

Briefing

MARKETING AND BD

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Ideas people

Interview

Baker & McKenzie's Mad Man

Laurie Robertson, B&M's global head of marketing and BD, talks to Briefing about brand, differentiation and winning the best business

Feature

Pitch perfect

Can law firms really be different? Does brand matter? And how do you please the procurement people? Rupert White investigates

Plus

Which non-legal sectors hold the best marketing and BD talent

Why business analytics are just as important as good CRM

How a leading French firm radically boosted its pitching capability

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Why should anyone buy you?




The days when law firms could rely on clients choosing them because they have great lawyers are gone.

As Laurie Robertson says in this month's interview, law firms need to wake up to the value of brand in the legal market, and find real reasons why clients should buy them, rather than A N Other top-100 law firm.

But creating that differentiation is no easy task – otherwise most of you would have done it by now. So how do you do it?

In this issue we analyse how law firms can find real differences, and we find better ways to sell those differences to clients. We also look at how to act different, to get closer to clients in ways they love.

We also have sponsor analysis on why there are more tools for BD and marketing people than just CRM, where the best BD and marketing talent might come from, and a very useful case study on using pre-proposal tools to free up time to win business better.

I hope you enjoy it.
Rupert White, head of content and community 

“Many clients will say that a large number of law firms are interchangeable. What is it that makes you different? Are you going to give me a lower price, or are you going to justify why you are better value?”

Laurie Robertson, global director of marketing and BD, Baker & McKenzie

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Interview: Laurie Robertson

Baker & McKenzie's global marketing and BD chief talks to **Briefing** about branding, client development and differentiation



Feature: Who are you?

Rupert White unpicks the big issues in BD and marketing: differentiation, brand, reputation, pricing and client development



Outside edge

Simone Timcke at Ambition on which sectors outside legal hold the best marketing and BD talent for law firms that want a competitive edge



Closing the value gap

Sally Calverley for LexisNexis on why business analytics are just as important as good CRM for getting the most out of your client base



Case study: Pitch creation

How leading French firm Gide Loyrette Nouel is creating better pitches, faster with Hubbard One's Experience Manager software



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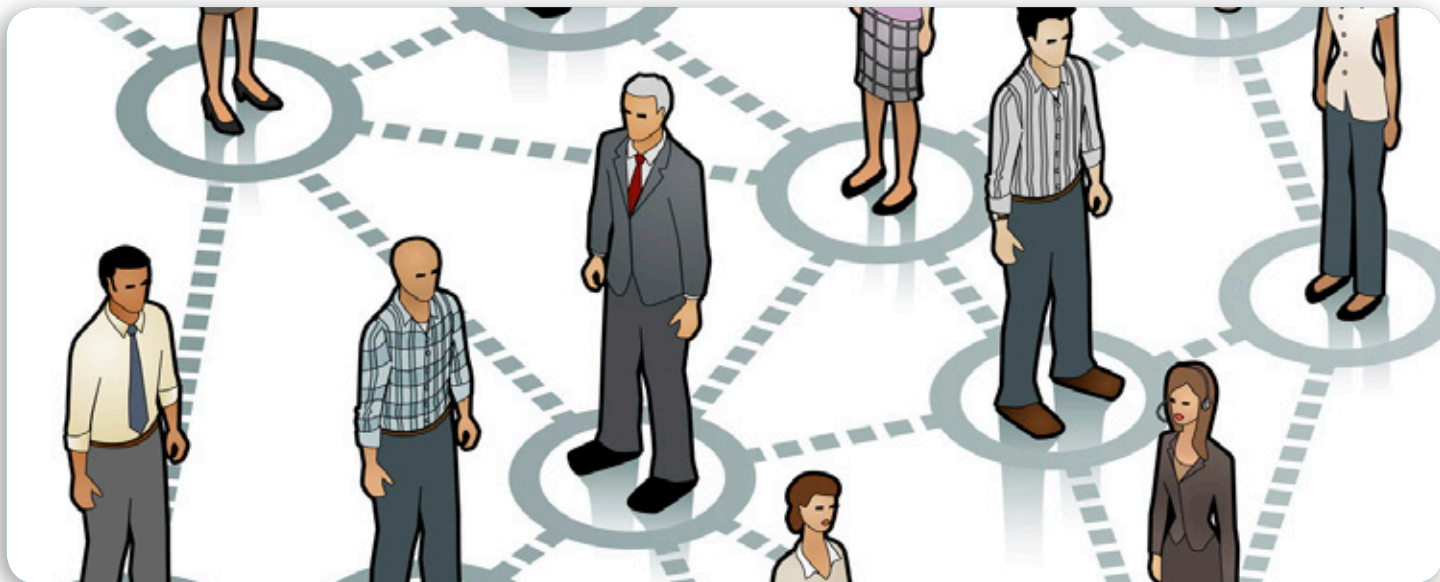


Interview with Laurie Robertson transcribed by Voicepath



INTERVIEW

The relationships man



Laurie Robertson, Baker & McKenzie's BD and marketing chief, talks to Rupert White about branding, getting close with clients and the elusive goal of differentiation

The advertising firm J Walter Thompson, now JWT, has produced a lot of winners – the Andrex puppy, Maureen Lipman's BT ads and famous campaigns for KitKat, Persil and Oxo.

