

How to Maintain Client Loyalty Continued from page 3

instance, my clients are informed in advance that “counter-offer prep” with me begins on day one. I gladly point out that I’ve had only one counter-offer acceptance in the past five years. I also ask my clients to formulate a list detailing three or more reasons as to why candidates’ should be interested in joining their company. Finally, both parties must be convinced that “as a team,” and only as a team, can we be successful in recruiting the industry’s elite talent. And we deliver.

Keeping Clients Loyal Continued from page 7

loyal to us for the long run (three-plus years). For my practice, client loyalty has come about as a result of lessons taught to me by clients who fortunately cared enough to give me some tough love. However, some of this well-intentioned love came simply from asking for feedback. Don’t be frightened to ask your clients for the occasional performance review (if you can handle the truth). How else can you improve? This mature dialogue can result in a connection that builds an accountability bridge leading to a very strong loyalty factor. *Clients stay loyal when they know you have their best interests in mind.*

Those who take a self-serving attitude towards their search practice clearly don’t understand how to achieve success in a service industry. Since executive search is a service industry, I have found client loyalty improves by offering creative, value-added services and counsel. For example, try suggesting your client hire a candidate whom you know is a superstar, even though the candidate came from an alternative source. If you have had a previous relationship with the candidate, ask your client how you can help recruit that person. *Focus on helping your clients acquire the absolute best talent, period.*

Another example would be attending a key meeting where you might give a presentation or gain exposure to learning more about the company, its culture and the senior management team. Remember, we are the experts at our trade. Many clients desire more of our expertise and counsel than you might be led to

Maintaining a client’s loyalty in today’s market isn’t easy. Recruiters will continue to come up with innovative ways to retain their clients’ business. But at the end of the day, it really boils down to “relationships.” We’ve all benefited, and at the same time been disgusted by the fact that people will do business with others just because they’re “bud’s.” Now take advantage of that fact, coupled with your ability to perform on the job, and you’ll be hard pressed to lose. ▲

believe.

As we all know, this business isn’t rocket science. Fortunately, executive search, at its core, is a common sense endeavor (whew!). Several very simple points should not be overlooked in creating client loyalty. Know the difference between a client and a customer. Absolutely be known as the “go to” person when your client has a need. This means you have gained a reputation for delivering when called upon. Remember, people enjoy working with people they genuinely like. As simple as this sounds, executive search is still very much a human touch or relationship business. Don’t overlook the fact that strong relationships can lead to preferential treatment. The best recruiters have taken the time to develop a client both vertically and horizontally within the organization. Broad knowledge of multiple hiring managers and their preferences will only aid in your bringing candidates who are that much more on spec.

Lastly, it’s been my experience that client loyalty has always been an earned privilege. However, it’s important to point out it is a concept that does not apply to all clients or all recruiters. Some outstanding recruiters have relatively little client loyalty and prefer to work in units with multiple customers. Regardless of your philosophy towards client loyalty, it’s my hope this article has provoked thought and possibly given each of us the opportunity to perform expertly for some client, somewhere. ▲

AT THE Pinnacle

Fall 2004

The Pinnacle Society / Recognizing Excellence in Recruiting

From The President State of The Organization

It is difficult to believe that four years have gone by since I was first elected President. Time is both an oddity and a phenomenon that I don’t have the skill to analyze. So, what is it called when it seems like forever and yesterday all at the same time? If you say being over 50, I will throw paper airplanes at you. I wanted to be President of Pinnacle since I felt some



Gail Kaplan

Kaplan & Jass
211 Congress Street
Boston, MA 02110
617-422-5678 x 224
800-422-5678
617-422-5682 (fax)
gkaplan@kj1.com



things needed to change in the organization—I wanted the conferences to become more meaningful to each of us and I wanted to give everyone a voice. My final article as President will now be a glance at the last four years as well as some predictions and hopes for the future. When I first became President, we had the bare beginnings of a website, a newsletter, great Pinnacle Panels at NAPS conferences, some loosely written by-laws that were not followed, the beginning phase of becoming a non-profit organization, a board that met over dinner where there was more drinking and cigar smoking than discussion of business, and conferences where fewer and fewer people were attending. We were still, in my opinion, the best show in town for big-billers, and I was proud to be a member. Not knowing I had what it took to get things done in this sort of forum, I surged forward in an attempt to make things even better.

