

[Guest Post] What I Learned Working With Someone Making \$1.5M a Year

Today we have a guest post from Finance Solver, the blogger over at SolvingFinance.com. He is a recent college graduate with a degree in finance and is sharing his unique path to wealth building, just like the rest of us in the personal finance blogosphere. In the guest post to follow, Finance Solver is going to share what he learned working with a CFO earning \$1.5M per year.

Take it away Finance Solver...

The majority of people want to be a millionaire, including Mr. GYFG and myself. There's no doubt about it. However, instead of being worth \$1M, what if you could make over \$1M by just working one year? That sounds like the dream.

To get to that status, though, there's a lot of moving wheels that you need to take care of. Things like knowing how to manage people, **putting in the hours**, talking to vendors and lowering costs, etc. I will be going over what I observed while working with someone who makes a 7-figure income in all-in compensation. Employing a couple of these characteristics I don't think is a bad idea to get ahead.

It was during my junior year of college. I was going through a couple dozen interviews for the upcoming summer's internship cycle and getting nowhere. My confidence was shattered when going through the grueling process of interviewing.

Somewhere along the way, my friend posted on Facebook that there was an internship opening at a company that's a short 20-minute bus ride away for the fall and spring semester. I forwarded him my resume and went through 3 hours worth of interviews, including the company's CFO.

I was so happy to hear a call back that I got the offer and was asked to start in 3 days. I had a lot going on as a student but there was no negotiation, it was exactly when I wanted to start, and I took the offer earning \$15 an hour. I'm so grateful I did.

The company is a multi-billion dollar company. During my internship, I had the

opportunity to work with different finance departments that were out there including treasury, internal audit, investor relations, and a couple of projects with the CFO.

The company was public and I was poking around our annual filings and saw that the CFO that I've done a couple of projects for had an all-in compensation of \$1.5M (this includes stock comps, options, etc.). He was only 44 years old.

I didn't care about the wage inequality between him and me. He was adding so much more value to the company than I was and I was sure that he deserved to be where he is, and I was right.

While working alongside him and asking a lot of questions to learn more about the company's business, I picked up a few things that I saw in him that I was sure helped in getting to being a multi-million dollar earner. These are the things that I found.

1 - He Had a Hook that Drew Me to Him

From the instant that I talked to him, I felt at ease. He was the CFO and I was barely a student in college, I should have been nervous out of my mind. However, I wasn't. There was something about him that drew me in to him and I was an instant advocate of him.

Maybe it was the environment, because his corner office had a lot of windows with bright sunshine that made him look better than in a dark environment. Maybe it was the fact that he was so open to talk to me when he clearly has more important things to do than talk to an intern. No. It was none of those things that put me at ease. I'm sure those factors helped, but it wasn't the reason that tipped my emotions to be in the middle and not go haywire.

It was his voice.

His natural voice.

I don't believe that he went through surgery to make sure his vocal sounds were pleasant to the human ear. I don't even believe that he was consciously trying hard to make sure his voice pitch was a pleasant one.

It was his natural voice, something that made him who he is that I was drawn to.

Then I realized that that must be what people who bring in a million dollars in income have. Something natural about them that is a hook to draw people in. It's a powerful tool.

2 - He Knows How to Say "I Don't Know"

It sounds cliché. I didn't even realize the true value of this until I actually saw it with my own eyes and heard it.

During my internship, I had to track our competitor's financials by going through their financial statements so that their financials could be compared with ours to see points of improvement. I wasn't and am not a CPA by any means so I had to carefully look over them and catch details. I also looked at what the CFO did in the past so that it would guide me for tracking competitor's earnings today.

After glossing over what he did, something didn't look right. As a hypothetical example, he would input a number like "\$534" for taxes, let's say. Then I pinpointed that number in the financial statements that said "\$534" but then saw another line item that said taxes for something else but with the number "\$540". It was a minute detail that I wanted to ask about. It probably didn't even matter that it was off by \$6, but I wanted to ask why it was off anyway in case it did matter.

He replied "I don't know."

That shocked me.

He's the CFO of the company talking to an intern. I would have thought that he would have felt the need to prove his intellect as CFO and at least made up an answer. No. It was a simple "I don't know." I haven't heard anybody say that to me in the past times I've worked at different companies (which were 3 companies so far in that time).

Then it made me realize something, people who are successful KNOW what they are good at and what they are good at and they **don't let ego** get in the way of answering questions. It also added to his credibility tremendously because I couldn't believe that he would say that to an intern.

My respect was really high already and that just made it shoot through the roof. Pride is the enemy of success and million dollar earners understand that.

3 - He Wants to Match Opportunities With the Right People

I asked him for some career advice because I thought, “hey, he must know a thing or two about building a career right?” He didn’t miss a beat. He said, “know what you want and let your manager know.” He’s been through dealing with a lot of people as CFO and after giving an opportunity to someone, he would constantly be met with other people who were hurt that he didn’t give them the same opportunity.

The ones who got the opportunity? It’s not the ones [who fought tooth and nail for it](#). It’s the ones who let him know that that’s what they wanted. As a result, he was able to match the right opportunities with the right people. His advice still sticks with me to this day and I’m constantly looking to increase my communication with my upper manager.

Conclusion

From working with a multi-millionaire, I was able to recognize a few of the characteristics that got him to where he is today. I didn’t ask him if these were the characteristics that got him to where he is. I didn’t have to. I could just experience all of them by watching him.

It’s his actions that got him to where he is, not his words, and I saw that his actions spoke a lot of volume about him. I certainly learned how to better myself just by paying attention to his mannerisms and I am forever grateful to be given the opportunity to do so. I believe that if you practice these characteristics, you can be a higher earner as well!



Gen Y Finance Guy

Hey, I’m Dom - the man behind the cartoon. You’ll notice that I sign off as "Gen Y Finance Guy" on all my posts, due to the fact that I write this blog anonymously (at

least for now). I like to think of myself as the *Chief Freedom Officer* here of my little corner of the internet. In the real world, I'm a 30-something former C-Suite executive turned entrepreneur turned capital allocator. I am trying to humanize finance by sharing my own journey to Financial Freedom. I believe in total *honesty* and *transparency*. That is why before I ever started blogging, I decided that I would share all of my own [financial stats](#). I do this not to brag, but instead to inspire motivate, and also to hold myself accountable. My goal is to be a beacon of hope, motivation, and inspiration for *you*, the reader, by living life by example and sharing it **all** here on the blog. My sincere hope is that you will be able to learn from me - both from my successes and my failures! [Read More](#)