

Episode 32 - Top Recruitment Biller Secrets with Brett Knowles from Six Degrees Transcript

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Welcome to another episode of The Lone Recruiter podcast.

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I'm your host, Brett Clements. And if you're a recruiter out on your own or just liking general guidance or mentorship, you've come to the right place. Our episodes are designed to give you the motivation, the strategies and the expertise you might need to become the very best Lone Recruit us, Join us. Grab a cup of coffee and let's take your desk to another level now.

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today is going to be super confusing for everyone because I am joined by Brett. Brett Knowles that is, not Beyonce Knowles, not Brett Clemenson. Brett Knowles how are you? Great, thanks Brett. It's always good to meet a fellow Brett. Or as my daughter likes to call me Britt, Oi Britt, she's watching too much New Zealand television. My barista likes to call me Brad, but that's fine.

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I'll take it anyway it comes. No one actually likes being called Brett. That's the that's the theme here. Look, as you guys know, we like to interview top billing recruiters. I've known Brett for a few years now. We met during COVID lockdown. It was actually quite an interesting way we met up. But hey, look, I'll leave that to Brett. Want to give us in 60 seconds

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your story. How'd you get into recruitment? Where are you at now? Let's go. Absolutely, it feels like a lifetime ago, Brett I got into recruitment probably like most recruiters did. I fell into recruitment, that good old phrase. I was jogging with a friend, he said, Come and do recruitment. I said, Sure, why not, let's get into it. That was circa 2013 when I started my career in recruitment.

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Nice. Ever since then, worked across perm, worked in real estate, property. Built up a bit of a desk and practice within the residential real estate market and then decided to shift on from there, moved to a bit of a bigger business and now it's been six degrees where I've started in the digital practice. Took on another challenge of contracting. So I took on a contracting desk, built up a contracting book and then opportunities arose and I moved

back into a permanent space and took on an executive role recruiting across the digital landscape within the consumables space.

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And did that for a number of years. You know did the \$100,000 months, you know, strong billings, those sorts of things like most recruiters strive to achieve and Covid hit and that caused me to do some self-reflection. And I thought, I want to do more than just do the billing side of things. And I had a bit of a passion of teaching and coaching and working with people and that lead me on a journey to unpack an opportunity here at Six Degrees, which is to now, what I now do in the business.

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I've been here 5.5 years is head up our whole learning and development and employee experience function across the business. Amazing. Six Degree office is national yeah it's a nice busy role it's in the recruitment space. Try to offer some of the wisdom that I have gained over the last ten and a half years to the next generation of recruiters. I love it, you can give us some of your wisdom.

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Anything else you need to know? No, that's good. Chardonnay Sunday, that's probably my go to. You love your what sorry? Love my chardonnay on a Sunday. Who doesn't? Who doesn't? Who doesn't? Well, let's kick into it. That was a great intro. As you guys know, we like to ask the same five questions.

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I'm getting some wonderful questions. Wonderful answers to these questions. I'm getting a ton out of it. If anything, you know, I'm learning. I actually use some of these. Just yesterday closing a candidate. I used one of the answers I got off this podcast and it worked a treat. So you know what? It's at the very least benefiting me.

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So thank you, Brett, for jumping on. First question for you is going to be if you can only have one KPI to measure your desk, what would it be? Oh, good question. You know, the dreaded KPIs, I turn away, it's metrics that matter for me, metrics that matter and I think the metric that matters most is conversion, conversion rate, the jobs that you're picking up, How are you, how are you converting them?

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Are you converting them? Because I think then that's what trickles down to the activity. That you should be doing, be it more business development, more candidate interviews, more client interactions. So KPI that I would be focusing on is that conversion rate. Jobs

I'm taking on versus jobs I place. Right, so it's like ends of the spectrum really like how many jobs do I get in?

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Like what's that ratio basically? So a lot of people do. A lot of people do closer ratios. They'd go jobs in versus interviews. Yeah. Or interviews versus placements, but I don't think I've ever heard end to end like that. Yeah, I think in feeds, when you look at that full cycle of you can have 20 jobs on right? If you're only filling, that's a lot of activity that you're doing in terms of interviewing candidates, sending CVs, arranging interviews and that sort of stuff.