First, not by choice but by necessity, was

Continued on page 6

You’re just like me . . . only different.

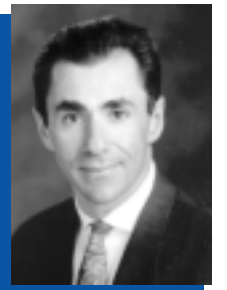
At According to Danny, my training company, we track just about everything. I’m both oral aggressive and anal retentive, making it possible for my psychotherapist to have several homes mortgage free, and impossible for my employees, who after all do the actual hard work of tracking and collecting data, to get a good night’s sleep.

When I compare the “Ask Danny’s” and the “requests for mentoring” that I get from the population of recruiters at large, and then compare that to the requests I get from top producers, including the members of our society, there is more that unites us than divides us. (Sorry, too much NPR during a presidential election year.)

What unites us

All recruiters ask:

- About absurd and ridiculous placement situations, brought on sometimes by our own error or a lapse in judgment or salesmanship, and sometimes, well...



Danny Cahill

Tony Byrne Chair

INSIDE

ATTAINING THE PINNACLE

2

HOW TO MAINTAIN CLIENT LOYALTY IN THE CURRENT MARKET

3

PINNACLE SPRING 2004 CONFERENCE IN SANTA FE

INSERT

KEEPING CLIENTS LOYAL - REGARDLESS OF THE ECONOMY

7

stuff happens. It’s the nature of our business, and is part of what makes it glorious. Today’s labyrinth-like miasma is tomorrow’s badge of excellence and treasured, if embellished, memory.

- About contracts, legal exposure, non-competes, employment agreements, and the interpretation of offer letters and their various covenants. Our CPC designation is often scoffed at, usually by those without the letters after their name, but the things I learned there I use every day. These questions serve as a reminder as well that we are not lawyers, are vulnerable to changes in law and the

Continued on page 5

www.pinnaclesociety.org

Fall 2004

President

GAIL KAPLAN
Kaplan & Jass
(617) 422-5678 x 224

Vice President/Membership

DANIEL SARCH
Leitner Sarch Consultants, Ltd.
(914) 682-4000 x 11

Secretary

KATHLEEN KURKE
Starbridge Group, Inc.
(703) 691-3900 x 202

Treasurer

DONALD SMITH
Smith, Brown & Jones
(816) 531-4770

Past President

DIANA J. GAZZOLO
Martin Grant Associates
(617) 357-5380

Newsletter

TOM KEOUGHAN
Toyjobs
(973) 744-0818

At *The Pinnacle* is edited by R. E. Schecter, Bartleby Scriveners, P.O. Box 5252, Framingham, MA 01701. (508) 820-7789; Fax: (508) 405-1769; e-mail: bartleby@rcn.com

Our Purpose

The Pinnacle Society was established to honor high volume producers in the Personnel Contingency and Retainer Placement employment services industries. It provides an educational forum through which members share information and ideas.

Attaining The Pinnacle

Bob Moses began his career in sales with the Southwestern Company selling books door to door while still a student at the University of Delaware.

On graduation, Bob took a position with Paul Revere Insurance in Baltimore as a broker responsible for consulting companies on their benefits packages, including executive compensation, insurance, and benefit rollouts.

Bob liked Paul Revere because of the quality products and the career possibilities — some of the sales managers were earning in the high six-figures. But the situation was not conducive to growth. It became intolerable when the company was swallowed up by Provident, which replaced Paul Revere's really good disability insurance products with cheaper policies and dramatically

Lina Savage was born in Brooklyn, NY and moved with her family to Ohio when she was 15. By 16, she had worked her way up from manning a phone to supervising 12 people at the National Reader's Service telemarketing operation in Cleveland during evenings and weekends — and going to high school during the day. "We played Zig Zigler tapes. They had all the bells and whistles. We played games to keep sharp. I was trained by some real dynamos in that business. I did well. But after four years, I got burned out."

So, at the ripe old age of 20, Lina answered a newspaper ad and went to work for

slashed career advancement and income growth opportunities. When Provident ingested Paul Revere, Bob — along with twelve others in his office — simply walked, voluntarily, and he started job hunting.