It also produced a winner in Laurie Robertson, global director of marketing and BD for Baker & McKenzie, the biggest firm in the world by revenue. Robertson served 22 years with JWT before joining Clifford Chance in 2000, where he spent a decade overseeing global client relationships and BD focus. He moved to Baker & McKenzie last year.

Bakers is a firm of two faces. Clients see it as a global legal powerhouse; legal people sometimes call

it 'McLaw' after the fast food brand value of having the same product, everywhere. But Bakers is a successful global business, and with a global brand, consistency is very important. It couldn't be the world's highest grossing law firm if it did its job poorly – litigation ain't flipping burgers.

And it's because Baker & McKenzie is a global firm, and we are in a global financial crisis, that Robertson is our **Briefing** interview – if the man who ran CC's client focus and BD strategy for 10 years can't help legal, who can?

The cost of everything...

The big challenges law firms face, he says, are pricing and

perception of value, client development, and branding and competitiveness.

When it comes to pricing, everyone interviewed for this issue of **Briefing** said that procurement (in its myriad forms) is now wildly more prominent in legal services buying than ever before. Therefore pricing is now a very hot topic – but it's nowhere near as simple as what a law firm costs to hire.

"Clients are looking for bigger discounts [and] alternative fees – which just really means lower fees," he says. "And it often falls to BD to help, whether it's in putting together the right pricing agreement, or in communicating the value we offer [to] justify the pricing."

It's all very well to talk about adding value, but clients need

lower costs, and that's why procurement is in the room – because the CFO has ordered legal to chop its spend. So how does a firm deal with this need for 'lower fees, please'?

"It's obviously a danger [that] once a firm starts to offer discounts, clients expect it day in, day out. So what we try to do is talk to clients about how we can work with them more efficiently." Robertson says many clients will admit that just focusing on rates is counter-productive, "because unless you have a pricing structure that gets the law firm to share in your goals and objectives, they really have no incentive to work efficiently".

This means a difficult conversation has to be had. It's hard to have this conversation

INTERVIEW LAURIE ROBERTSON cont.

if procurement wants to start with a rate cut, he says, but if you can get the ball rolling, "it's a much more productive [conversation] for both sides... where the costs are reduced but the law firm doesn't feel that they're working at a loss".

The problem has to be faced. "It's the elephant in the room. Many law firm partners are hoping that it just won't come up, but of course it does – it's what every client is talking about at every conference they go to."

Knowing you, knowing me

The key to getting that conversation right, Robertson says, is to raise the issue outside the scope of normal fee negotiations, not waiting until the client pulls out the annual review. His advice is to have a separate discussion to talk about how the firm can put together a special team, for example, of law firm and client staff to analyse how to deliver on the 'better value' promise.

That hit squad has to be well prepared, he says, which means understanding the costs of the law firm and its work. The law firm has to be able to identify where costs can be shaved, and if it can help the client provide a more accurate brief, be more efficient or even perhaps if the client is doing something badly, such as writing supplier agreements.

Whatever's causing high costs, Robertson says, "it often goes far beyond the rate the law firm is charging". But this shouldn't be construed as a 'blame the client' mantra – he also says law firms must analyse if they're misusing internal resources and thereby unwittingly costing the client too much.

"It requires a holistic look at the costs," he says. However it's discussed, there's a benefit to talking about the costs of business rather than

To create better pricing and to argue about costs from a position of power, you have to know a law firm's costs. This means access to great data. Robertson agrees that good IT systems are vital to helping law firms win more business and deliver more value to existing clients.

"Any large law firm that can't identify what its costs are and its profitability on matters is obviously working a little in the dark. Most large law firms have got to the stage where

to business development to help them manage the relationships of their key clients, and try to get deeper relationships and more revenue out of their client base, because it's a more efficient way to [create] business than going looking for new clients".

Leveraging existing clients is vital in straitened times, he says, because "there are fewer transactions, and some clients have disappeared altogether". "It has become more important first of all to make sure

you are protecting your existing relationships, and then trying to expand those relationships."

Robertson ticks me off for using the phrases 'cross-sell' and 'up-sell' – "one of the fatal terms is cross-selling, which is bandied around in a number of professional services, and is absolutely the wrong way to go about it".

The old days of a chummy introduction by the M&A partner to

the tax head without knowing what the client needs are gone, he says. "Put simply, it's about getting the client to believe that you're actually trying to help them and their business, rather than just flog more services. We try to sit with the client, understand their needs, what's keeping them awake at night, where their growth is going to come from, and then try to help.

