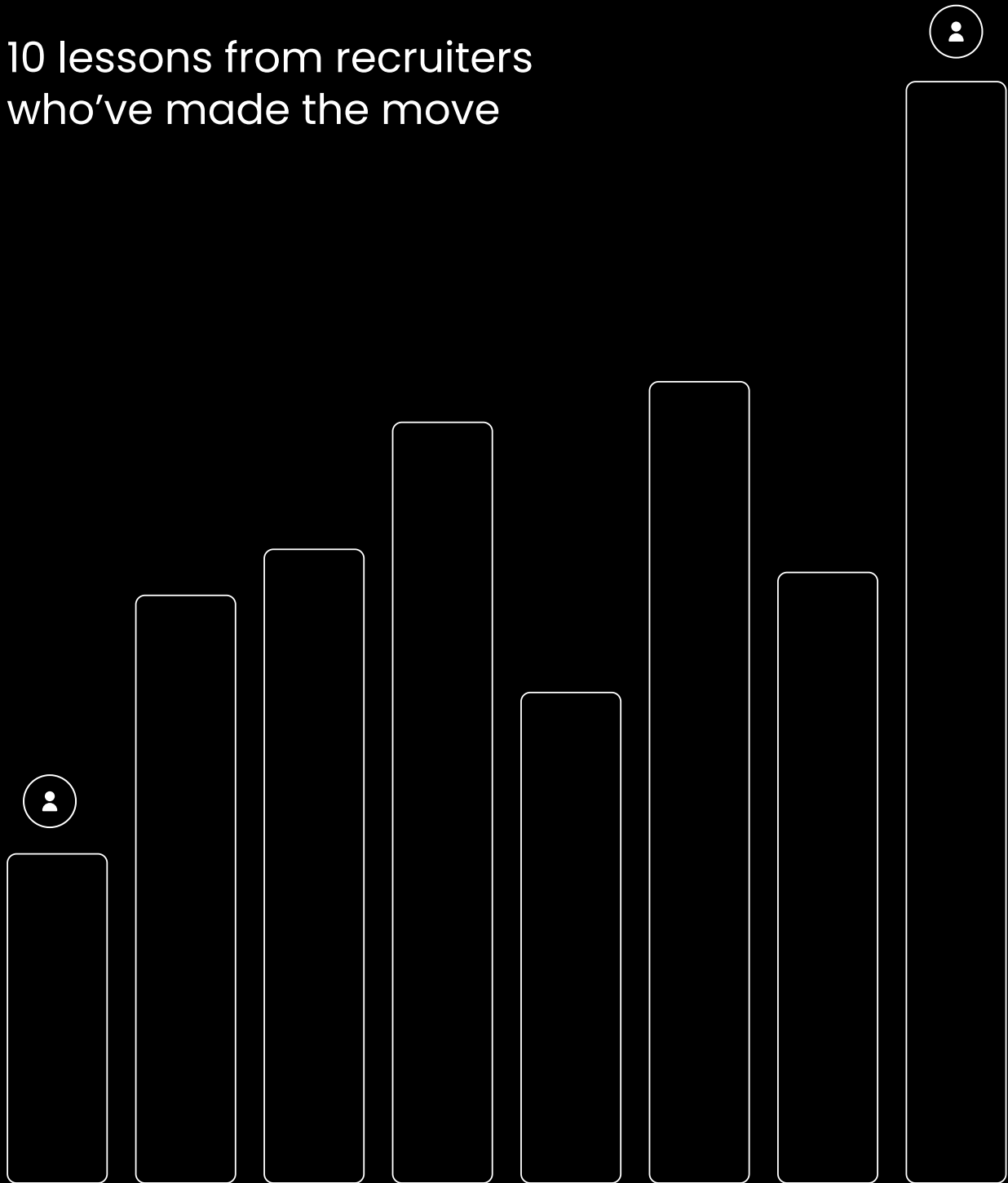


From top biller to 7-figure founder

10 lessons from recruiters who've made the move



Your 0→1 starting point

This guide collects practical go-to-market lessons from founders who built specialist recruitment businesses from scratch. It's written for recruiters who want control, confidence, and a reliable GTM - not theory, but repeatable actions you can implement into a new business.

