



How Experienced Recruiters Are Keeping More of What They Bill & Building a Better Life In Asia

\$752B

Global recruitment
market value, 2025

\$500k+

Annual fees threshold
for elite status

85%

Fee retention rate for
solo operators

\$28M

Career fees: Rich
Bradley, solo recruiter

This report is for experienced recruiters in Western markets who already know how to bill well but want to earn more. It shows how strong recruiters turn an ordinary agency desk into an unusually high-income, high-margin business, and why the biggest financial shift often comes not from billing dramatically more, but from owning the desk, changing the cost base, and in some cases relocating to a place where the same billings produce a radically different life.

All benchmarks, examples, and stories draw from named recruiters and founders who have shared their billing performance publicly. Treat them as directional commercial evidence rather than audited financial statements.

Contents

How Much More Can You Earn?	3
Evidence From Over 150 ‘Super Billers’	4
The Entrepreneurial Premium: Solo vs Employee	6
What Super Billers Do Differently	7
The AI Multiplier: One Person, Bigger Desk	8
Timeline to Results	9
Asset Value - When a Desk Becomes a Business	10
Why This Matters for Experienced Recruiters	11
The Geography Multiplier: Two Ways to Build Your Desk	12
Key Takeaways	13
Sources and References	15

How Much More Can You Earn?

The industry already has a term for recruiters who crack the code on big billings: Super Billers. It is not a motivational badge. It describes a specific billing level that shows up consistently across documented high performers.

Performance Tier	Annual Billings	What It Really Means
Competent recruiter	\$100k–\$250k / £80k–£150k	Covers the desk. Basically effective but not yet a top economic engine.
Good performer	\$250k–\$500k / £150k–£350k	High-performing consultant. Triggers meaningful commission and internal recognition.
Strong Biller	\$500k–\$1M / £350k–£750k	Elite level. Often principal consultants or boutique owners. Pinnacle Society territory.
Super Biller	\$1M–\$2M / £750k–£1.5M	Exceptional specialist performance, typically built on exclusivity and retained work.
AI-augmented elite	\$2M+ / £1.5M+	Emerging category using automation and systems to manage 20+ placements per month solo.

The \$500,000 mark is more than just a strong year - it is the globally recognised entry point into elite performance. The Pinnacle Society, the premier peer organisation for high-billing recruiters in the US, mandates that applicants must have verified, personally generated cash-in of at least \$500,000 per year for at least three of the five most recent sales years. That sustained threshold is what separates a top performer from a true elite practitioner.

In the UK, serious recognition often starts around £200,000 to £250,000. But the most successful specialists in finance, technology, and legal search regularly operate at £500,000 and beyond. Our founder, Mike Walmsley, has coached a number of million pound billers and he is currently coaching a £2.6 million biller to improve their performance further.

Evidence From Over 150 ‘Super Billers’

The following are named recruiters and founders who have publicly shared their performance and playbooks. They are not outliers - they are the evidence that superior models work. The only real question is whether you are ready to run it yourself.

Craig Picken - \$1.5 Million. Three Consecutive Years.

Co-founder of Northstar Group and a landmark example of modern solo performance. He has billed over \$1.25 million for three consecutive years, reaching a peak of \$1.5 million in 2023. His success is built on focused daily conversations, deep specialisation in the aviation and aerospace executive sector, and a premium technology stack. He operates on a retained model with a 90%+ fill rate. The lesson: specialisation plus exclusivity plus cadence is a more powerful formula than raw hustle.

Peter Murphy - The \$1 Million Personal Benchmark

Identifies \$1 million in annual fees as the standard personal benchmark for those at the top of the profession. His model focuses on an average fee of \$30,000 per placement with one placement every two weeks. The critical detail: 98% of his work is retained or exclusive. That single commercial discipline - refusing contingent ‘if and maybe’ work - is the foundation the entire model rests on.

Rich Bradley - \$28 Million. Four Decades. Still Going.

A long-term Pinnacle Society member and owner/senior IT recruiter at TeamBradley in the US. He has reported around \$28 million in lifetime personal fees across nearly four decades - working solo alongside his wife. Bradley attributes his results not to luck or hot markets but to cadence: rigorous daily planning, tracking talk-time with decision-makers rather than raw call volume, and a relentless focus on candidate quality.

Tyler Rossi - Zero to Six Figures via Niche Authority

After being laid off, he launched a recruitment business focused exclusively on the steel and metals industry. Despite generating zero revenue in his first six months, Rossi committed to building authority through content - launching ‘The Recruiter of Steel’ podcast and a consistent LinkedIn presence. Within 12 months, his business was generating multiple six figures in largely inbound fees.

