

Structuring and Leading a Marketing Department



by Lucy Jones

What makes a great marketing department? What is it that law firms look for when hiring marketing professionals? How can you be more effective in identifying what you need for your department? These issues were the focus of “Structuring and Leading a Marketing Department,” a session presented by Wisnik Career Enterprises, Inc. at LMA’s Annual Conference and Exhibition.

President Eva Wisnik and Director of Recruitment and Special Projects Jennifer Johnson offered a thorough examination of today’s hiring trends, as well as a practical overview of what to consider when building your team. In their meetings with more than 40 law firms in one year, they found a significant take-away: there really are few norms. Things are in flux and moving to a whole different level.

So, with that said, what makes you marketable in today’s competitive environment? Eva offered four key elements:

- Strong skills
 - ❖ Leadership, communication, and organization
 - ❖ Work effectively within a partnership structure
 - ❖ Deliver results
 - ❖ Client service focused
- Knowledge of the market
 - ❖ Well informed
 - ❖ Aware of trends
 - ❖ Inquisitive
- Strong professional network through involvement
 - ❖ LMA
 - ❖ Industry organizations
- Ability to articulate achievements without bragging
 - ❖ Provide “evidence” of results achieved
 - ❖ Strong work ethic

Structure

How these elements map to leadership roles and how these roles are defined was further examined. The very structure of a marketing department can be a model for success. Eva shared the following breakdown of the top titles being used by AmLaw 100 law firms, which is helpful in benchmarking your own department’s organization.

Highest Ranking Titles in AmLaw 100 Law Firms

	Top 100	Top 25	Top 50	Top 51-100
Director	55	15	29	26
CMO	40	10	20	20
Manager	3	0	1	2
None	2	0	0	2

Common Titles

There is some consensus among law firms concerning the most common titles for positions being filled. These include:

- CMO/Director of Marketing
- Director of Marketing and Communications
- Business Development Manager (aka Client Service/Practice Development)
 - ❖ Business Development Coordinator
 - Responsibilities range from one to eight practice groups per professional
 - Most common groups have one dedicated professional: corporate, IP
- Internal Communications Manager
- External Communications Manager
 - ❖ PR Coordinator
- Proposals Manager (a more formal approach that allows for benchmarking what wins and what doesn’t)
- Events Manager
- Graphics Manager
- Database Manager
 - ❖ Data Steward (firms are hiring individuals whose main responsibilities are to manage their CRM systems, provide training and institute “best practices”)
- Senior Marketing Coordinator
- Marketing Coordinator
 - ❖ Marketing Assistant

New to the Field

An interesting trend has been developing over the last 18 months. It's no secret that law firms are seeking innovative ways to distinguish and differentiate themselves in the marketplace, and there is growing evidence of nontraditional, more corporate-type roles emerging. A CMO from a D.C.-based firm articulated that she sees a thrust to bifurcate marketing into revenue- and non-revenue-generating arenas. New to the field are the following positions that more and more law firms are seeking to fill:

- Writer/Editor — journalism background
- Business Analyst — MBA
- Finance Department Liaison — CPA
- Industry and Client Team Managers
- Top 200 CRM Manager
- Ranking, Directory and Awards Coordinator
- Media Reporting Specialist — “deal tracker”
- Strategy and Planning Manager — “big picture” strategist
- Alumni Relations Manager — careful cultivation of a firm's alumni
- Client Solutions Technology — extranets, white papers

This list is indicative of the “hybrid” jobs that pull from other industries.

Wish List

Let's assume for a moment that the stars are aligned and head-count budgets are not an issue. Wisnik Career Enterprises posed the following question to eight CMOs/Directors:

“If you could add one more position to your staff, what would you add?”

Notwithstanding that the word “sales” still doesn't play well in most firms, seven out of eight responded that they would want a solid business-development professional. The other respondent said that person would be a business writer.

Responsibilities

Unfortunately, the “new to the field” positions are not quite yet part of the fundamental lexicon of most law firm marketing departments. Leaving the wish-list discussion, Eva and Jennifer provided the attendees with a series of very practical checklists of responsibilities by title. These checklists assist in clearly communicating what is expected at every level within the department.