Bob's first call was to Southwestern, for whom he had worked while a student. Even when he was with the company, Southwestern had, free of charge, referred many of its best "book kids" to any number of large companies; they knew a good source when they saw it (and didn't have to pay for it). Now, Southwestern had decided to charge for the service through a new division, a placement firm, Southwestern Business Resources.

In response to Bob's call, a recruiter from Southwestern followed up. "We're opening an office in your neck of the

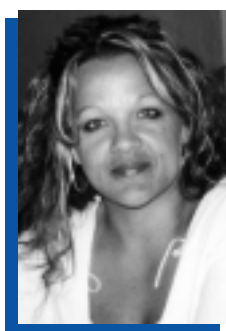
Continued on page 4

Champion Personnel, where she was mentored by "a wild Cuban spitfire of a woman" who gave real meaning to the term "hands-on" training. The woman sat next to Lina during her calls telling her what to do and how to do it, even breaking in to speak with the client or candidate, and literally taking over. "It was excruciating," says Lina. The woman fired and re-hired Lina three times during her year-and-a-half of employment at Champion — fired her because she was too aggressive and argumentative, re-hired her

Continued on page 4



Bob Moses, CPC, CSP
Moses Associates, Inc.
944 Burdette Drive
Downingtown, PA 19335
610-518-1982
610-518-1981 fax
bob@mosesassociates.com



Isabel (Lina) Savage, CPC
Abigail Abbott Staffing Services
1201 Dove Street, Suite 500
Newport Beach, CA 92660
949-756-8000
949-756-1045 fax
lina.savage@abigailabbott.com

Keeping Clients Loyal — Regardless of the Economy

by David Youngerman

Loyalty. Is there really such a thing in today's business world? Think about it. Everyday we ask our candidates to forego their current company loyalty to look at new opportunities. Furthermore, haven't we all snickered at least once when one of our candidates uses the term loyalty as their reasoning for choosing not to explore the assignment we have in mind? Recruiters, on the contrary, tend to be hypocritical animals of sorts and believe — almost demand — that our clients stay loyal to us regardless. Is that what loyalty has become, simply a matter of convenience? During my fifteen years of effort within our wonderful industry, it seems that the whole concept of loyalty has really taken it on the chin. Let's face it: The world just moves at a much quicker pace than it did in 1990. For example, in today's environment, leaders run the risk of putting their company at a disadvantage if they become too faithful to people, concepts, or strategies during a critical period of necessary decision. That said, why would a client stay loyal to a recruiter, regardless of the economic landscape?

In order to truly understand the concept of client/recruiter loyalty, I felt it would be wise to deliver this question directly to the end-users themselves, our clients. So, I asked four of my long-term clients, whose wisdom I value, why they would choose to partner with a recruiter for an extended period (three-plus years), and why they would continue to stay loyal to these people regardless of the economy? Interestingly, they all downplayed the *economic conditions* portion of my question. To them, "loyalty weathers economic vacillations." Not surprisingly, that's the very attitude permeating their answers, which brings us to a key point: *Most good clients understand there are ebbs and flows to business cycles, and long-term loyalty continues during the tough periods as well as the high times. Likewise, they expect the same from us in return.* In other words, loyalty must be approached with a long-term vision and not a short-term one, and it must come from both parties. I heard quotes such as: "Loyalty is a two way street," or, "A good search partner is loyal to me as well." Taking a long-term approach certainly can have its rewards, but when are we (as recruiters) and they (our clients) staying faithful to a fault? Obviously, there is no formula answer. The point here is that *good* clients tend not reward recruiters who take the "quick hit" approach.

Other common themes offered in client feedback as to why a client might stay loyal were: *Urgency.* "They work to my pace, and stay one step ahead of me." Or, "If lack of urgency becomes an issue, I would first address it, and if it continues, suggest we part ways." It's important to remember that our fees are

substantial, and the reason our clients come to us is because they have an urgent or critical need to fill. Taking the urgency comment a step further, outstanding recruiters will understand what the motivation is behind the urgency or why the need is critical. Understanding what is under the surface brings us to the next common theme: *Deep knowledge of the client.* "They [good

David Youngerman

Youngerman SearchPartners, Inc.
126 South Milledge Avenue, Suite F
Athens, GA 30605
706-613-7800
706-613-7802 fax
dyoungerman@ysrecruit.com



recruiters] know the company and me so well that candidates wouldn't know if they [the recruiters] work for the company or not." Or, "They bring me candidates that are off the search spec... just because they know I will like them and that the candidate is good for the company." Come again? Yes, our clients don't want us to market candidates who are a possible fit. They want us to bring them unique, exceptional talent that provides a staffing solution and puts them in the awkward position of having to create a spot in the organization for that caliber of candidate. Intense knowledge of your clients will result in loyalty and provide reward.