Who's who

Contributing to this guide are stellar founders who launched and scaled specialist recruitment firms across the US and UK. Each founder shares the real decisions, tactics and trade-offs from their 0→1 journeys.



Hemish Ilangaratne
Founder, Rx Group
(Pharma & Biotech; QA specialism)



Stuart Mitchell
Founder & CEO, Hampton
North (Cybersecurity)



Jason Thomas
Co-founder, Alexander
Barnes (FinTech)



Jevon Barnes
Co-founder, Alexander
Barnes (FinTech)



Evan Santi
Founder, Berkley Hunt
(Tech)



Michael Green
Founder & president, Unico
(IT / ServiceNow headhunting)



Ten proven GTM moves that helped founders launch faster and scale with confidence.

01 – Structure beats chaos: build habits early



Why it matters: When you launch solo, freedom can quickly turn into fog. Structure creates consistency, confidence and compounding performance.



“The biggest challenge for me was the first two months on my own – there was so much to do. Once I built the structure – gym, start time, finish time – everything clicked. Now I have an office I walk to, finish work early, have dinner, do bath time with my kid, then work in the evening three nights a week. With an infinitely open laptop – you end up non-productive because nothing is urgent or a priority. Humans are creatures of habit... those little habits create discipline.”

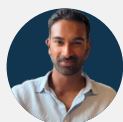
Actions you can implement:

- Create a fixed daily rhythm (start, gym, outreach block, review) and stick to it.
- Set weekly priorities on Sunday night and track completion Friday afternoon
- Define one “shutdown ritual” that signals work is done – to prevent burnout and keep focus.

02 – Pick one tight niche (then own it)



Why it matters: Niche focus builds credibility fast. It simplifies messaging and makes referrals more likely.



“When starting out, I made a conscious decision to say no to a client if they weren’t hiring in the market that I was recruiting into, which is Quality Assurance. I did have a couple of opportunities which were outside my niche and I thought that, as good as it would be, it would distract me from my strategy of focusing on my niche.”

Actions you can implement:

- Write your niche as one line: vertical + seniority.
- Map 20 targets (10 buyers, 10 candidates). Outreach twice in 30 days.
- Create a 60–90 second pitch explaining why you’re the obvious expert.

03 – Execute rapidly – run 2-week experiments



Why it matters: Small, fast experiments reveal what scales. Momentum beats perfect planning.



“Execution beats ideas – every day, every time. I always say: if you’ve got an idea, just do it. Stop overthinking it. If it doesn’t work, drop it. Too often people talk and plan for ages. We’ve got a strict rule – if it’s a good idea, execute it. If it fails, fail fast.”

Actions you can implement:

- Pick one measurable experiment – something different from your current outreach or call strategy – and define how you’ll measure success before running it for 2 weeks.
- Track inputs – calls, emails, meetings – not feelings. Review progress weekly.
- If results fall short, change one variable and rerun.
- If it works, share what and why.

04 – Start by sharing – visibility builds trust fast



Why it matters: Content, podcasts and case studies create trust entering new markets. Visibility speeds warm intros.



“I worked really hard on building a brand and sharing knowledge early on because I didn’t have a US network. Over the last two years, we’ve built a strong community through the podcast and mentor scheme, with credible people involved. Altogether, it adds real value – and that’s where many of our referrals come from.”

Actions you can implement:

- Publish one short clip or post each week sharing insights that build brand credibility.
- Consider launching a podcast or interview series – start small, but use it as a platform to share expertise and connect with credible voices in your niche.
- Host one informal roundtable or Q&A with peers to strengthen community connections.
- Send a monthly “community update” or digest highlighting others’ wins to stay visible and valuable.

05 – Sell retainers early to protect time (and deliver)



Why it matters: Retainers buy commitment, and quality. They turn you from a supplier into a partner – giving space to deliver deeper, faster, and better.



“In the last 15 months, I’ve sold more retainers than in my entire career... because our time is critical – and we deliver. I respect my time, but I also respect the client’s. The retainer model lets us both commit to the process properly and deliver better outcomes.”

