

Barton Mills Recruitment stronger than ever

Barton Mills Recruitment (BMR) is a recruitment to recruitment business that was launched in 2004 by husband and wife team Richard Mills and Clare Barton. Today it is not only surviving the downturn, when many other rec-to-recs have fallen by the wayside, but intends to come out the other side stronger than ever.

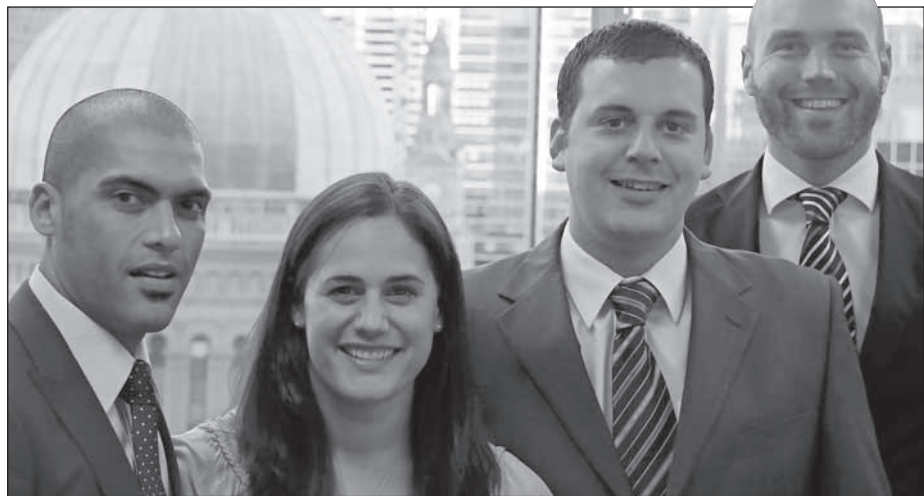
The reasons behind starting BMR were no different to those behind most start-ups: Barton genuinely felt that there was a gap in the market for a consultative rec-to-rec service. Barton's previous role with an international IT agency had given her firsthand experience dealing with rec-to-rec agencies and she had been disappointed with the level of service, ethics and knowledge on offer. Having worked as a hiring manager within the industry she had become "savvy" at dealing with recruiters and sales people, and from this the idea of BMR began to form. Richard Mills brought the business knowledge and the accounting expertise to the partnership. He then added to this by securing a role with a brand name agency where he spent two years learning the ropes of contract banking recruitment, before moving over to BMR full-time in 2006.

Barton Mills Recruitment has now been operating in Sydney for almost six years. The majority of their business is based locally in New South Wales but they are also enjoying success recruiting remotely for the Canberra, Melbourne and Brisbane markets.

Today they enjoy a loyal and solid team with fantastic experience. Between the four Consultants – Clare Barton, Richard Mills, Neil Smith and Steven Belletty – there is 23 years' specific "rec-to-rec" experience and over 45 years' general recruitment experience. Each Consultant specialises in the areas that they have recruited in themselves and it is this that has given them credibility and the ability to truly consult and add value to the industry.

Barton believes that their year-on-year growth is, in the main, driven by their strong referral networks. Despite having to adapt their approach during recent times, Barton strongly believes that a consultative, candidate focussed approach will pay dividends in the future again.

"We have lost a significant number of 457 recruiters overseas and a significant



From left: Steven Belletty, Clare Barton, Richard Mills and Neil Smith of Barton Mills Recruitment.

number of consultants have left the industry. A lot of companies have pulled back to core numbers and it will only take a small upward shift in the market for a surge of hiring to start again within the industry. We are seeing examples of this already. It is our belief that it will not be long until we are operating in a candidate short market again."

Working through and adapting to the past six months has been extremely challenging for the rec-to-rec industry as a whole. It seems that on a weekly basis there have been reports of competitors closing and agencies making large numbers of redundancies. BMR always knew that a downturn would be particularly challenging for them because their business is predominantly built on permanent revenue, with no contractor book to fall back on – not an ideal model to ride out a financial crisis. Barton believes that there are some key reasons why they have not only survived but will come out the other side of this stronger than ever.

First, BMR has been able to keep demonstrating the value of its service and has been able to keep accessing the cream of the active and passive local candidate pool. What distinguishes them from other agencies is that they are a business built on referrals – 75% of their business comes from a strong referral network. They are constantly coming across the best available talent in the recruitment industry and are working with local, experienced, exclusive consultants.

Secondly, they enjoy a loyal client base within the SME market. Although currently working on briefs for a number of the multinationals, BMR's business over the past six months has predominantly come from within the SME market: the privately owned, national or one State agencies that have used this downturn as an opportunity to "up skill" their teams and come out the other side with a much stronger recruitment practice. Such agencies have used BMR services to source the best talent in the market during the downturn. These companies have focussed on a longer-term strategy and it is these agencies in Barton's opinion that are going to be the ones to watch and that will gain market share in the next few years.

Thirdly, they have taken a long-term view with their own consultants. They recognised that it has taken a long time to put together the right team and they have therefore protected and supported their consultants through this challenging time. By making no redundancies they have a loyal, strong, credible team in place to tackle the challenges ahead.

Barton believes that the future looks bright and very strong for BMR: "We are feeling cautiously optimistic about the year ahead. Clients have briefed us about some robust hiring plans for the coming months. Our aim this year is to increase market share and add to our team." ■

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