Jon Woolley - Leaving a \$1.6M Agency Desk

Founded CandidTalent after leaving an agency desk reportedly worth around \$1.6 million annually - just weeks before the birth of his third child. He rebuilt his pipeline and brand as an independent specialist using disciplined outreach and content under his own flag. His story speaks directly to high-performing agency recruiters who suspect they are leaving significant upside on the table.

Kent Depwe - The Million-Dollar Playbook, Decoded

Known for building a million-dollar desk and then breaking down his model openly. His playbook: ruthless focus on high-value roles within his niche, strong fee discipline, clear boundaries around bad business, and a willingness to walk away from fee-cutting clients even when short-term income is tempting. He positions \$1 million not as an outlier but as the natural destination for any well-designed specialist desk.

Brandon McGill - Content Over Cold Calls

Built a desk approaching \$1 million in annual revenue without heavy cold business development, using a content-first strategy and deep niche knowledge of civil engineering roles. Clients come to him - which changes the dynamic on fees, terms, and commitment entirely.

Harrison Wright - Burning Down and Rebuilding

Publicly shared one of the more instructive stories in recent recruitment: from around \$400,000 in annual fees to almost zero, then a disciplined rebuild. He tightened his client criteria, focused on well-funded companies, and built a more resilient pipeline. The message: structure matters more than a single big year.

Darci Smith - Industry Knowledge as Competitive Advantage

Moved from a corporate finance background into wealth management and private banking search. Existing sector knowledge commands 25–30% fees because you speak the language of both client and candidate before you pick up the phone.

Dylan Cohen - \$500k to \$1.94 Million

Made a dramatic jump from \$500k to \$1.94 million in a few years - one of the sharpest billing acceleration stories in the archive. His episode focuses on the specific strategic and mindset shifts that unlocked a near-fourfold increase in production.

Adam Tiberius - \$1.5–\$2 Million Per Year via Market Mapping

Brings in \$1.5 to \$2 million in new business every year. He opened a US office at 22 years old and onboarded 100 new accounts in his first two years. A new recruiter joining his business billed \$700k in their first year.

Jason Ayachi - \$1.5 Million Through Candidate Flipping

Bills \$1.5 million annually, with 50% generated through candidate-led business development - proactively presenting strong candidates to clients before a live role exists. His approach turns the traditional model on its head.

Amber Penrose - £800k, 80% Inbound

Billed £800k in a single year while managing a team of eight - with 80% of that business generated through inbound leads from her personal brand on LinkedIn. One of the most compelling cases for the commercial power of personal brand over heavy outbound.

Troy Neenan - £500k for Five Years Straight

Started as a perm consultant, switched to contract, and has since billed £500k consistently for five consecutive years. Sustained performance at that level is arguably more impressive than a single big year.

Samuel Kippen - \$90k to \$620k in Three Years

Year one: \$90k. Year two: \$160k. Year three: \$620k. That progression - more than tripling billings in a single year - came from specific shifts in business development strategy and cold calling approach.

Patrick Waites - £800k After Eight Months to First Deal

It took him eight months to close his first placement. He went on to build an £800k desk. A powerful counterpoint for anyone in the difficult early phase questioning whether to continue.

James Holder - \$950k in Eight Months After a Decade of Average

Described himself as the most average recruiter imaginable for over a decade. Eight months of intense focused effort produced \$950k in fees. His levers: a specific BD strategy for reaching high-level CTOs, a transformed daily routine, and deliberate use of AI tools to compress his workflow.

The Entrepreneurial Premium: Solo vs Employee

Inside an agency, a recruiter's personal earnings are constrained by what is known as the rule of thirds - and it is not in their favour:

- One third of billings pays the consultant's salary and commission.
- One third funds overhead: office, technology, management, support functions.
- One third is profit for the firm's owners.

Example: A recruiter billing £300,000 in a decent UK agency might take home a total package of around £100,000. Two thirds of everything they generate disappears up the chain. As a solo operator, the same £300,000 in fees can yield £230,000+ after lean overheads - because the fixed costs of running a one-person desk in 2026 are remarkably low.