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But if I only 10% of those are converting, then that might be, it opens up a conversation for where am I going wrong? And like, is my job brief not actually accurate and am I not spending enough time consulting with my client around is this job palatable or am I interviewing the wrong candidates? So for me, I think if you can focus on that bigger picture, it just simplifies it and then you can you can narrow down and focus in on areas of, okay I need to,

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I need to improve my interview skills and I need to do more interviews with candidates to get the job filled that I need to. And do you have do you have a ratio other than 100% that that that you like to see? Is there a number that works in your mind? No 100%, if it's not 100% it's not good enough. Right, right.

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No, I think, I reckon if you're somewhere circa 50, 60%, If you've got five jobs on, you're filling three of them. That's like that's pretty all right. I reckon that's pretty good. Yeah. And you're doing that consistently right? But you know, KPI, if you came up with so something you're measuring, right? And then you can't actually grow or you can't actually move forward, you can't take an opportunity to reflect and go, okay, well, what do I want to do? If my conversion rate generation rise tend to say, how do I get to 12%? How do I get it to 15%?

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Yeah. it's the activity. What's the the drivers wants to motivators that I need to do to see that dial shift towards the top. And it's funny so it's a metric that could feed into a lot of other areas. I like it. And we were talking just off camera before about the state of the market and we're all saying that we're still all very busy, but maybe conversion isn't quite happening the way it was and we kind of got onto the path of, you know, it's ironic that when things tighten a little bit and it's not even tightening, the jobs are there, the people are there, it's more that both ends are getting fussier.

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And then my resolve or and your resolve was to say, well, sometimes less is more in those scenarios, like we need to get more quality, go deeper and you know, just say we did have 20 roles on last year, we'd place 50% of them, whatever. There was always going to be more and it was easy sort of goings, but now it's a bit tighter.

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You want to get those ten placements again. You always need to have a 1 to 1 ratio, don't you? Like go, go deep. Yeah, you know then it breathes and looks at quality, it's quality conversations that you're having with your clients and with your candidates. It's quality interactions. It's not just sitting behind emails, sending emails, actually getting on the phone and going out and meeting someone, you know, face to face and having that influence.

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So it really, yeah, in this market, you really got to be looking at the quality more so than just quantity. Absolutely. BD KPI. Do ten BD calls a day and you'll bill a million dollars and that's just so old school. Quality focussed, am I actually converting this stuff? Am I in the traffic etc? Those types of metrics I think in KPIs are number one. Perfect, love it.

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Second question, if you could only ask three interview questions, which obviously is sacrilege, but if you could only ask three, you've got 5 minutes and you know you have to make those calls. What are the three questions that you're going to ask? I reckon in this market, you know, you can sit here and qualify, you now tell me about a time that you drove influence with no budget or something like that, like they're great questions But I think in this market understanding candidates motivators and drivers and why they would leave are questions that we need to be spending more time on. With the amount of buybacks or counter offers that are taking place or candidates changing mind, consultants just need to get

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better at truly understanding if someone is ready to leave. So it's things like getting ballsy and saying what would your current employer need to do to retain you or keep you in the business? Ask that question. That's a great question. That's a great question. And then they'll spit out all the reasons why they might stay and then you follow it up with, Okay, have you had that conversation with your employer and how did that experience go? Right and that insight, then when he might come across a wobbly candidate or hey, my employer's giving me an extra \$10,000, or whatever, you've got the data to say to them, actually

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Well, we had a conversation and this is what you're wanting. This is what you were needing. So another good question is, where do you see yourself in the business in the next 3 to 5 years? And is that achievable? I love it. Have a candidate sitting there reflection going, I see myself in a head on role, that means my manager has to leave and my manager's not leaving in the next 3 to 5 years.

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So my career aspirations actually don't align with my current employer. So they can pay you an extra \$10,000 but your career aspirations will never be met. So why are you staying? Why are you going? So you can have a much more robust conversation, I think with the candidates and truly understand the drivers and motivators. I love it. So the three interview questions were again.

