



Michael Barros and Stephen Provost, Managing Partners of Prestige Scientific



What a pleasure to sit down with not one, but both founders of Prestige Scientific! Let's start with a snapshot of why you both got into executive search and ultimately founded Prestige:

Stephen: In my early 20's I was invited to interview at national search firm and once I did, I was immediately drawn to the impact that we could make for companies and the ability to change lives. When we built Prestige Scientific it was, initially, out of necessity. Mike and I were with a firm that had to close their doors a month after 9/11 and we both still had life science clients that we had committed to helping to build their management teams. It took us about a month to open the doors at Prestige and then we focused on helping our clients find the person that will help solve whatever the business problem was that led to that search.

Michael: Like most, I kind of fell into the industry. I remember seeing an ad in the "newspaper"... that's right, a newspaper. The role was fairly similar to past sales roles I'd held in commercial real estate. As Steve shared, after 9/11 we picked up the pieces and began building our own company. We became overnight entrepreneurs, but in hindsight, that was a calling that ultimately fit us both perfectly.

What are the types of opportunities you are most known for specializing in?

SP: Our typical search is with an early to clinical stage biotech or pharma to build their management or executive team. We have a team and each member leads a practice that mirrors a department in a life science company from Discovery, PreClinical, CMC, QA, Regulatory, Clinical (Development/Operations), and C-Suite.



Michael Barros

FAVORITE QUOTE

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do" ~Pele

What are the biggest trends you are seeing with your clients in attracting, onboarding and retaining the best of the best in your niche?

SP: When it comes to attracting, it starts with great science. Is it something people can believe in? A lot of people like the ability to target patients with a high unmet medical need and to have the ability to really make a difference in patient's lives. Work flexibility is becoming more accepted and implemented as well. I'm seeing companies put a lot more emphasis on their culture and

mission for retention purposes. They're creating a close knit "work family" and also creating a bridge to patients so everyone is focused on what their efforts are working toward.

MB: I agree, of course in the current environment companies are forced to adapt quickly. Some stand flat-footed and wait for the difficult times to pass while others are video interviewing and hiring with no face-to-face interviews. Like with any downturn, the companies that adapt quickly will be that much more ahead of their competition when things get back to normal.

What have you been most proud of professionally?

SP: The longevity of Prestige and the lives we've improved along the way, both outside and inside Prestige. We'll be celebrating 19 years this

November and we've been fortunate to beat the odds. We founded Prestige in the down economy of post 9/11, and then we saw 62% of recruiting companies close throughout the 2009 recession. Statistically, more than 75% of small business don't survive past 15 years. I'm also proud of the fact that we've improved the lives, professionally and personally, of nearly 700 people (and counting) as we helped them transition into new jobs.

MB: At the end of the day, it's the relationships that you forge internally and externally that create our reputation in the industry. That reputation has allowed us to be in business for almost 20 years. Additionally, the longer I do this the more I realize the team/culture/environment is what dictates our



Stephen Provost

FAVORITE QUOTE

"Pay me less, just let me work at my own speed."
– Stanley Provost (my grandfather, while helping him replace shingles on his roof when I was younger and moved a lot faster)

success professionally and many times personally. On one hand, we've beaten the odds as Steve said – on the other hand, we've deliberately charted our course and been acutely aware of the value proposition we extend to our clients, candidates and recruiters at every step of the way.

What are the shared attributes of the clients you have most successfully partnered with? What made those relationships so enjoyable?

SP: Trust. They all started with trust, which opened the door for full transparency, which led to be things like two-way unfiltered feedback and opinions, no agendas, and complete honesty. I enjoy those partnerships because it makes working with them fun and because they are so open, it helps us to represent them, which makes us more successful for them and for the hires we are able to make together.

MB: I agree with Steve. I'd also add reliability...do what you say you will do. Complete any stated deliverables with urgency. Our clients put their trust and often professional reputation on the line when they give us their business. We take that seriously and we do what we say we will do; as a result, our clients quickly realize they can feel confident when giving you additional searches to handle and problems to solve.

What's your leadership philosophy?

SP: Share a vision, set clear expectations, provide tools for success, be responsive for support, and then step out of the way.

MB: Do your best to lead by example and truly care about the success of your team. I think people tend to pick

up on that and in turn also care about the success of every individual in the organization.

How does the culture of your organization lead to your success?