Metric	Agency Consultant	SuperBiller Solo Owner
Fees generated	\$400,000 / £310,000	\$400,000 / £310,000
Base salary	\$60,000	N/A - captured within profit
Commission / retention	20–35% after threshold	100%
Estimated gross take	\$120,000–\$140,000	\$340,000 / £263,500 (minus overheads)
Your share before tax	~30–35%	85%

That delta - the difference between \$120,000 and \$340,000 for the exact same amount of work - is what we call the entrepreneurial premium of the recruitment industry. The solo recruiter is not funding the CEO's salary, the marketing team, or an expensive city-centre office. They convert their professional fees directly into personal wealth.

This is a low-risk, high-reward startup model. With low fixed costs - particularly in non-Western locations - the downside is minimal. The upside is a \$500,000+ income on a well-run desk, and the freedom to decide how hard you want to push it.

What Super Billers Do Differently

Across the documented examples in this report, a consistent set of behaviours shows up again and again.

None of them require a particular personality type. All of them are learnable.

- **Niche first.** They pick a market where they can become the go-to expert, not just another generalist. The niche is the moat.
- **Senior enough roles to matter.** They bias toward higher-salary, harder-to-fill positions where expertise is valued and fees are meaningful.
- **Exclusivity and retained work.** They push away from contingent work toward exclusive or retained searches. Peter Murphy: 98% retained.
- **Fee discipline.** They hold the line on percentages. Specialists in AI, cybersecurity, and fintech regularly negotiate 25–30% fees.
- **Cadence over drama.** They treat the desk like a professional sport: daily, trackable actions rather than emotional spikes of effort.
- **Content and personal brand.** They share useful, visible content in their niche so clients and candidates feel they already know them before any call.
- **CRM and pipeline as a business asset.** The CRM is a compounding database of relationships that gets more valuable every year.
- **High-value conversations, not high volume.** Fewer, deeper conversations with serious people consistently outperform mass outreach.
- **Strategic use of AI.** AI accelerates business winning, sourcing, and screening without replacing judgment or relationship.
- **Intolerance of bad business.** They turn down low-fee, low-commitment work even when short-term cash is tempting.

Worked Revenue Examples

Model	Operating Logic	Annual Outcome
High-velocity generalist (UK)	24 placements at £50k avg salary, 20% fee (≈£10k per placement)	≈£240,000
Mid-market specialist (US)	20 placements at \$100k avg salary, 25% fee (\$25k per placement)	≈\$500,000
Elite executive searcher (Global)	10 retained placements at \$333k avg salary, 30% fee (\$100k per placement)	≈\$1,000,000

The AI Multiplier: One Person, Bigger Desk

The historical constraint on solo recruiting was capacity. In 2026, AI has fundamentally changed that constraint - and the solo operator is the biggest beneficiary.

AI Efficiency

Top-performing solo firms are now AI-first. The tools that once required a corporate budget and a three-person research team are now accessible to any individual operator:

- **Sourcing agents** can crawl multiple platforms 24/7 to find candidates - a task that previously consumed an average of 7.3 hours per recruiter per week.
- **AI-assisted screening** can pre-screen CVs, summarise interviews, generate scorecards, and return only the strongest shortlists for recruiter attention.
- **Automated administration** - AI notetakers can transcribe calls, extract key data (salary, notice period, motivations) and update records without manual effort.
- **SuperBiller's 15 AI systems** <https://superbiller.com/ai-system> Can help make vacancies easier to fill, identify fresh vacancies, enable differentiators v competitors, create new revenue streams and more.
- **AI CRM** Most well-known legacy software CRMs are trying to bolt on AI. Recruiters with an AI first CRM have a massive advantage in terms of efficiency.

Combined, these tools shorten cycle times between brief and shortlist, improve fill ratios, and free the recruiter's time for the parts that only a human can do: persuasion, negotiation, and relationship.

What the Maths Looks Like With AI

Research suggests that by reducing average fill times from 8 weeks to 4 weeks through automation, a solo operator who previously made 10 placements per quarter could realistically scale to 20+. At an average fee of \$30,000 per placement, that opens a theoretical path to \$multi-millions - a level of production that traditionally requires an agency of 10 people or more.

Even at a more conservative improvement - moving from 10 to 14 placements per quarter - the compounding effect on income is significant. Technology has removed the traditional solo ceiling.

Timeline to Results

The practical question for any experienced recruiter considering the move to independence: how quickly does the desk stabilise under a new structure?