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So it was so motivations. Yeah. What was your current employer, what could your current employer do or provide to retain you? Yep. Have you had that conversation with your employer and what was that experience like? And do you see yourself, can you see yourself in the business in the next three to five years in what role in what capacity? Or where do you see yourself in the business, what're your requirements? Yeah, fantastic. I'm going to skip the next question

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and I'm sorry for everyone at home someone decided they'd start drilling on my bloody roof. So I'm not sure if we can edit that out, but it's doing my head in. Those three questions kind of lead straight into how do you handle counter offer? So I'm going to skip to that one because I think that they're probably related, right?

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Yeah, absolutely, you know your counter offers, first thing you need to do is. Us recruiters need to stop patronising and guiltting our candidates that look at counter offers and say that 68% of people who accept a counter offer are back on the market in six months time. Because we all know that 72% of statistics are made up, right? Respect their decision if that's what they've made. Yeah, on a long enough timeline you know 100% of people quit, right? That's right, so stop and you know that's just such a short term mindset for consultants. You gotta be thinking long term, long game. If you just respect that decision

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work with them, try and influence the outcome if you can, but ultimately, they've make their choice. Respect it and let it go, because they might be a hiring manager in 2 years time and you've got a strong relationship with them that you can then leverage, the business, right? But if a candidates considering a counter offer. You've missed the boat early on to manage that. Yeah. Counter offers are handled at interview one. You know,

you know from day dot whether this person's ripe for a counter or not and a lot of times you just go I'm not working with you because you got no tangible reason for leaving and you've pretty much said you would take a counter offer.

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If it was a dollar more, you know. Again, as I said with the questions before like being direct if your company offered you an extra \$10,000, what would you do? And they'll be like, ahh ... your next response is well go ask them for an extra \$10,000. Get assignments. Yeah. Kind of simple. Yep. Yep. Because when they say no, they'll come back to you and be even more motivated, right?

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So and then every step along the way, has anything changed since we last spoke? That sort of stuff and that's how you manage counter offers. You don't manage counter offers once they've been counter offered. You're too far behind the eight ball. It's why I love, it's why I love working with people who have been made redundant. A lot of people go, ooh, there might be a bit of sting, like no, there's no counteroffer risk.

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Let's go, baby. Yeah, spot on, yeah, yeah. It's yeah, it's, it's that idea of you want someone, you want a candidate that is, like, urgent, I need to change, I need to go. But couple that out with a client that has an urgent need. Like, true argent need. Then, you know, that's the sweet spot, right? Oh, it is. It is. It can never be,

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It can never be done fast enough for us recruiters. I genuinely, you know, I had a placement happen this week and I'm trying to talk in code here the person said I'll resign on Friday and I literally just got off the phone with them and they said, you won't believe it. I can't resign today because someone in the business had a death in the family and it's just I can't do it to them.

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I said, you could have resigned yesterday. And they're like, I know, I know, time is everything right? Timing is always like now, now, now, because you never know what's going to happen tomorrow. Someone could be drilling on your roof while you're trying to do a podcast. Pull the band-aid off, rip the band-aid off it's never the right time to leave a business.

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It'll never be the perfect, you know, circumstances that align. Just. Just get it. Just get it done. That's it. That's it. If a candidate does take 24 hours or 48 hours to resign. If you're not switched on to that, you're going, something might be up here. Yeah. Then giving

them a call, having a conversation with him. Or probably better would be actually getting in front of them and having a coffee.

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You're opening yourselves up for yeah counter offers and buy backs and losing candidates every day of the week. 100%, I like that buyback. I like that. I've never heard of it that way. It is. It's what it is, I'll buy you back, c'mon. Yeah. So okay, zooming through it. So what is your best closing line when you've got the offer out or you're getting to that offer stage with a candidate?

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What's the closing line? What's the approach? Yeah, again I'm probably singing a bit of a theme here around qualification, but it's like it's questions like, before we get the offer, is there anyone else that you need to consult with about changing jobs? Family members, partners, wives, husbands, etc.? Great. Like have they gone through all of that, you know, to get home and Honey, Love, got a new job.