Lastly, my clients mentioned *Accountability* as a key reason to stay loyal. As one would expect from a good client, they all felt the accountability issue goes both ways. "They put their pride and reputation behind every candidate presented." Or, "If my search partner counsels me about a particular issue or candidate that differs from my opinion, I listen. There are times when they are privy to information I may not be aware of, and I know they will stand by the end result." Wow. A good client understands the partnership is based on a *duel* accountability of mutual actions. However, the ultimate ownership rests with us and we must *make our client look great for having hired our candidate.* We can't just conveniently lay claim to the great hires among our candidates. We must own all of them.

As each of us manages our business in our own unique way, I think it's prudent for us to reflect on why a client may stay

Continued on page 8

State of The Organization Continued from page 1

the non-profit issue. We did not know it when I took over, but we were not officially a non-profit organization. Upon receiving a letter from the IRS asking for an explanation of an array of issues, my Office Manager began researching and discovered we had only done half of what it took to make us officially non-profit. We began a series of discussions with the IRS and the non-profit governmental people to legalize us. It took almost a year to accomplish, but I now pass on the Presidency to others knowing that we are in great shape with all government agencies.

Then came the issue of attendance at the conferences. First, I was determined to make the conferences more substantial, and felt a way to do that was to include all of us. We all qualified for Pinnacle and, therefore, we all had something to contribute. I began spreading the participation to everyone and have always been very conscious not to use only a handful of people over and over, but to use all of us to lead roundtables and speak. As a result, Chip talked to us about how he bills over \$1-2 million per year consistently, Ed Bradstreet and Jim Ashworth presented opposite management styles both of which work, and many people who had never been asked to participate before led roundtables. People who told me they were about to drop out now thanked me for changing the conferences and have stayed with us. The numbers began to rise at the conferences. Also, additional people attended due to the fact that I began to enforce the attendance rule (you know, the one that says you have to be at one conference out of four or your membership will be “up for review”). The conference in New Orleans was the largest we had had up until that time and many of those people had received “do or die” letters. Since then (with the exception of Vancouver), the conferences have had record numbers. Several members opted to leave Pinnacle since it could no longer be a priority in their life, but we also added many new members who contribute so much to the organization. We have Danny Cahill to thank for most of those people. My motivation for making the conferences larger and better was totally selfish—I like hearing from all of you because it is through you that I have become a better recruiter.

On to the torture involving the By-Laws. Between the attorney needing to approve the By-Laws to meet non-profit standards, the typos and the discussions of how we wanted Pinnacle to be, the Board and the membership approved the new By-Laws. And, the best news is that we actually follow them.

I sent letters out to every President of state organizations introducing them to Pinnacle and the Pinnacle Panels. We did several panels as a result of those letters. And, of course, we had several members have panels at their state conference. I

would love it if at every state conference there would be a Pinnacle Panel. Perhaps that is a goal for the next generation of Pinnacle leaders.

The website is a work in progress and has evolved from its miniscule beginning to being something of value to us all. With Dan Martineau’s leadership it is now a fabulous marketing tool for us.

I must say that changing the board meetings to being in a boardroom and having dinner after, shifted it from social to business. With the help of the incredible board, all of whom have spent many hours working to make Pinnacle better, we have created an organization that is of value to all of us, is a business organization, and is also very fun. I applaud and thank each member of the board — Danny Sarch (ever the diplomat and the presenter of the logical side), Kathleen Kurke (the most organized and coherent person I know), Don Smith (my best buddy for life who organized the finances rather than having uncertain checks being written with no real records), Suzanne Fairlie (her persistence with NAPS brought us credit for our conferences), Jackie Nabat (an enthusiastic ball of energy), Tom Keoughan (another diplomat with great ideas), Dan Martineau (you need to know how much work he has put into the website — great work), and Diana Gazzolo (invaluable member, past president, person who took the clique out of Pinnacle, person who brought us The Ritz and has been on the board since Pinnacle began).