Actions you can implement:

- Introduce a 4-week discovery retainer with clear milestones (market mapping, outreach, shortlist) to prove ROI before scaling to full search.
- Gate non-retained work behind strict qualification – only take contingent roles if you have access, feedback, and exclusivity.
- Track and publish data comparing time-to-shortlist, interview-to-offer, and acceptance rates between retained and contingent work to prove value.
- Rehearse your pitch – explain retainers as shared commitment, not cost. Emphasise outcomes (“better hires, faster”) over process.
- Pilot one retained project per month and record every client objection to refine your narrative and objection handling.

06 – Candidate experience is a product – prep for every stage



Why it matters: Prep increases interview performance and acceptance rates. The small lift yields big returns.



I spend 30 minutes with a candidate helping them prepare for every stage. It’s about helping them articulate their achievements and strengths in a way that aligns with what the client values. Many candidates undersell themselves, so it’s our job to make sure they can confidently highlight the impact they’ve made.”

Actions you can implement:

- Build a 3-stage candidate prep checklist (first, second, final) and use it consistently for every progressing candidate.
- Block 20–30 minutes with each final-round candidate. Track offer acceptance rate vs the prior month.
- Capture the 3 most common hiring-manager questions per client, and coach candidates to answer with clear, evidence-based stories.

07 – Solve the bottlenecks that stall growth: prioritise hires that unlock momentum



Why it matters: Every sector has “make or break” hires – the individuals whose expertise removes blockers and accelerates growth. Focusing on these roles builds credibility fast and positions you as a true partner in your client’s success.



“If the client doesn’t get it right the first time, the FCA pushes back and delays follow – so it’s critical to find proven leaders”

Actions you can implement:

- Identify 2–3 “critical path” roles in your niche – hires that directly enable revenue, compliance, or delivery milestones.
- Build a shortlist of candidates who’ve led key projects, not just participated.
- Capture one client success story showing how the right hire removed a blocker or accelerated progress.
- Use these examples to position your expertise in future BD conversations.

08 – Build structure and control: operate like a partner, not a vendor



Why it matters: Consistent structure and communication give you control – and give clients confidence. Clear cadence, visibility, and process discipline create partnership-level trust and better outcomes.



“We’ve refined our process to make it as effective as possible – it’s all about control and structure, for us and the client. Every search follows a clear format: regular calls with key decision-makers, Slack updates, agreed CV timelines, and interview blocks. That rhythm keeps everyone aligned and the quality high.”

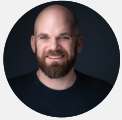
Actions you can implement:

- Set a defined cadence for every live project (Slack updates + 15-minute weekly call).
- Share a simple delivery timeline upfront – CV submission, interview windows, feedback loops.
- Use a consistent market-mapping phase before outreach to show depth and build client trust.
- Only accept work with enough control (exclusive or retained) to deliver to your standard.

09 – Partner with clients who value your expertise



Why it matters: The fastest way to stall is taking work that doesn't align with your standards. Founders who qualify clients for mindset, not just headcount, build lasting credibility and higher-value partnerships.



"We don't want to work with everybody... The second it becomes a subservient relationship, we're out. I won't have anyone treated as a second-class citizen. We want the right deals - the ones that build our legacy. Some of our best partnerships started before those companies were cool. I did foundational hiring for OpenAI before anyone had heard of ChatGPT. It's about being brought in to fix a problem, not just fill a role. We've even created new headcount by showing clients they could solve issues with people instead of software. That's the level we operate at."

Actions you can implement:

- Qualify every brief by why it exists - not just what's required. If there's no clear problem to solve, pass.
- Build case studies showing where you helped a client fix a core issue or create a new capability.
- Track repeat business rate; aim for >60 % of revenue from clients who see you as a problem-solving partner.
- Say no faster - exclusivity and respect compound faster than volume.

10 – Consult, don't transact: bridge the gap between 'want' and 'need'



Why it matters: Top founders help clients and candidates see what's possible, not just what's requested. True consulting creates trust and repeat business.



"So many prospective clients think staffing is just matching skill sets. We go above and beyond - consulting both sides on what they think they need versus what's possible, and bridging the gap to get the perfect solution."