"Everything that we do in marketing should be trying to demonstrate that we can

"Everything we do in marketing should be trying to demonstrate that we can solve the client's issues."

Laurie Robertson, global director of marketing and business development, Baker & McKenzie



arguing over the firm's rates – this is the basis of dealing in value, rather than price. But there's also a secondary benefit, he says: "The client feels you're actually thinking about their business and how to improve it, rather than just about what we charge and what profit we make."

One has to wonder if clients really believe all this talk of value when they're so uptight about costs, but Robertson is convinced that they do – as long as it's true.

they can do that," he says. (Read more on using data to analyse client value on p13)

Good relations

In the not-so-distant past, marketing departments dealt with relationships. They organised events, sent out the newsletters, put together websites and so on. Now, Robertson says, the more forward-looking firms, and most firms of any size, "are also looking

INTERVIEW LAURIE ROBERTSON cont.

solve the client's issues in some way."

There are many clever ways of doing this, he says, but they all seem to stem from gaining a deep understanding of the client's business, then divining what the client needs – ideally before the client does.

"[Clients] will choose the suppliers who seem to be committed and thinking about how to help them and their commercial needs – how to make them commercially more successful," he says.

Differentiation engines

But how will clients choose those firms? If there's no relationship, you can't have pleasant conversations about value before getting to the piquant ones about pricing.

This is where a firm's brand and reputation will increasingly count. Though many law firms seem to see 'brand' as somehow separate to reputation – perhaps partners still think brand is all about coffee mugs, calendars and pens – they are two sides of the same coin, and they both do a lot of the work when it comes to differentiation, or "what is it about us that would make us better value than another firm, or inspire loyalty in a client to stay with the one firm or to give that firm more of their business", as Robertson puts it.

"The vast majority of law firms are not considering branding the way that a consumer goods company would, but in this competitive environment, firms are having

to think about what they stand for, and why a client should choose them over another firm that offers broadly similar services, broadly similar prices, or cheaper prices."

"Many clients will say [that], for many purposes, a large number of law firms are interchangeable for a certain type of transaction. What is it that makes you different? Are you going to give me a lower price, or are you going

a world of 24-hour news and social media, brand value can be a precarious thing.

Your brand, outsourced

I put this point to most of those people interviewed for our feature in this issue, but I was most interested in Robertson's response to it – because it was while listening to a talk about how Bakers offshored a

the work they think they're buying isn't being done by the people clients have traditionally 'bought'? Does brand become more important as the core things clients buy diminishes?

Robertson agrees that brand does take up the slack, as it were, but counters by saying that "our brand isn't just about having good lawyers, because I think every law firm will say that". "We believe our brand is about being commercial, in other words understanding what the client's business drivers are and trying to organise our service and advice to meet that. It's about being innovative and ahead of the curve, and it's about being genuinely global, rather than just saying we've got offices everywhere.

"Those sort of brand attributes do apply when your supply chain changes. Our operation in Manila is not outsourced, it's offshored – we have lawyers and back office people there who are on our payroll, they are part of our firm.

"But you can see situations where, as LPO [legal process outsourcing] develops, we will either be working with offshore providers who have been hired by the client, or the client asks us to work with outsource providers as part of the contract of doing parts of the job."

But that doesn't mean a firm won't get hired, Robertson says. "[If clients] think that, in terms of managing the project and the end product, we are more commercial, more innovative, more seamless in

ROBERTSON'S JUSTICE

"I still believe that getting the right expert lawyer face to face with the client on issues the client is interested in is the ultimate BD experience."

to justify why you are better value?

"So that thought about how firms can differentiate themselves has [moved] much higher up the agenda."

For global firms, surely brand is even more important, for several reasons: it's a big stage, so you need to shout to be heard; nearly all firms are now engaging in multiple types of outsourcing/offshoring and so on, something which, if it goes awry, can badly affect reputation; and in

significant work area to Manila that set me thinking about the question, many months ago.

Firms rely, or have relied, on clients buying their great lawyers. The Bakers partner who described the Manila operation that day later answered a question on 'Why should a client buy you?' with the phrase 'Our clients buy Baker & McKenzie lawyers, because of our quality'.

That made me wonder: what might clients think when an increasing amount of

INTERVIEW LAURIE ROBERTSON cont.

how we provide that service globally, they are going to hire us to do it. It doesn't come down to an individual lawyer any more – it comes down to whether we [as a firm] can deliver against that promise."

Battle of the brands

Though of course it does, generally, come down to the lawyers, from a BD perspective: "I still believe that getting the right expert lawyer face to face with the client on issues the client is interested in is the ultimate BD experience."

But before that happens, the brand has to do a lot of heavy lifting. Robertson doesn't see brand being more important just because a firm is global, "but many of our clients are looking for that brand reassurance". Big businesses want global control and consistency, so "the correct brand is important in those situations". In other words, brand isn't any more important to a global firm than it might be to any firm.