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You're not changing jobs. We just applied for the mortgage don't forget. We need consistent employment. Yes, I forgot that happened. Happens more often than you think. Yeah. Absolutely, absolutely. Especially in times like today. With that, with the way things are going, you know. Yeah, those sorts of questions I think are really good at that. At that closing stage of a candidate. Other ones are like, you know that trial close that we sort of talk about within the sector. Or pre-empting, if I was to get the offer X would you accept? Yes or no and just putting you know, testing the water before you you know, if we get you, there's just something there's something quite remarkable that

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happens, you know, asking the question if we were to get you this, what are we doing? Yeah, absolutely I'm taking it. Or oh, I'm not sure, I'd have to think about it. Then it opens up the next question, doesn't it. What do you need to think about? You know exactly. What's it. Because if you just give them that offer, if you're young and you're a recruiter listening, you never give a candidate an offer.

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If you haven't asked this questions to what are you going to do is go, He's the offer and all of a sudden they go solve on you and cold. You can't ask those questions anymore because you've given them everything they need. The trial close is the most under utilised tool that recruiters have to ensure they have confidence in the candidate accepting a job, and then you have to communicate with a client.

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Nothing worse than you as a recruiter calling a client to say they've pulled out after they've offered. It puts you in a bad spot because it's also the add on to those questions is so if I get the offer at X as discussed are you comfortable if I verbally accept on your behalf? There's still a table employment contract? Yes or no. Yep, 100%.

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Because then they're empowering you Yep. And they're saying I'm in, you say yes. I think giving you the control of that of that, of that deal. Yeah. Oh but I, but I need to review. But, but I need to, but, but... you go, okay, what are the but's? What are the but's? Think of me, we're in an auction, like you're in a room, you've got no reception on your phone.

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I'm the guy who's going to bid on this thing for you. Like, I can't just guess. Tell me what you need. Let's go. And this is like and this is what I get, you're getting me excited, maybe I need to get back... You haven't done deals in a while. That's it, I haven't actually done a deal in awhile. It's quite, it's geez

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it's good. Because this goes back to what you were speaking about before around quality, quality conversations and quality connections. If you really master that quality stuff, then all this other stuff is , I can't say it's not going to happen. It's easier to manage and you reduce the risk of losing that, right? Which then increases your conversion rate. Your having better, better quality conversations, better outcomes, better outcomes for you means more placements. More placements means

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Yep, and you know what? A quality conversation at the start can sometimes dictate. I'm not working with this person because it's not going to work. We can't get the money they want. We can't do the timing they want, there are too many roadblocks. So you're saving yourself time as well by being thorough. Sometimes. We'll probably, that's another podcast, right?

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How recruiters need to learn to say no better. Oh yeah. And when to walk away. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh, 100%. It's hell yeah. Or hell no. No middle ground. Like I've got that rule in my office. Like if they say I'm not sure. I'm like, after we talk. It's a hell yes or hell no, that's it. And it's the best. It's the best. No middle ground early on, early on in the days, I remember working some jobs that I was just like, Why?

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Why? Why do I do this job, what am I doing? Exactly, Exactly. Or I'm conscious of the clock. So last question. How do you get yourself out of a slump? Yes. Oh, it's it's easy.

It's call, we say call your mates. Yep. Yeah, who in your network are your friends? Who can pump you up, who can tell you you're amazing. You just do some very easy BD. Where you're

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just chatting with your mates, who you can just get back into that rhythm, that's one. And then from a practical level, just time-box your tasks. So just block out 30 minutes, I'm going to punch out a-b-c. Bang, have a ten minute break. 30 minutes I'm going to punch out X-Y-Z and just get yourself back into the rhythm. Momentum.

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Of doing the doing. Yeah. Couple that with, yeah just call your mates in the industry, for a yarn. You do that for a couple of days, you should be, you should be, right. Yep. And go home and just get a good night's sleep and come back and realize it's just recruitment. 100%, a 100%. Another day, another day. We're not saving lives. Yeah. I love it, mate.

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That was excellent. They are quality answers from a quality recruiter. Maybe you should get back on a desk. Show the little guys how it's done. I really appreciate being on the audience does as well. So we'll wrap that up. For everyone at home, thanks for listening. As always, we are chasing five star reviews. So if you're on Spotify or Apple Podcasts or wherever you are listening to this, give us a review.

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Slap us five stars. It really helps us grow and we are growing. We keep growing every day. I see these numbers go up. I'm getting messages from you, from you recruiters out there, you know, asking certain questions, and I create content around it. So please don't be shy, reach out. I love it. As always, it's all we have time for you.

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Have an amazing day and may all you

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