I have been asked by many people to be “President for Life.” While it is unbelievably flattering, and I would love to have my ego stroked forever, I do not believe it is healthy for the organization to have the same people over and over again. Many of you have tremendous ideas and I encourage you to share them and participate. I have set the stage for everyone to be important. Please take advantage. You, as I have, will be appreciated. Perhaps more in this place than in any other way in your business life. Your effort will not go unnoticed.

I leave you in very good hands and will be excited to continue to attend conferences and help the new President in any way I can. Actually, I will be on the board as Past President and will still participate in the hotel arrangements for the next few conferences. As your *lame duck queen*, I just want to say that I love all of you and want to thank you for allowing me to grow and learn about myself in this leadership capacity. You made every minute I put into Pinnacle worth it, and will continue to do the same for the future Presidents. My wish for our future is continued growth, continued learning from each other, and a place where we can all feel like and be a queen (or king). ▲

“ My wish for our future is continued growth, continued learning from each other, and a place where we can all feel like and be a queen (or king).”

How to Maintain Client Loyalty in the Current Market

by Greg Westenberg

Loyalty is defined as: “A feeling or attitude of devoted attachment and affection.” A dog is loyal to its owner, a sibling to his family, and a politician is usually loyal to his party, but maintaining our client’s loyalty in the current market can prove to be a much greater challenge. Part of the problem stems from the “perception” that we need our clients more than they need us. And let’s face it, with the barrage of recruiter calls these employers receive daily, coupled with competitors who are quick to offer discounted fees at the drop of a hat, who can blame them.

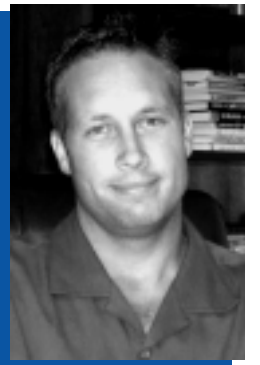
Many of us have developed clever ways to remind companies that our firm is different and that we want their continued patronage. We send birthday cards, holiday gifts, write newsletters, conduct open houses and even fund entertainment outside the office. And these are all effective strategies that contribute to winning over a client’s loyalty. For those of us who are “Sole Proprietor’s,” or who run a small recruiting firm, these value-added services can be time consuming, and generally require an additional administrative staff.

When asked to reflect upon what I do individually to secure repeat business, I narrowed it down to three simple factors. First, I thoroughly *research my clients* and know their competition. And I’m not referring to fundamental research on annual sales, profit margin, projected growth, etc. I’m talking about the org. chart, i.e., the five different departments, their function, hiring managers, internal employees, products, environment, etc. This is where working a “niche” market really helps out. When my client is describing some new electronic module that his company has developed, not only do I understand the technical aspects of the product, but I am also familiar with the company’s five biggest competitors. Companies are impressed when the recruiter knows a little more than a buzzword or two, and even more impressed when they don’t have to indicate who their competitor’s are. Another advantage of working a niche market is that it allows me to become well acquainted with the best engineer’s in the field, many of whom now work for my clients and/or with whom I once had, or still have, relationships. By fostering these relationships with internal employees, I’ve significantly improved my position to influence the hiring decision. Now that I’ve convinced the client of my technical competence in understanding their business, I’m halfway there.

Secondly, I consciously focus my efforts on *continually contacting the client even when business is slow*. Some of you might think, “Well sure, I always keep in touch with my good clients.” And what is the definition of a good client? To most of us a good client is one who pays full fee and offers multiple placement opportunities. But what if we haven’t made a

placement there in six months, nine months, or even a year? Are they still a good client?

Let’s face it, when things are going well with our client, we’re the best friend. But when things aren’t going well with our client, we’re somebody else’s best friend. I make a point to include these stale clients when making my other marketing/cold-calls. I cannot begin to tell you how much this has



Gregory Westenberg, CPC
Direct Results, Inc.
39111 W. Six Mile Rd., Suite 149
Livonia, MI 48152
734-432-3143
734-432-3144 Fax
direct@mich.com

resulted in paying huge dividends later on. One of these clients in particular recently expressed to me how impressed he was that I continued to contact him knowing full well that it was not likely that any new positions would be approved now or in the near future. He also went on to elaborate. Rarely did he receive calls from his other preferred vendors now that the market had slowed down. This human resources manager had categorized me as not just another ravenous recruiter looking for business (although ultimately I was), but also as one who was clearly interested in maintaining a personal relationship with him. And sure, HR people at times may seem cold, shortsighted, and even incompetent, but they are still human. And even though these calls may not instantly grant one access to new openings, you’ll be the one they think of when the market picks up. This concerted effort will result in additional exclusive search assignments along with other searches offered at the front-end of the recruiting process.