It seems, from what Robertson says, that a firm's brand needs to be a hyper-condensed form of its strategic difference.

"Brand and strategy, in my mind, are two sides of the same coin for any organisation or product," he says.

And it can't be just an artifice, creating difference where there is none. "It has to come out of some truth in the organisation. If you look closely at most organisations, there is a culture or an attitude or a particular skill-set that

has resulted in some success, [and the brand is] building on that. I don't think you can invent brand [out of nothing]."

For Baker & McKenzie, Robertson says, it's about being commercial and global – "what we call 'passionately global'".

Robertson points to a smaller, UK-based firm as a

in much the same space as many similar law firms, so the strategy may not be totally unique, but what we have to be is better at delivery of that strategy," he says. "When we say that we are passionately global, we really do have to deliver against that promise. We can't be worse or the same as other law firms, we



good example of how brand can work well when it's tightly focused and embodies his pointers above: Nabarro.

The firm's 'Clarity matters' tagline, he says, must have come out of imagining what it was that clients liked about the firm. "It's a very good proposition, that the most important benefit they can offer is the provision of plain unequivocal advice, not pages of jargon. That's a promise that will transcend whatever practice area they're working in at that time, and whatever combination of LPO and other things they're doing."

But because a brand is a promise, a clear brand means delivering totally on that promise. "For many law firms it will be very tough to be unique. We all operate

have to be better – and that's very difficult, for an organisation."

Right people, right time

Helping create that promise is a big part of the job of the people in the back office, the BD and marketing people on the ground.

Since he joined the world of legal from the world of Mad Men, Robertson has seen a lot of change in the industry in those areas, though, he says, "it's tough to say anything in the legal business changes radically or particularly quickly". But one thing that's developed is the acceptance of the necessity for professional management.

For Bakers, he says, "having

professional management in place is a source of competitive advantage".

Does that mean getting more people into law firms from backgrounds such as his? "More firms are looking at bringing people in from outside to help them think through their strategy and their client relationships, and trying to improve [BD] processes."

This shift is a good and necessary thing, he says. "Bringing in fresh skills is important. If you're looking at changing the way you pitch for new business, for instance and you want to improve your pitch percentage and be more efficient at how you pitch, it's a good idea to bring somebody in from an organisation where they do that better than we do in law firms."

Wherever they come from, Robertson says it is vital that marketing and BD work in concert, and are managed from one place, a thought echoed by others in our feature article.

BD and marketing should not be corporate fiefdoms running separate operations – they are both essential and interdependent parts of the new world of customer-focused thinking in tomorrow's successful law firm.

Or, as Robertson puts it: "BD and marketing are just two aspects of the same department and group – they are all about building business for the firm." ●

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FEATURE



Who are you, anyway?



Is differentiation a myth? Will brand get more important as outsourcing grows? What does your firm really stand for? Rupert White goes in search of BD and marketing nirvana

Why should a customer buy your firm, rather than another?

That was one of the most telling questions asked by Baker & McKenzie's global marketing and BD chief, Laurie Robertson, in this issue's interview. It's something most business sectors have struggled with for years, but one which legal has only had to worry about fairly recently.

"The vast majority of law firms are not considering branding the way that a consumer goods company would," Robertson says.

"But in this competitive environment, firms are having to think about what they stand for, and why a client should choose them over another firm that offers broadly similar services, broadly similar prices, or cheaper prices." Many clients, he says, see their firms as "interchange-

able", and he doesn't mean high street firms – he's talking about top 20 global brands.

Why is this? How could it possibly come to pass that comparatively large corporate businesses engaged in relatively specialised work end up being indistinguishable in the eyes of customers?

Perhaps it's the Holy Grail of 'full service'. Firms large and small have always striven, overtly or not, to be everything to all clients. They've done this mainly because it was the easiest way of keeping clients – and plenty of client access meant opportunities for 'up-selling' and 'cross-selling'.

This has led to a war of attrition, where top firms talk about how they have a team for every kind of work, lateral hire to create those teams, and sell themselves through the legal press and directories as great at everything.

The reality is that 99.9% of law firms can't deliver real full service, in the sense of being equally brilliant in every category, so clients always end up just a little disappointed, some of the time.

But chasing the mythical full service beast has had a highly problematic impact on marketing and BD: how exactly do you differentiate your firm when its selling point is being good at everything, everywhere in the world, for everyone – and there are tens of other firms saying exactly the same thing?

Clients have now woken up to this myth, as they have woken up to the power they have to reform the way law firms charge for work. In fact, those two issues are interdependent – as clients have pushed back on pricing, so firms have had to work out what they stand for, what they

excel at and what that means for their client base.

It's come to mean radical pricing reforms, often spurred on by the increasing intervention by bean counters on the client side, changes in BD and marketing behaviour across the board, a rethink of the importance of brand and reputation, new eyes on client development, and a need for staff with skills honed in the more business-focused sectors of industry.

