

The Simple Brilliance of
MIKE CROSSWELL

Mike Crosswell, during the late 1990's, was the owner of Blue Arrow; the UK's largest privately-owned staffing organization. I met Mike at that time because he was on the Board of Advisors of the same company who had relocated me from San Diego to Atlanta to become their VP of Corporate Development (Trainer). We had offices around the US, but also in the UK, Malta and Cyprus. It was my duty to travel to those offices and train the recruiters and managers.

One night when I was in London, Mike and I had dinner at the Hilton Langham Hotel, near Oxford Circus. We started talking about this and that and eventually, since this was December, our conversation turned to Goal Setting & Planning for the New Year. I asked Mike how he did this at Blue Arrow. Mike told me that he had too often seen recruitment organizations let their coming year's goals be set for them by their individual recruiters instead of by upper management. In other words, the goal commitments were coming from the "bottom up" instead of from the "top down". By definition, this is an example of "Undercut Management". Mike explained that at Blue Arrow they decide at Corporate what they want their total revenue to be for the coming year. Then they sit down and look at all of their offices and the revenue flow histories of each. Based on this information, a portion of the total revenue goal is assigned to each office. He compared it to cutting up a big apple pie. When this is done, the individual office managers are assigned their target goals for the coming fiscal year. Each manager is then asked, "Can you attain that number?" If they answer "yes", then the goal is set in concrete. If they answer "no", or say that they are not sure, this follow-up question is asked, "What can we at Corporate do to ensure that you will hit this number?" It's as simple as that. After all of this is settled, the managers return to their offices and divide up their number and assign portions to each of their recruiters in much the same way as the managers were assigned their office number by Corporate. At this point, the manager asks their recruiters the same two questions that they had been asked. In this way, they get an office-level commitment to their expected revenue goal for the year. At the end of this process, the manager not only knows what support he can expect from Corporate to help his office reach their goal, but he will also know what his recruiters expect from him to help guarantee their individual numbers. By using Mike Crosswell's format, Blue Arrow constantly hit their goals and eliminated year-end surprises.

This was the simple brilliance of Mike Crosswell and one of the reasons why he was so successful while running Blue Arrow. He has since passed on, but his words are as clear to me today as they were on that foggy night years ago in London.

*"The Simple Brilliance of" is one in a series of articles focusing on ideas and techniques from some of the great thinkers, movers and shakers in the field of recruitment who Bob Marshall has had the privilege of meeting and discussing various topics over the past 25 years.

Bob Marshall, CPC, CIPC started in the search business in 1980 and became Western Regional Manager for over 60 Management Recruiters Intl. offices in 1984. In 1986 he founded The Bob Marshall Group, International, training recruiters across the nation as well as the United Kingdom, Malta, and Cyprus. In 1996, he returned to working a desk full time and continues to train recruiters. To learn more about his activities and descriptions of his products and services, contact him directly at: 770-898-5550 or @ tmg@charter.net or espro@bellsouth.net.