Last and most importantly: DELIVER! There’s nothing worse than a person who can talk a good game but can’t deliver. That may work well in politics, but not in business. This is why I am constantly re-prioritizing my marketing calls. Being a sole proprietor, I don’t attempt to take on all search requests that come my way. If I’m confident that I can identify an excellent fit for my client, I go for it. If not, I avoid the risk of failure and leave that to my competitors.

And we’re all aware that successfully placing a candidate requires more than just “identifying” the candidate. For

Continued on page 8

Bob Moses *Continued from page 2*

woods [Philadelphia]. You probably don't want to hear about any openings, do you?" As someone in the business, Bob was amused by the negative sell. He signed on.

Bob's job — on straight commission, with a draw, was to identify and place mid- to senior-level IT professionals. He began by almost doubling the rookie record for the company and soon became the top recruiter in the firm's history. But even as Bob's production rose, he felt blocked by the lack of company support for his marketing, as well as by compensation issues, including the significant time he was giving to training fellow recruiters. So after five very successful and basically gratifying years, he left Southwestern and founded Moses Associates.

There he happily remains, in his home-office, by himself, no assistants, and doing quite well, thank you. "I love it." He especially appreciates the freedom from filling out logs and forms. He's also thankful not to be managing people; he doesn't like handholding. Best of all, Bob says, now he can be produc-

Lina Savage *Continued from page 2*

because she had such great promise. "I was like a wild pony, trying to do it entirely my way." The woman was patient, however, and by the end of Lina's time at Champion — recruiting for administrative and clerical positions — "I started billing like crazy."

Lina gave her notice at Champion because her husband wanted to move to Southern California. The dominating mentor "nearly killed me" because she had invested so much in Lina. But, controlling her murderous instincts in the face of the inevitable, and appreciating Lina's talent and potential, she insisted that Lina apply for a position with Abigail Abbott, known in clerical and administrative recruiting circles as "the best in the West." And indeed, once she was hired, Lina found that all of the women at Abigail Abbott were top billers. Moreover, most had been with the firm for a long time. They were also great mentors in Lina's continuing education, "because I still had a lot to learn."

What does Lina like best about the business? "The thrill of closing the deal; finding a new "home" for a hungry, dedicated candidate, one who is ready to contribute to the success of an organization; satisfying a client; the money. The whole journey is exciting."

What does she like least? Starting over each month, and the turnover (in clerical/administrative personnel at client companies, which is far greater than for higher level recruits). But the peaks and valleys of the business cycle are the hardest to take for Lina. "To stay on top you have to drill all the time, looking for the gold, prospecting continuously."

Lina uses the Internet to glean information about client companies and their executives so that she knows what she's talking about when she visits. They are impressed by what she

tive a hundred percent of the time he's working. There's no wasted time when he's "locked in the zone." He's proud of his ability to fill searches quickly, many in only one day with a single résumé! (But when he's not working, he's really not working — "I'm outa' there.")

Bob uses the Internet extensively, "constantly," not for the job boards or candidate databases, however, but for research on companies and individuals. For him, the 'net' backs up his "hard core" headhunting.

Bob continues to recruit IT professionals, but now for very senior as well as mid-level positions ("I've moved up a notch."). In addition, he's filling more and more speaking engagements and holding more and more training sessions for other recruiters, on both an individual and company basis, in this country as well as overseas. In tribute to his skill and effectiveness, Bob has been placed on Danny Cahill's elite "Catch a Rising Trainer" list. ▲

has been able to learn and come to believe that her candidates will be right for them. (She of course shares this information with candidates before sending them out for interviews.) If Lina is working on a really good job offer, with a high salary, she'll advertise on Monster. She also uses Map Quest frequently to help her many candidates find their way to interviews, which are "all over the map." Lina and her colleagues do not use research assistants, but the firm does have a client development person who visits potential client companies, bringing them marketing information and looking mainly for temporary placements, but also to fill some full-time jobs.