Pitching, pricing and procurement

Judith Prime is managing director of business development for CMS Cameron McKenna, one of 2010's most talked-about firms. She says loyalty doesn't mean what it used to in legal – as the economy has pushed clients

Who are you, anyway... cont.

to put pressure on rates, the value of work done in the past now plays second fiddle to a firm's pitch for work tomorrow.

Also, she says, client procurement people have become a huge part of the business-winning process. "It's just phenomenal [how much more procurement is being more involved]. About 81% of our pitches recently have had significant procurement involvement – if you took that [test] three years ago, you'd probably be looking at less than 10%. That in turn has put huge pressure on rates – that's something we're all having to contend with."

CMS CMCK has dealt with some of the demands of procurement to reduce rates by embarking on far-reaching outsourcing deals, and it is far from alone in doing so. The firm also works hard, Prime says, to make sure it's listening to clients in a deep way, and fine-tuning the firm's cost base to ensure maximum value. But that's not easy. "You can only make work at lower rates profitable if you know how to manage it effectively, and that means, in law firms, changing behaviours. For anyone to try to change any behaviour, it's not easy to do overnight."

[\(Download Judith Prime's paper *The Future of Fees*\)](#)

At Wragge & Co in the Midlands, Nicola Lynch is business development director for Wragges. She says that

BD has to learn new skills to deal with having a new group of people involved in winning business. BD has to work out if procurement is "acting as a blocker to talking to the lawyers", she says – and if so, "that has to ring alarm bells". This is a key part of opportunity analysis, she says, and if procurement is really getting in the way, perhaps it's work the firm is better off without.

Your flexible friends?

But even where procurement is a more helpful part of the

now – that's something I feel has changed dramatically in the last couple of years. [So] your opportunity analysis, and 'placing your bets' wisely, is more important than ever."

Michael Michaelides, associate director for BD at Allen & Overy, agrees that law firms are now contending with procurement on a regular basis. "We've had to find different language and get under the skin of what procurement are looking for – not just in the documents, but across the whole pitch process.

"Now, rightly so, we're having to talk about the

way in terms of delivering this informational armoury to BD and marketing folk. Customer relationship management systems are now established as vital, but the newer breed of technologies, such as proposal generation technology and reference/CV collation tools, are now used alongside business intelligence systems to give client-facing people maximal leverage.

Michaelides says A&O is "about to launch a new system that'll allow us to create very simple draft pitches using a document assembly tool – it'll really help us improve

the efficiency of our pitching process". But, he says, "that's only going to work if we as a function are really on top of the quality of the information, so we're working hard on our working practice so that [the data] can be relied upon". This automation doesn't mean BD people can just kick back, though: "We're not expecting BD to spend any less time

doing pitches, but we are expecting the balance of that time to change dramatically, to give more time on the tailoring, messaging and coaching – the value-added part of winning proposals."

Differentiation and brand

This value-add language is, of course, differentiation in a new guise. It's how a firm makes good on its brand promise,

"We're having to talk about the mechanics of how we're going to do the work. It's about being more open and clear about the delivery."

Michael Michaelides, associate director for BD, A&O



process, the new harsh focus of pricing that procurement people bring to the equation means deep changes in BD unit practice.

"You have to be much more flexible in terms of the type of pricing you're capable of delivering, the type of project management you're capable of delivering, [and take a] flexible approach to client service.

"The client is the most powerful in the dynamic

mechanics of how we're going to do the work. It's about being more open and clear about the delivery of the project or deal, and that's one of the things procurement are looking for: clarity, control, and being able to choose between different approaches."

Two things procurement departments really like are knowledge of costs and analysis of how to deliver work more cost-efficiently.

Law firms have come a long

Who are you, anyway... cont.

and its brand promise is its difference.

But does differentiation in the legal market really exist? Not quite, says Chris Hinze, head of corporate communications for Hogan Lovells.

"When you say differentiation that tends to mean [to most people] they're getting something that is absolutely unique. I believe that, actually, you can't differentiate law firms. What you can do is make them distinctive."

That distinction might sound like wordplay, he says, but it's important – "if you can make yourself distinctive and you do that through a number of different means, you've probably got a stronger chance of standing out in the minds of potential clients. That's probably a more fertile area of exploration than trying to seek this holy grail of differentiation".

To Richard Grove, marketing and business development director at Allen & Overy, differentiation is a matter of opportunity as much as anything: the best firms could all be the same, but they're not – because they can choose where to be different.

"If all the magic circle firms have done their research correctly, by definition there will be no differentiation – if

they devise a marketing and BD strategy that matches that research. So you have to look elsewhere [for differentiation]." There are two ultimate differentiators, Grove says: "The character of the firm and how you interact with the client, which to some extent is an embodiment of brand, and the client relationship – and that's the ultimate, because no two relationships could ever be judged to be the same."