Marketing Assistants

- Assist with scheduling appointments
- Gather information and fulfill information for directory listings
- Receive RSVPs for client events
- Assist in gathering information for pitches/proposals
- Assist in coordinating client event details
- Have primary responsibility for maintaining client database

- Provide all statistical data
- Responsible for all client entertainment-expense tracking
- Provide administrative support, including all correspondence, reports and memoranda
- Function as a frontline representative for the department
- Update attorney bios
- Prepare “media mentions” reports

Marketing Coordinators

- Maintain integrity of marketing materials for pitches and proposals
- Coordinate content for Internet, intranet and newsletters
- Coordinate all internal mailing distribution of new marketing materials
- Attend practice group meetings and take minutes
- Write attorney biographies
- Coordinate details of client entertainment
- Design and layout newsletters
- Coordinate firm mailings
- Track expenditures
- Conduct research on potential clients
- Generate statistical reports from databases
- Manage special projects

Coordinators

- On average, 50 percent of their time is spent being reactive.
- Most have two to five years of experience.
- Firms support membership in LMA and other activities relevant to the job.
- They welcome the opportunity to “own” a project.
- They appreciate receiving meaningful feedback from direct reports on a regular basis.

Managers

- Work closely with section leaders and firm-wide committees
- Develop and implement practice group marketing plans
- Identify new business opportunities
- Develop and maintain budgets
- Analyze and report on internal and market trends
- Conduct new-hire orientation
- Supervise marketing staff

- Perform media outreach (identify speaking, writing and sponsorship opportunities)
- Develop and continue relationships with various vendors
- Work closely with recruiting department

Managers

- Spend 80 percent of their time being reactive.
- Are stretched too thin — asked to do too many dissimilar projects.
- Lack communication/leadership to know priorities.
- Enjoy strategic thinking.
- Appreciate having input in large-scale projects.

CMO/Director

- Work hand in hand with marketing partner/executive committee to plan and implement all aspects of the firm's business goals
- Serve as leader for the department's capabilities
- Oversee and communicate strategic vision to team of marketing professionals
- Evaluate staff's performance and responsibilities
- Is a key member of firm's marketing committee
- Establish best practices for all procedures
- Work with partners to determine business development needs and provide solutions
- Develop key relationships with all practice group leaders to assess marketing needs and report to the marketing committee/partner

CMO

- Who you report to is key — marketing partner or managing partner is ideal.
- External experiences — financial or professional services helpful.

Leadership

Leadership is possibly the single most important element that distinguishes good marketing departments from great marketing departments. When polled on what they want from leaders, marketing coordinators' and marketing managers' overwhelming response was mentoring, constructive criticism, responsibility and the chance to feel "heard." The most common leadership traits desired in successful CMOs/directors included being inclusive, decisive, fair, encouraging, being an advocate and exhibiting total

confidence in their staff's ability. As one CMO conference attendee aptly put it, "It's not about you; it's about the clients."

Hiring and Retention

Now that you are a leader building your department, what should you look for in candidates? What are effective tips for interviewing? How do you transition new hires to your team, and, moreover, how do you retain them? Eva and Jennifer again presented a series of practical checklists that answered each of these questions.

Core competencies found across the board included strong organizational skills, service orientation, flexibility and the ability to work under pressure and deadline.

Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or the DISC Personal Profile System can help you identify which personality types would be best for your department.

Examples

- You are a big picture strategist — you may need a detail-oriented implementer
- You are a highly creative motivator — you may need an analytical doer

Hiring Tips

- Be careful not to only hire people with the same strengths as you
- Aim to hire different types so you can offer your lawyers a variety of styles
- Ask behavioral questions when interviewing
 - ❖ "Take me through the process you use for . . ."
 - ❖ "What tools do you use for gathering research, and how do you present your findings?"
 - ❖ "Describe how you accomplished . . ."
 - ❖ "What have been your biggest challenges in the job?"
 - ❖ "Tell me how your team worked together during that challenging project."

Maximizing Effectiveness

In conclusion, Eva provided a blueprint for maximizing your team's effectiveness and productivity.

Top Five Time Management Tools

- Do the worst things first
- Delegate, and use your resources
- Apply the 80/20 rule (20 percent of actions yield 80 percent of results)
- Break down large projects into smaller, more manageable chunks
- Have a 3:00 p.m. check-up each day

Following Eva and Jennifer's guidelines should help any marketing professional leading a team or transitioning to a leadership role set the expectations and structure for a smoothly operating, institutionalized marketing department.