Milestone	Typical Timeline	Notes
First placement	4–8 weeks (with existing clients)	Existing client trust and a warm network compress this significantly. Most experienced recruiters have both.
First six-figure year	12–18 months	Most experienced recruiters hit this within the first year. The niche is already known - the variable is how quickly the new structure is up and billing.
Crossing £250k / \$300k	18 months to 2 years	Once niche is clear and process is consistently applied.
Crossing £500k+ / \$500k+	3+ years	Depends on niche, risk appetite, fee discipline, and specialisation.
Seven-figure fees	5+ years (or faster with AI)	Well-documented by Picken, Murphy, Bradley, and others.

Experienced recruiters with an established client base and niche typically reach previous billing levels within six to twelve months under an independent structure. The infrastructure transition - brand, systems, terms, back-office - is the friction point, not the commercial capability.

The honest expectation for the transition period: the first two to three months may involve reduced income while systems and pipeline are being rebuilt. For those who push through it, the flywheel effect is real.

Asset Value - When a Desk Becomes a Business

Most recruiters think of their desk as what they bill this year. The sharper frame is this: a well-run specialist recruitment practice is a sellable asset with capital value - on top of the income it generates every year.

Small specialist agencies under roughly £1.5 million in revenue typically sell at EBITDA multiples of 3.5x to 6x:

Value Driver	Impact	Why It Matters
Niche focus	Increases multiple (up to 5x–7x)	Buyers pay a premium for specialist expertise and a defensible market position.
Contract revenue	Increases multiple	Recurring contract margins are more predictable than transactional perm fees - often valued at 6x+.
Owner dependency	Decreases multiple	If the business only works because of one person's relationships, it is harder to transfer and harder to sell.
AI and systems	Increases multiple	Proprietary data, automated workflows, and process maturity make the operation more scalable.

A solo recruiter billing \$500,000 with \$450,000 in profit who has started to decouple delivery from pure founder heroics - systemised processes, CRM as an asset, some AI automation - might attract a 3x multiple in a bolt-on acquisition scenario. That is a \$1.35 million liquidity event, in addition to the strong annual income they have been drawing throughout.

A capital gain of that magnitude is something a salaried employee almost never achieves. It is available to a solo recruiter who thinks like an owner from day one.

Why This Matters for Experienced Recruiters

For an experienced recruiter who already knows how to bill but suspects the current structure is working against them, the opportunity is clearer than it might first appear:

- **The income ceiling is structural, not personal.** An experienced recruiter billing £250k inside an agency is generating far more than that number reflects. The rule of thirds means two thirds of what they produce goes to overhead and ownership above them. Moving that desk outside the agency walls changes retention from 30% to 85% overnight.
- **The upside is exceptional.** The top 1% of recruiters in many markets outearn the top 1% of lawyers and doctors, using a far leaner model. That is not marketing - it is a structural feature of high-fee specialist search.
- **Existing relationships are the asset.** Unlike a new entrant who has to build everything from scratch, an experienced recruiter already has the client relationships, the niche positioning, and the market credibility. Those belong to them - not to the agency they have been building them inside.
- **Performance directly drives income.** When you own the client relationships and the commercial terms, there is very little distance between skill and reward. No politics, no salary band, no waiting for a promotion cycle.
- **The geography option changes the equation entirely.** An experienced recruiter who moves their desk to Bangkok keeps 85% of what they bill, pays a fraction of Western living costs, and operates in a city with a strong international business community. Same clients, same fees, structurally different outcome.

The transition does have a cost: the disruption of moving from employed to owned, and for those making the geography move, the logistics of relocation. For recruiters who are already commercially functional, those costs are lower than they appear - and the upside is structurally higher than staying put.

The Geography Multiplier: Two Ways to Build Your Desk

Most experienced recruiters focus on what they bill. The sharper operators also think about where they operate from.

SuperBiller supports two distinct models:

Option 1: SuperBiller Global

Run your desk from your home market - London, Manchester, New York, Auckland, Sydney, Singapore. You keep your existing network, timezone advantages, and local market knowledge. We provide the AI-first CRM and tech stack, fee protection and legal framework, business development and content support, and remote back-office coordination.

Economics: Same client base, 85% fee retention, Western cost base.

Option 2: SuperBiller Asia (Southeast Asia Base) - Recommended

Relocate your desk to Southeast Asia while maintaining your Western client relationships and fee structures. This is not offshoring - you are still the front-facing expert. You are simply operating from a base where £300k in billings produces a fundamentally different lifestyle. Primary locations include Bangkok (Thailand), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Manila/Cebu (Philippines), Bali/Jakarta (Indonesia), and Singapore.

