MBD Leaders 2026

Tuesday 10 November – Underwood Lofts

6-14 Underwood St, London N1 7JQ

Gold partner

Silver partners

Draft day shape, subject to change

09.00 – 9:30	**BREAKFAST AND NETWORKING** Grab a coffee and connect with your peers!
09:30 – 9:40	**WELCOME** ***Richard Brent, head of content, Briefing*** ***Andreea Dulgheru, editor, Briefing***
09:40 – 10:00	**ICEBREAKER** The fun starts with a quick ice-breaker session designed to get you in the mood to collaborate, share and learn!
10:00 – 10:35	**KEYNOTE: Human relationships as the competitive advantage** As AI re-shapes the services clients seek from law firms, will the human factor increasingly be the key differentiator when it comes to higher-risk work and long-term relationships? If human trust becomes more important, how can BD balance people and tech to become a truly trusted partner in a world where client loyalty is shifting fast? ***Nishma Patel-Robb, speaker, adviser, CEO, Switched ON***
10:35 –11:20	**KEYNOTE LEADERS PANEL: The future shape of the MBD function in the AI era** • What will business development, marketing and client teams look like in 3-5 years? • Which roles will disappear, which evolve, and which become more important as AI changes how law firms operate? • Is "cognitive offloading" inevitable? If so, how can leaders foster critical thinking? • What skills will future hires need beyond traditional MBD experience? • How should teams balance human expertise with AI-enabled efficiency? ***Karen Snell, chief business development and marketing officer, Kennedys*** ***Ruth Stringer, director of client experience, Eversheds Sutherland*** ***Shama Perera, director of business development and marketing, Shoosmiths*** ***Chair: Richard Brent, head of content, Briefing***
11:20 – 11:50	**MORNING COFFEE BREAK** **Continue the conversations with a brew**

11:50 – 12:35	**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS:** Pick a topic and join your peers to share approaches, experiences and learnings
	• **Pricing for AI-enabled matters**
	  o Exploring pricing models and factoring in the cost of tech
	  o Fixed fees and understanding what AI workflows are really costing
	  o Profitability by work type
	  o How are your firm's lawyers handling conversations with clients around fees?
	• **Optimising the client experience to drive brand loyalty**
	  o Building trust – what does trust look like from the client perspective?
	  o Do your fee-earners know how to really listen to clients?
	  o Creating a seamless client onboarding process
	  o How can firms use AI to optimise the client experience?
	• **Institutionalising the client relationship for longevity**
	  o Shifting from 'my client' to 'the firm's client'
	  o Getting clarity on which clients are dependent on one partner (and what the revenue associated with that relationship is)
	  o Formalising early succession planning with partners
	  o Approaches to building multi-partner relationships
	• **Tech-driven efficiencies for marketing and BD teams**
	  o Use cases to work smarter:
	  ➢ Pitching
	  ➢ Directories
	  ➢ Presentations
	  ➢ Agents
	  ➢ What else?
	• **Career paths and managing multi-generational teams**
	  o How to bridge the differing values, work styles and expectations of multiple generations?
	  o Benefits to compete with overinflated salaries at other firms
	  o What are the skill sets you prioritise when hiring?
	  o Developing experienced marketing and BD team members

12:35 – 12:45	**Head back to plenary for quickfire feedback**
12:45 – 1:05	**ROUNDTABLE QUICKFIRE FEEDBACK** Hear the highlights from the roundtable discussions you weren't part of.
1:05 – 2:00	**NETWORKING LUNCH BREAK** Keep the conversation going over a buffet lunch

2:00 – 2:45	**Adding up the true cost and commercial impact of AI** Tokens and budget-busting usage-based pricing is driving a turnaround in thinking on AI use, but the real economics of running agentic workflows at scale are much broader, from the cost of infrastructure, operations, people, risk to the hidden cost of engineering around AI's limitations. How are MBD Leaders working with fee earners to frame complex matter and pricing conversations amid changing client expectations? How are client conversations evolving as client firms increasingly embed AI in their own work? What does this mean for the work firms will win going forwards? Who is capturing the value of AI-enabled work – clients or private practice firms? ***Nathan Whinray, senior pricing manager, Linklaters*** ***Raksha Jain, director of IT programmes and change, Norton Rose Fulbright*** ***Torben Petersen, partner, Simon Kucher*** ***Andreea Dulgheru, editor, Briefing***
2:45 – 3:30	**Data, client intelligence and growth strategy: Where will your next £10 million come from?** Identifying and delivering a portfolio of growth opportunities requires firms to better understand their clients, spot emerging demand and rigorously qualify, prioritise and convert opportunities. This is increasingly challenging as demand is uneven, growth opportunities are concentrated in particular practices, sectors and geographies, and clients expect greater commercial value, efficiency and AI-enabled delivery. How can firms bring together client, matter and market data to build a clearer picture of where future revenue will come from? And how can technology help turn insight into action? ***Chris Jefferson, director of sales, Litera*** ***Jo Cooper, global head of marketing & business development operations, Simmons & Simmons*** ***Owen Williams, chief marketing officer, Trowers & Hamlins*** ***Andreea Dulgheru, head of content, Briefing***
3:30 – 4:00	**AFTERNOON COFFEE BREAK** Discuss the day so far with your peers over a coffee.
4:00 – 4:30	**CLOSING KEYNOTE: Communicating for impact in an AI world** As AI makes high-quality analysis increasingly accessible, the differentiator for law firms will be how effectively they translate their expertise into something clients can understand, trust and act on. Drawing on her experience as a seven-time Emmy-winning comedy writer, Beth Sherman introduces her practical approach to Audience-First Communication, helping Marketing and BD leaders make complex ideas more relevant, engaging and persuasive. Through smart humour and interactive insights, Beth will explore how to capture attention, build trust and turn strong thinking into communication that strengthens client relationships and moves decisions forward. ***Beth Sherman, leadership speaker, 7x Emmy-winning comedy writer, Audience-First Communication™***

4:30 – 4:40	**CLOSING AND THANKS** ***Richard Brent, head of content, Briefing*** ***Andreea Dulgheru, editor, Briefing***
4:40	**DRINKS RECEPTION** *Join the Briefing team and chat to your peers over a drink!*