Brand is very important

To Lynch at Wragges, beneath the magic circle there are identifiable differences between firms – but clients often can't see it, because the differences that exist aren't always things the client cares about.

Back to the factory floor

Lynch has a better way of getting close to the client and being different: "You have to

you earn. You have to do it in a commercial way."

Gerard Bornebroek is now director of business development, Europe, at Latham & Watkins, but he spent much of the last decade in the BD function at Clifford Chance, and worked with Laurie Robertson. He says that reputation and differentiation "are much more important than branding as an activity", but he agrees with many of those interviewed that firms have to

find innovative ways of setting themselves apart – quality is no longer a unique selling point.

"It can either be you're a very good niche player, or you have the best client-focused service, or you can team up with your client in a way that no other law firm can do, etc. The differentiation is in the clients' perception of the

service. There are many ways of tackling that, but the closer you can get to your client in their mind, and physically, the more positive your differentiation is. This can be around how a project is managed, the accuracy of the financial details you're giving them upfront, and the actual bill. Or this can be about creating an application."

Did he say 'create an

"Actually, you can't differentiate law firms. What you can do is make them distinctive."

Chris Hinze, head of corporate comms, Hogan Lovells



in this respect, Grove says. "You need to understand the client's needs, but the brand itself is a differentiator – there's an element of promise and expectation [in the brand]. With an existing client or, even more so, a prospective client, if you're looking for a score to be built up that'll win you a client relationship, brand is a contributor to it – what your brand promises or doesn't."

be prepared to invest time in the client, and they need to be prepared to invest in you." She asks if someone from Wragges can go to a client business and spend a day in the factory, for example. "If you say that, they love it," she says. However, there is a limit to this 'extra mile' effort: "You've got to work out how much you can afford to invest based on the revenues that

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Who are you, anyway... cont.

application'? Actually, he did. To Bornebroek, marketing and BD (basically, sales and marketing in any other business) are all about meeting customer need. So even an iPad app, however anodyne such a thing might sound, can go a long way to deepening relationships and building reputation. One app L&W has developed, the Book of Jargon, an app-based overview of finance capital market definitions, has, he says, garnered 15,000 downloads.

It's one of the ways, he says, to "really connect to your clients and potential clients. It actually has added value, [which we know from] client feedback".

Bornebroek says these apps aren't marketing, they're meeting needs and providing real value – and they're also great marketing. Whatever purposes they serve, apps can deliver brand visibility and client respect. "It's just listening to your client and getting closer to them to fulfil their needs in one way or the other."

This strikes to the heart of what can make a law firm truly different – it can be anything, as long as it means something and fits a good strategic goal.

Anne Groves, a communications consultant who's worked with some of the biggest names in legal, agrees that "firms can say they're international or full service or client-focused, and some can claim to be value for money,

but it's not easy to differentiate in those ways". Like Robertson, she says it's best to take something truly different about the firm and turn that into a USP – she points to CMS CMCK's "genuinely deeper European network" as an example of a real differentiator.

Fundamentally, all law firms, she says, "need to

firms within the last four to five years". Those who've spent their whole careers in legal, she says, have often never been given the opportunity to shine in external situations.

"If you look at the people who are in middle management in BD teams in a lot of law firms, you've got people who have never been out [in

better moving to law, because they come from a fee-earning environment. Hinze himself came to legal from PR and, he says, PR people are "used to being client-centric, they're used to working in the fee-earning environments, they understand what the pressures are like for the lawyers because they've effectively sat

as that professional themselves, and they are very service focused".

But these outsiders are elusive, says Prime at CMS CMCK: "If you talk to anybody in a senior management role in BD, anywhere, recruitment is a nightmare. To find really good individuals to join our teams when we have gaps is not easy."

They are out there, though, as Simone Timcke from recruitment business Ambition outlines on page 12, though perhaps senior BD people like Prime are more willing to hire them than the partners.

However they are brought in, they face the challenges of differentiation in a market that looks like turning red hot in the next few years, and they need to become pitch perfect to please very demanding clients.

That sounds like a challenge few people interviewed in this issue of Briefing would be able to resist. ●

"It's the BD professionals on the front line rather than in the back office who are able to add value."

Nicola Lynch, BD director, Wragge & Co



do some hard thinking to work out which part of the market they're occupying and decide".

Recruiting the future

Who's going to do that hard thinking? If law firms are thinking straight, it will be a mix of BD, marketing and client relationship people with legal sector and non-legal backgrounds.

Lynch says law firms have more recently wised up to the need to pull in people with a background from beyond legal. She hails from Ernst & Young, and "of about 40 people in my role I would say half of them left to go to law

the market, and] if your entire career has developed in a law firm, you probably haven't had much real business development experience.

"[But] in the long run it's changing. Some of the bigger firms are recognising that it's the BD professionals on the front line rather than in the back office who are able to add value. The Big Four accountancy firms recognised that 15 years ago."