SP: I think we have a culture that is not stifling and allows people a wide allowance for creativity. We also have a positive team that shares the in the belief of abundance.

MB: In this business, of course personal success is a priority, but I think everyone generally cares about each other doing well. We don't have any islands in this group. We lose together and we win together.



**Michael Barros and Stephen Provost,
Managing Partners of Prestige Scientific**

What's one thing people would be surprised to learn about you?

SP: I auditioned for the movie "Miracle" about the 1980 Men's Olympic hockey team and made it to the final call back of 10 people when they were choosing for 3 parts. I wasn't chosen. To this day, I've refused to watch the movie.

MB: If Steve got the above-mentioned role, I would've killed him.

What are some of the biggest lessons you've learned throughout this journey in executive search?

SP: Tough one because there are so many. Some are small, but more impactful on a daily basis, like reserving any judgement until you have all of the facts. In other words, first seek to understand. Others are big but slow moving, like the strength of having the large network of Sanford Rose Associates. It's been incredible to have people to lean on, and that can lean on me, for information, friendships, and business.

MB: It's not over until it's over, volume fixes everything, and consistency is the key.

What do you have little patience for?

SP: People who have a lack of respect. I'm from the school that respect is given, not earned. I give it and expect just a little in return.

MB: When people replace the toilet paper roll, but put it in backwards. I just don't get it, how can you not see the problem.

What was your first job as a kid?

SP: Paperboy. Every day after school and then the weekend paper on Saturdays. I did this for years. I learned lessons about work ethic, being responsible, how to manage money, communication skills, and being persistent.

MB: Landscaping... and I was very allergic to poison ivy... had it all summer long.

What's still on your Bucket List?

SP: I'm working on checking the box on one by completing a full Ironman 140.6 in October of 2020. I don't have a lot of bucket list items at the moment after that. I'd like to travel, but I'm keeping the destinations open. One long term bucket list will be sailing along the length of the East Coast someday when I don't have to be accountable (still trying to figure out when that last part happens).

MB: Travel Europe/Swiss Alps with the wife and kids.

What motivates you to work as hard as you do?

SP: I've come to accept at a very early age that hard work is the only path to get what I want in life. I frequently ask myself, "If I don't, then who will?" and it's usually nobody. I feel it's my duty and obligation to my family, and myself, to give 100% until I can't any longer.

MB: Honestly, probably the fear of not providing for my family and the stress that would cause.



What's your go-to Karaoke song?

SP: Easy. "When Doves Cry" by Prince. If you've tortured me to get me on stage to sing, I'm giving the torture right back. Every. Single. Off-Key-Note.

MB: Nobody wants to see that.

Is there anything you wish would come back into fashion?

SP: Fanny pack. I'm wearing a black one with fluorescent green stripes right now. I wear mine backwards. So much cooler that way.

MB: How about parachute pants? Does anyone remember parachute pants?

If you hadn't taken the path of building an executive search firm, you would have...

SP: That question honestly scares me. I don't know. I'm just grateful I ended up here!

MB: Sustainability living off the land, providing for myself sounds good.

Did you have any life-changing experiences that put you on the path that led you to be doing what you're doing today?

SP: I was young when I started so there wasn't a lot of life yet to change, but I frequently look at back at the sequence of events that led me to enter the profession. There were decision trees along that path and one decision here or there could have resulted in a much different "today." I'm thankful to have chosen this path.

MB: Not exactly. At that point in life I think we just wanted to find our careers. At that time, I was married and recently had my first kid so the stakes were high but that didn't keep us from starting a new business during a recession. For some reason, we had the confidence we could make this happen. Every day you wake up and have a second chance to do whatever you want and to be whoever you want. The only thing stopping you, is you. I'm glad that at that time, we were young enough to not know any better, and didn't let any past failures stand in the way of our youthful optimism.

What do you still hope to accomplish in your life and within your firm?

SP: In life, I want to lead a healthy life and be there for all of my children's milestones. With the firm, I feel like we have so much more untapped potential. We have a solid business, a great nucleus of a team, and a wide open industry. I'm excited to see where that combination will bring us in the future!

MB: Regarding the firm, the potential is unlimited. My goal has always been to create financial stability for my family and everybody that works at Prestige Scientific. When successful, that goal creates an environment for most things outside of work that happen. However, it is only by successfully exceeding the expectations of those whose lives and businesses we touch, that we experience this unlimited potential. We look forward to all that's in store as we pursue that ultimate goal.