we called our team behaviours document 'The Way We Do Things Around Here' and it served as valuable benchmark for defining and measuring the standards we were committed to as a team and as an organisation.

### accountability

How will performance be reviewed? In any role accountability keeps people focused and motivated. High performers love to know where they are going and how they are progressing on that journey. Weekly one-on-ones are useful for activity accountability but quarterly and annual business reviews, focusing on results, are even more important in continually raising the bar to ensure high performers are challenged and underperformers are managed up, or out.

When there exists a consistent and well structured accountability process it greatly assists a consultant's focus, motivation and productivity.

*When there exists a consistent and well structured accountability process it greatly assists a consultant's focus, motivation and productivity.*





## feedback (coaching)

What's working?

What's not working?







What skill improvement will gain the greatest performance improvement?

Ken Blanchard (co-author of *The One Minute Manager*) loves the quote '*feedback is the breakfast of champions*' and so do I.

One of the best pieces of feedback I ever received was from Greg Savage, who joined me on one of my visits and during the car journey back to the office afterwards said one sentence that reverberated around my head;

*'Ross, talk less, listen more'*.

Feedback is most effective when:

-  it occurs as close to the event as possible (immediately afterwards is ideal)
-  a questioning technique is used by the coach, rather than telling or critiquing
-  a clear link is made between the result achieved (eg winning a job at the client visit) and how the result was accomplished (eg the consultant mentioned how they had filled a similar job with a competitor last month)
-  the feedback is as specific as possible so the person understands exactly what to do next time and how to do it
-  positive feedback is provided for 80% of the conversation and feedback for improvement is provided 20% of the time
-  the conversation is kept short and to the point.

## target market

What are the basic criteria we use to decide whether a potential customer is worth pursuing? Niche marketing is in - mass marketing is out.







This rapid change is mostly due to 21st century technology allowing us to gain vast amounts of information at a cost, and within a timeframe, that would have been unimaginable fifteen years ago. This information can be used by the recruiter to make more effective choices with respect to limited marketing time, resources and money.

*Niche marketing is in - mass marketing is out.*





Smart recruiters use some, or all, of the following to define their customer market:

-  skills
-  industry
-  geography
-  salary range
-  employer characteristics (eg size, culture, etc)
-  candidate characteristics
-  their own standards

### points of difference

Why would a customer choose you ahead of anyone else? High performers speak the language of benefits (what the customer wants to buy) rather than the language of features (what the recruiter is selling). In other words average recruiters talk about what they do whereas high performers talk about the difference they have made to their customers' organisation and careers, respectively.

The most powerful points of difference are ones where statistics and examples are used.

*Average recruiters talk about what they do whereas high performers talk about the difference they have made.*





## conclusion

High performance frameworks are not one-size-fits-all templates. What I have detailed in this eBook is one possible high performance framework. Based on my experience I have suggested things that have worked for me, or my clients, however I would encourage you to find a framework that works for you, in your market, given your level of experience.

Like any piece of advice you think is applicable to you I suggest you do the following with the knowledge you have gained from this book; apply it, review the results, refine your approach and apply it again.  
Repeat.

Remember; not having a map doesn't mean that you won't get to where you want to go but having a relevant and accurate map sure makes it a quicker, easier and more enjoyable journey.

Recruitment can be an exciting job and a rewarding career because you have the opportunity to impact many people in an area of their life that they care deeply about.

May you succeed quickly, not slowly, on that journey.

*Not having a map doesn't mean that you won't get to where you want to go but having a relevant and accurate map sure makes it a quicker, easier and more enjoyable journey.*





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## about the author

Ross is a recruitment expert.

Since 2003 Ross has been an in-demand expert on recruitment and the recruitment industry in Australia. Ross imparts his expertise through the most effective means possible depending upon the purpose and audience, this is typically through workshops, coaching, keynote speaking, consulting, facilitation, authoring and mentoring.

As a professional recruiter, between 1989 and 2003, Ross screened over 80,000 resumes, interviewed over 3,000 people and successfully placed over 500 people in work. Over this time he worked in London, Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne. He has been professionally recognised by the designation, MRCSA (Accredited Recruitment Professional) awarded by the Recruitment & Consulting Services Association (Australia & New Zealand).

Since 2001 Ross's opinion pieces and skill development articles have been regularly published in recruitment industry magazines and on specialist recruitment websites, both in Australia and in the USA.

Ross lives with his partner, Michelle, in Melbourne along with their children Guy (8), Nicola (6) and James (born July 2007).

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