But some people fare better than others. Hinze is far from alone when he says that people who have had professional services experience, whether that's in PR or management consulting or any other client-facing partnership business, often do

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ANALYSIS RECRUITING BD AND MARKETING

Outside edge

Law firms need to hire more people into BD and marketing from beyond legal to be competitive, says Simone Timcke of Ambition

Firms are rebuilding their skeletal marketing and business development teams, but which are brave enough to do so with talent from outside legal?

In 2010, some firms did take a leap of faith and hire people from different sectors into BD, but they were few and far between. The most common hires were ex-bankers appointed to client-facing roles with a financial services focus, an area in which firms often struggle to find good people.

Sadly, this often back-fired. As the financial crisis eased, they were too easily tempted back to their roots – hardly surprising when they could earn at least two to three times their law firm salary at a bank.

The sad knock-on effect of this is that the firms that were previously leading the way in hiring from outside legal are now more cautious than ever.

The right stuff

Good sources of candidates who make the transition to legal with ease are publishing or networking organisations that have law firms as clients.

These people know exactly how lawyers work because they've worked with managing partners. They know how to influence them, but they still have a much more commercial

edge to their marketing/BD than many of those that have grown up in the sector.

A couple of years ago we met a great candidate from a large legal education organisation who stood head and shoulders above the candidates at her salary level from the legal sector – and not one of our clients would interview her. She eventually secured a BD executive role in a law firm

One US law firm recruiting last year said at the beginning of the process that they were very open to people without a legal background. The BD director duly interviewed a range of candidates and shortlisted a strong person to put before the partners.

But, having sailed through the first two rounds of the process, the candidate was rejected by the lead

must have legal experience. When asked why, given that the hiring manager came from the FMCG sector, the answer was because he had struggled to settle into the environment – so he assumed others would have the same experience.

Bravery required

Whatever the reason good candidates are being ignored, there are too few firms brave enough to hire from outside the sector, and too many that are put off by the occasional bad experience.

There are great success stories of the bolder firms. Many years ago, one national law firm hired a marketer from FMCG [fast-moving consumer goods] who won over the hearts and minds of the lawyers, completely changing the way they thought about clients – and sure enough, the revenue came rolling in.

If only we could persuade more partners to be as open-minded as that firm – then the legal sector would start to be really competitive and attract the best talent, rather than having a limited pool of candidates that most firms find fairly uninspiring.

"The tide is gradually turning with senior marketing/BD people – the hard part is convincing the partners."

Simone Timcke, Ambition



that had been a client of hers and was prepared to take the risk on someone a bit different.

Two years later she was back on the market and law firms couldn't interview her fast enough. Within three weeks she managed to secure a step up in title to manager and a £12,000 pay rise.

The tide is gradually turning with senior marketing/BD people, but the hard part is convincing the partners.

partner in the business area because he didn't have a legal background. That candidate eventually gave up trying to get into the sector and is now firmly embedded in a financial services firm.

A baffling current trend is a refusal by those from outside legal to entertain candidates from the very sectors they came from.

One firm was absolutely adamant that any candidate

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about recruiting BD
and marketing people**



ANALYSIS BD INFORMATION

Closing the value gap

Firms now need relationship and financial data to win new business, says Sally Calverley for LexisNexis

The global legal services pie shrank by 6% in 2010. Clients expect a measurable increase in value and will shop around for it, and law firms have to compete to retain, let alone grow, market share.

But there is good news – it is possible to demonstrate an increase in value over the period of a client relationship. You can also show how you will continue this trend, while maintaining satisfaction levels. And, by using some clever insight techniques, it's possible to show prospects how you will deliver more for less without a drop in quality.

The value gap

PwC's Law Firms Survey 2010 warns that "the biggest information gap for firms appears to be in the area of understanding clients' preferences and needs – a critical area".

Law firms want to engage with their clients on improving value, but value is subjective. To understand clients' needs involves understanding their sensitivity to factors such as outcome, service, access and detractors – which lie largely within the firm's control – as well as contextual factors,

such as marketplace developments, which lie outside its control. If the PwC report is right, firms aren't always delivering on those challenges.

Clients try to redress the perceived value deficit that results by pushing back on price. Some firms have responded by launching new pricing strategies, others by asking their clients how they could add value. But clients don't want to advise law firms on how to unlock value from their businesses. Successful differentiation by value requires a more sophisticated approach, and the courage to seize the initiative.

Marketing has already felt the tremors of change in panel tenders. Clients and prospects alike use pitches to gain value, either 'more for less' or much better value for the same price. The stakes are higher: more firms playing for fewer places and lower volumes.

Prospects want to know that you will unlock more value than your competitors, and you will monitor and deliver progress against a plan. Existing clients will increasingly expect firms to prove they have been tracking value, and will want more in the future. The trick is to pleasantly surprise your client, not make

them think: "Why have we only arrived at this offer now?"