Direct support infrastructure: Our operations team, mentoring, and back-office are based in Bangkok, providing same-timezone responsiveness, in-person strategy sessions (for Thailand-based members), and regional support across Southeast Asia.

Cost arbitrage without compromise: 60–75% lower living costs than London/NYC while maintaining international school access, quality healthcare, and reliable infrastructure across the region.

Multiple location options: Thailand for infrastructure and expat community, Malaysia for ease of business setup, Philippines for English fluency, Indonesia for island living, Singapore for a premium business hub.

The math for a £300k biller: Operating from London, £230k after costs is a solid income. Operating from Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, or Manila, that same £230k represents £400k+ equivalent lifestyle purchasing power - with premium healthcare, international schooling covered, and significantly higher discretionary income. This is not about working harder. It is about the same desk producing different life outcomes based on geography.

Southeast Asia is the accelerator. Bangkok gives you the most support. But we will help you succeed wherever you choose to build.

Key Takeaways

THE COMMERCIAL CASE IN NINE POINTS

What every experienced recruiter should understand about their options

- 1. Top recruiters think in fees and billings, not salaries.** At the elite level, compensation is a percentage of the revenue you personally control.
- 2. A strong solo recruiter can convert hundreds of thousands in annual fees into unusually high personal income.** Billing £300k as a solo typically yields £270k+ pre-costs.
- 3. Seven-figure producers are real and documented.** Pinnacle Society membership verifies that \$500k+ billings sustained over multiple years is a consistent reality - not a myth.
- 4. The rule of thirds works against you in an agency.** Inside a firm, you lose 65–70% of your generated value to overhead and owners. As a solo operator, you keep almost everything.
- 5. Niche authority commands premium fees.** Specialists in AI, cybersecurity, and fintech regularly negotiate 25–30% fees because they are genuinely irreplaceable in their market.
- 6. AI has removed the solo ceiling.** AI plus proprietary AI tools like <https://superbiller.com/ai-system> allow one person to do the work that previously required a three-person team.
- 7. A high-billing desk is a sellable asset.** A \$500k-profit solo practice at a 3x multiple represents a \$1.35M liquidity event on top of years of strong income.
- 8. Exclusivity is the hidden lever.** Top billers like Peter Murphy work 98% retained or exclusive. That single discipline transforms the value of every hour worked.
- 9. Geography is the underused lever.** Operating from Southeast Asia (Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore) while serving Western clients produces 40–60% more lifestyle value from the same billings. Our Bangkok-based infrastructure means Asia-based members get timezone-aligned support, regional mentoring, and in-person access (for Bangkok members) - plus the economic advantages of Southeast Asia's cost base.

Closing Perspective

The economics of Super Biller recruitment are more transparent than they first appear. A desk is, at its core, a simple machine: number of placements, seniority and salary, fee percentage, and conversion rate. Change any one of those levers deliberately and the output changes dramatically.

What separates an average recruiter from a top producer is less about personality and more about deliberate design - of niche, terms, cadence, and tools. In 2026, AI has tilted the field further in favour of the individual who is prepared to think like an owner, build a focused brand, and run a disciplined process.

For the right recruiter - experienced, commercially proven, and ready to own the desk they have already been running for someone else - this is not a career change. It is a better version of the career they already have. If that resonates, a conversation about whether this model fits your situation costs nothing and carries no obligation. Reach out directly to explore it.

About SuperBiller

SuperBiller was founded by **Mike Walmsley** - the Quarter Billion Dollar Man. 30,000+ recruiters trained, client testimonials show \$250M+ revenue increased across multiple recruitment companies, five exits.

SuperBiller supports experienced recruiters in Western markets who are ready to own their desk, keep 85% of what they bill, and build sustainable high-income practices - whether from their home country or from our Southeast Asia base. A functioning business, supported by Mike and his team, with your brand, your systems, your AI stack, and your back-office built and managed from day one.

Phase 1 - Launch

Everything needed to trade on day one. Brand and market positioning, website and sales assets, terms of business, fee protection documentation, AI-first CRM configured, and 1-to-1 mentoring from Mike Walmsley from week one.

Phase 2 - Outsource

Back-office, compliance, and day-to-day infrastructure handled so you focus entirely on billing. Accounting, bookkeeping, invoicing, collections, fee protection, and AI-assisted monitoring for backdoor attempts - all running in the background.

Phase 3 - Grow

Once billing is consistent, growth levers activate. AI-driven prospecting, competitor intelligence, vacancy identification, content and social presence, and strategic guidance based on your pipeline and performance data.

SuperBiller.com

Sources and References

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