

706 Words

From Zero to a Million in....

When Julie Fontaine attempted to recruit Michelle Payne on behalf of a retail client, she had no idea her life was about to change in unexpected ways.

At that time Michelle *was* preparing to make transition...not into another high-level corporate position, but into a life of coaching. As any top executive recruiter will do, Julie engaged Michelle in a dialog, learning about Michelle's desire to help others reach their highest potential. This information would come in handy a few years later.

Michelle, who is now the managing principal of Beyond Point B, went on to become one of the leading executive coaches in the country. Meanwhile, Julie was nurturing the desire of owning her own business.

"That had always been my dream," she said. "But I needed some help. So, I called Michelle." And they developed a coaching relationship. According to Michelle, Julie came to her with the idea for a business and the desire to earn just over \$55K the first year.

"I really thought Julie could do better than that. She had a lot of expertise, was extremely confident and had plenty of drive...but I thought she could double what she thought she could make in the first year."

The very first thing they worked on was creating a vision for Julie's company. Having carved a niche for herself as a top executive recruiter, Julie well understood the challenges employers faced when it came time to recruit for key positions. "I knew my field well. I wanted to do more than just recruit...I truly wanted to help my clients find a permanent solution, something they could do themselves. To meet that need I developed

a software product that was unique and offered tremendous value, solving their recruitment challenges.”

That product was *Alternalink* – a client-based long-term internal solutions database that enables companies to drastically reduce, even forego, the need for external recruiters. It enables company personnel to perform most of the recruiting duties from within.

“Recruiting agencies hate us...”

According to Michelle, one of the primary commitments a coach must have is to hold the vision for her client by helping remove the emotion from the process, while nurturing the passion that’s essential for success. A part of the vision Michelle helped nurture was to ensure that Julie’s expertise and the quality of *Alternalink* conveyed the appropriate value. “One of the most important things Michelle said was to not under-price myself.”

And she didn’t. When her first serious prospect became interested, Julie wanted to price *Alternalink* at \$30K. Michelle suggested \$70,000.

“I went with the price Michelle suggested. I was scared that I’d over-priced myself out of a client. But, I wasn’t afraid of a challenge. This was my dream. There was no way I would fail.”

It would take seven long months to close that first deal. During that time Julie says that the coaching relationship with Michelle played a significant role. “Michelle is wonderful at catching red flags and providing reality checks. She’s an ideal accountability partner. I could come to her and say, ‘this isn’t working...what do we do?’ We did a lot of role playing. She did a lot to keep me motivated and on-track.”

Alternalink didn’t sell for \$70K right out of the chute...instead, the client bought Julie’s software for \$68,000. She then made four more sales in the next three months. Now, three years later, Julie’s company will generate over \$1-million in sales this year. Julie attributes this tremendous growth to the emphasis on creating long-term relationships with her clients. “Rather than just recruiting, we focus on partnership. It’s the relationship

that's most important. And the same can be said of the relationship Michelle and I created.

“Everyday, while I sweated out that first sale, I always knew Michelle was there with me. That made a significant difference. And, to this day, I know she's still there for me.”

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“When Julie first called me, I knew I didn't want to be recruited for anything. My plan was set to become a coach.” Michelle says. “This is a great example of why it's important to return your calls, even when you think there's nothing to gain. You never know what's going to come your way.”