Deeper understanding

By using client insights to segment the market and client stewardship techniques to finesse relationships, firms can better understand what value means to each client and work out together how to deliver a measurable improvement.

But things should start with easy access to reliable financial and client data. Many firms will already have this at their fingertips – or they will have if they use tools such as LexisNexis Redwood Analytics and a decent client relationship management interface such as LexisNexis InterAction.

As Alan Rhodes, financial controller at Brodies, says: "Until you introduce a business intelligence tool like Redwood you have no idea how powerful they are. We now produce relevant financial data on client sectors and profitability in 10 minutes, allowing us more time to focus on innovative solutions and approaches that add value to clients."

The investment in the technology is an indication of willingness to take value

seriously. As Rhodes says, clients "are impressed by how open we can be to new ideas, and think we are pretty forward-thinking". But Brodies' openness is based, quite properly, on financial data and evidence on profitability.

This last point is critical. Firms determined to retain market share and unlock value for their clients can only do so if they have a strong grip on their own profitability. The success of any pricing or new client acquisition strategy has to start with a keen understanding of the current financial and client position.

The debate has moved on from 'do clients want better value' to 'how can we deliver better value'. The stakes of failing to answer this question are increasingly high. Firms should be looking at what resources they already have in place to assess accurately where they are now and where they could be. The strength of business intelligence is its ability to shine a light in dark corners and produce reliable data effectively. The drive for value starts here.

Click here to find out more about LexisNexis Redwood Analytics



CASE STUDY GIDE LOYRETTE NOUEL

Better, faster, fitter proposals**France's premier law firm is using automation to prepare for pitches, giving more time to the BD people to stretch their skills**

For marketing and BD people in law firms, one of the key goals in winning new business – whether that's from new or existing clients – is to effectively present that your firm has the right people, with the right skills, to meet the client's needs.

Once BD has worked out the client's needs – no mean feat – the pitching operation has to allow the firm to prove its expertise and the relevancy of its experience, in the shortest amount of time and with maximum consistency.

As France's largest homegrown law firm, with 21 offices around the world, Gide Loyrette Nouel has a strong international focus and knows the importance of consistent, homogeneous pitching across its office base. To deliver this, Gide has installed Hubbard One's Experience Manager to speed up the creation of reference lists to improve Gide's technical performance when pitching.

Jillian McFarland, a marketing officer with Gide Loyrette Nouel, sees some key advantages to using Experience Manager to rapidly source better pre-proposal information: "The main advantage is having one source for information on experience."

Until now, she explains, staff at Gide would have to leaf through press releases and existing track records, or contact partners directly, to build information on work Gide

has done – which soaks up valuable time. Now references are "generated quasi-automatically", McFarland says, staff have "more time to look after other elements of the pitch".

"Experience Manager gives us a pretty complete idea of what we've done in an area or business sector, and it gives us more of a basis on which to contact the relevant lawyers for more information on their experience," she explains.

pitch consistency across this multi-branch international operation – partly because Experience Manager is more user-friendly than the firm's previous solution, and partly because it boosts uniformity of data entry across the business.

Now, McFarland says, "we're trying to give the whole firm a vision of our experience, and we're trying to get everybody implicated in the creation

in – McFarland says these two rubrics are "the golden rules" of the application.

Being able to automate references doesn't just help drive consistency, nor does it simply create a better and more centralised information infrastructure for BD and marketing to exploit, firm-wide – fundamentally, it makes Gide more competitive, because there's more time to finesse the pitch. "We were using valuable staff time running around after information, where we could be more focused on creating added value in our pitches and making our offer to the client," McFarland explains.

This is what technology is supposed to offer a law firm: more time on the pitch, less time on the drudgery.

And, when it comes to pitch presentation, "we're definitely presenting much more pertinent references now, and we're able to design exactly what we're showing the client", she says.

"We weren't addressing the criteria as accurately as we could have been, and we were giving too much information – whereas now we're able to bring you the top five highlights, for example, very quickly – and we know that's what the client wants to hear."

We're presenting more pertinent references, and we're able to better design exactly what we show the client."

Jillian McFarland, Gide Loyrette Nouel

"Before, we were faced with a white sheet of paper a lot of the time. It's not taking away all the work, but it's giving us a solid platform to start from."

Gide plans to implement Hubbard One's Proposal Generation module in the future – with both modules in play, the firm aims to create better pitches in less time.

One of the reasons Gide is adopting technologies from Hubbard One's suite of BD solutions is because Experience Manager has been a catalyst to drive better

of that vision, for marketing and business development purposes – centralising the efforts in terms of practice areas to the maximum extent possible".

That's the consistency side of the equation – almost more important is the quality of the information going into the firm's systems. Someone has to put the information in for the system to 'know' something, and the quality and coherence of data that comes out of the system is only as good as the quality of data that goes

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