Actions you can implement:

- Add a "why now?" and "what if not?" question to every client brief.
- Capture 3 examples where your advice changed a hiring outcome - use them in BD decks.
- Run a quarterly 'Hiring Gap' session to review mis-spec'd roles and share learnings internally.

How RecruitHub can help you turn idea into action

These are some of the practical steps RecruitHub uses with founders when mapping a 0→1 plan.



- Define your mission in one sentence and three outcomes.
- Build a 90-day “go/no-go” checklist (clients, contracts, cash buffer).
- Choose a single niche and map 20 buyers/candidates.
- Draft one retainer + one candidate-prep checklist.

Map my 0→1 plan – book a call to explore your business idea and run the checklist with the RecruitHub team.

RecruitHub – what we do



“RecruitHub did all the heavy lifting for me so that I could just go and bill. They’ve paid for themselves ten times over.”

RecruitHub is a business operations platform designed to help founders go further, faster – with fewer mistakes and more clarity at every stage of their journey. We’re not just here to help you start a business; we’re the infrastructure that powers it. Our platform combines expert-led services with integrated technology to reduce friction, accelerate outcomes, and allow founders to focus on what matters most. Today, over 150+ founders in the UK, US, UAE, and Europe grow their business on RecruitHub.

RecruitHub platform:



Technology – A cutting-edge toolkit built on best-in-class recruitment technology.



Finance & Back Office – Complete setup, accounting, reporting, tax, and payroll support.



Brand & Marketing – Professional logos, websites, brand packs, pitch decks, and more.



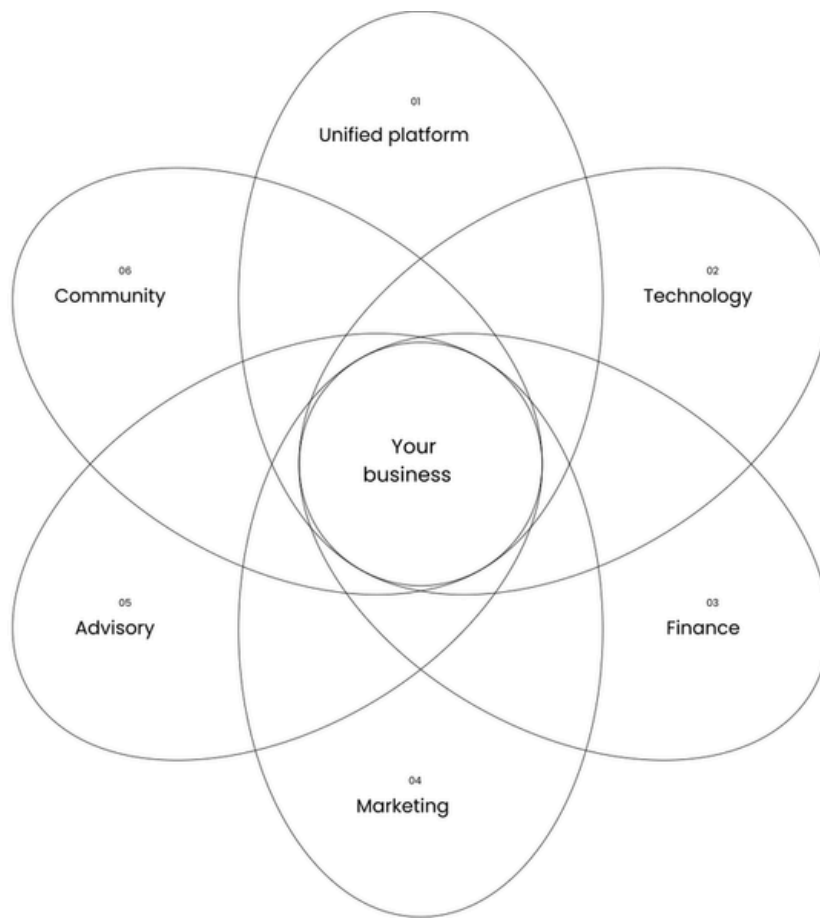
Advisory – Access to a team of seasoned recruitment, finance, and tech experts.



Community – a network of like-minded founders building together

RecruitHub – Learn more

[See how RecruitHub works](#)
watch video



Let's discuss your business idea
Get in touch for a confidential chat today.

[Schedule your call](#)

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