As to the future? Lina just had her third child — the other two are eleven and eight — so mothering will certainly be central in her life for many years to come. To do this, she works part-time now — still in continuous contact with her office and colleagues — her actual time depending on how the monthly billing goes. The company supports her in this because she bills so well. Down the road, "maybe management, if that door opens, but I'll always be a recruiter." ▲

What does Lina like best about the business? "The thrill of closing the deal; finding a new "home" for a hungry, dedicated candidate, one who is ready to contribute to the success of an organization; satisfying a client; the money. The whole journey is exciting."

You're just like me . . . only different *Continued from page 1*

back door approaches of lobbyists. If you read these questions as much as I do, you'd join NAPS or your local state association fast, as they all have an ethics chair, and a govt regulations chair, which is code for lobbyist-negotiator.

- About fees. The most arrogant of top billers and the most lowly of neophytes get on the phone with their clients and with alarming regularity, fold like cheap suits. At least the rookies admit they got overwhelmed or lacked the skill, the top producers are lazy and acting expediently. Their principles seldom survive a looming bad month.

- About how to leave better voice mails. We are talking to fewer and fewer people every day. We yell out into the night, "It's a phone business, its about touching people." And it is. But with the exception of the recently retired Concorde, no improved technology has ever been put back in the bottle. We won't stop hitting titanium rackets on the tennis court no matter how much it corrupts the game, we aren't going to stop driving our cars because highways get crowded, and people are not going to stop using their voice mail systems. It is in fact no longer just a phone business! That is perfectly obvious and yet we are coming in tomorrow and hitting our desk and preparing for phone time, because we know no other way. **We are living in the in-between time, the changing of the guard in how people communicate, and to be more precise, how people sell during the work day.** What percentage will be Email? Instant messaging? Trade Shows? Webcasts?

It's not known yet, and we need to make a living now. So we pound the phone. And it works, at least in a good market. But underneath we can all feel something is slipping, something doesn't make sense. I think all we can do is stay open to change, and when the new paradigm becomes clear, have the guts to go with it.

- About getting retainers. I am currently personally mentoring two Pinnacle members in this area. It scares them. They want verbiage and collateral material and surefire, paint by number approaches. I share my PowerPoint, and they act like I have given them gold.

But every retainer I get, and I'm pitching one Wednesday in NYC, I get because:

- 1) I believe I should get paid for my work.
- 2) They are buying my commitment, and as any one of my ex-girlfriends or wives can tell you, that's not easy to get. (When "client-money" is invented by some Marvin Mitchelson sycophant, I really will have to hang it up.)
- 3) I don't give any other option. It's not "retainer or contingency," it's, "This is how I work." The one way, the true way.
- 4) I am so niched I can do it faster than anyone else.
- 5) I will present a short list of candidates.
- 6) I will hold you and you will hold me to a prescribed timeline.
- 7) The best candidates will not talk to me if I am not retained. Your retainer dollars buy you access to the best.

If you aren't getting retainers you are violating or hedging one or more of the above precepts.

What divides us?

Ironically, the members of the society, and many other top producers I know who, for any number of reasons don't seek membership, are more jaded about their careers. They have changed lives, made or are making a fortune, have a place of status and power in the world, and do so every day in air conditioned offices that they drive to in executive suites on wheels, and yet are the ones that ask me the most about balance, about slumps, about the crushing tediousness of the business, the lying candidates and the harsh, discarding nature of capitalism.

The rookies and the underachievers? They would kill to have the skills and gifts we take for granted. They don't ask, "Is this all there is?" They think, "This is wonderful, I just wish I were better."

There is a Japanese fish that will grow to four inches if you put it into a six-inch bowl. If you put it into an 18 inch bowl, it will grown to 12 inches. And if you put it in a four-foot wide tank, it will grow to three feet.

Most recruiters have no choice. They try as hard as they can and grow to the size of their bowl. Pinnacle people have a choice. They need to get out of the bowl and find the widest tank possible. They are that blessed. And cursed. ▲

"Most recruiters have no choice. They try as hard as they can and grow to the size of their bowl. Pinnacle people have a choice. They need to get out of the bowl and find the widest tank possible. They are that blessed. And cursed."