

Introduction

leadership themes in professional services marketing

The market for professional services and consulting firms is changing. A number of factors are influencing that change, but without doubt the principal reason is client requirements.

Across sectors – law, accounting, property, engineering, management consulting and others – clients are asking for more from their professional services advisers. This is not a new trend, as there has been a steady evolution from clients wanting to buy a product or service to needing advice – the idea of the ‘Trusted Advisor’ was first put forward by David Maister (Maister, Green and Galford, 2000). However, today clients are going further and many want their advisers to anticipate and deliver full-service, commercial solutions to meet their changing needs (Figure 0.1).

FIGURE 0.1 Changing client needs



With new client demands comes the requirement for professional services firms to change their business model (Figure 0.2). Firms have to recognize that they are no longer in business just to provide technically excellent products and services. They need to go the extra mile to anticipate, understand and deliver commercial solutions to their clients. This has to be done in a manner and style that not only resolves their clients’ challenges, but also delivers a great experience in the process. Clients want relationships with their advisers that cover all points – technical excellence, service

provision, and client experience – not just a narrow set defined by the firm’s technical disciplines. They are looking for a partner that cares about business outcomes as much as they do.

FIGURE 0.2 The professional’s role is changing



To meet these needs the modern professional services firm needs to recruit, retain and develop a team of people that thinks first and foremost about the client and is ready to address all of their challenges.

Thankfully it’s been clear for many years that whatever expertise an individual or team has in their chosen discipline, a successful career or practice cannot be achieved unless that technical ability is paired with strong client relationship skills. The ability to attract, develop and retain clients has always been a prerequisite for success in a professional services firm.

More recently and across the professions, firms have started to realize that there is a limit to how far that combination of technical skill and relationship management can take you. That limit is rooted in a failure to understand that developing client relationships cannot be a singular or team activity alone.

Like all critical business activities, client relationship development has to be led from the top, but it cannot be the sole preserve of individual partners, directors and senior managers. It has to be a shared, whole-firm obsession which then embraces and influences company-wide concerns such as strategy, structure, systems and skills.

The widening gap between individual and firm-wide capability in these areas has been exacerbated by clients now demanding better solutions and an improved experience. No firm can achieve those outcomes for clients without such considerations permeating the DNA and values of the business.

Until recently, there had been a gap in the capability and capacity of professional services firms to deliver on that obsession. This begs the question as to what type of individual or team discipline is best placed to help plug that gap.

The need for marketing

The UK Chartered Institute of Marketing still defines marketing as ‘The management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably’ (Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2014). I always say that marketing is about seeing the world through the eyes of your client – first understanding and then acting on what they need and want – and everything else should then flow from there.

Whatever your preferred definition, it is exactly this client-focused capability and mindset that professional services firms should be looking for in their people. All marketing and business development professionals should recognize skills such as identifying market trends, understanding client requirements and recognizing competitive advantage as their natural territory. These skills lie at the heart of our professional capability and credibility.

These skills need to be honed and delivered in an environment where the principal point of contact between the client and the firm is the team of technical practitioners delivering the advice or service required. The marketing and business development teams often do not have the benefit of a direct channel of engagement or communication with the client. They need the ability to build their client understanding through their technical colleagues. Their relationship and engagement with their colleagues firm-wide – their internal clients – are critical and prerequisites for success.

Unfortunately, marketers in professional services firms have for too long been pigeonholed as only external communications experts, designing and implementing plans to push out the latest PR or promotional campaign. Similarly, business developers have been wrapped up in coordinating and finessing urgent client pitches, delivering to ever-tighter timescales. However, in both cases, the individuals or teams involved are usually kept remote from the client and used in support of the partners or managers leading the client engagement.

These individuals and teams are recognized as providing critical capabilities to the business and adding skills and professionalism to their firms, but they are rarely seen as setting the agenda or offering strategic capabilities for their firms. Marketing and business development professionals have been seen as valuable foot soldiers, but not officer material – helping to win battles, but not define how or where those battles should be fought.

Marketing, business development, sales...

The roles and titles of those leading and contributing to the development of client relationships vary within professional services firms. At first, people joined firms in marketing roles as the majority of their responsibilities covered promotional and communications activities. Increasingly, business development roles have developed as firms have professionalized the client development and sales process. Some people hold sales roles, but it remains a term or title little used in professional services firms.

In addition, people holding marketing, business development or sales roles can either be specialists from those areas that have joined to bolster the firm's capabilities or technical practitioners – lawyers, accountants, consultants – who have stepped across either temporarily or permanently into such positions.

The title held or career path pursued by such individuals does not really matter. Most firms are now finding that a blend of skills and experiences is needed to progress the development of client relationships. The title and role are not important – the commitment to the client is.

In this book we will use marketing and business development interchangeably and will not get hung up on the distinctions. We will make few references to sales because, although it remains a critical step in the process, the overall objective is the

progression of the client relationship, not the individual sale. A sale is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a successful client relationship.

The barriers to marketing leadership

There are a number of barriers that prevent people in marketing and business development roles progressing into leadership positions within professional services firms. The best-known and most pernicious is the division drawn between ‘fee-earners’ and ‘non-fee-earners’, which suggests that only a technical professional can lead the growth and development of the firm – everyone else being in a ‘support’ function.

The terms fee-earner and non-fee-earner, although well intentioned by themselves, suggest a culture where a) the principal role of a lawyer/accountant/consultant etc is to get money out of the client, and b) if someone isn’t a technician, then their role is defined by what they don’t do, that is, earn fees, not by what they contribute.

It is never very clear what clients think of the terms fee-earner and non-fee-earner. It doesn’t indicate immediately that a firm’s focus is on everyone working in the best interest of the client’s requirements.

Historically, professional rules prevented anyone from a ‘support’ function achieving partner, or even quasi-partner, status, and so sitting on the senior management team of the firm. Those rules have now largely been removed, but it remains common for the head of marketing or business development to report into a ‘Marketing Partner’, rather than have a direct line to the Managing Partner/Director or Chief Executive Officer.

I have been party to many a conversation where professional services marketers have bemoaned their status in firms when similar positions in consumer businesses command much greater power and influence. They complain about the ‘support’ status of marketing and business development in the professions and the cultural traditions that preserve leadership positions for the partners of the firm. They see a ‘glass ceiling’ that cannot be penetrated without partner status.

What those in professional services firms have failed to recognize is that in a consumer-led business, with maybe millions rather than hundreds of customers, the marketers understand their business’s customers better than anyone else and champion their cause. That knowledge earns influence at the top table reserved for partners or directors in professional services firms, who are also typically the ‘owners’ of the firm’s key client relationships.

The real reason that many marketing and business development leaders do not make it is that they know little of additional value about the firm’s clients and what they are really looking for. It’s a bitter pill to swallow, but they neither earn nor deserve a place at the top table. The ‘glass ceiling’ is not one of heritage and prejudice, but one of knowledge and insight.

The new breed of marketers

What marketers and business developers need to show their firms is that they can deliver the insight and intelligence that their consumer marketing colleagues frequently offer. Some firms will need people in these roles to specialize in, and take a lead on,

both developing client relationships and guiding their colleagues in the necessary skills to deliver that whole-firm client relationship obsession. The more advanced firms will offer the opportunity to become a complete client champion – the voice of the client – helping to shape and deliver the client solution and experience (Figure 0.3).

FIGURE 0.3 The marketer's role is changing

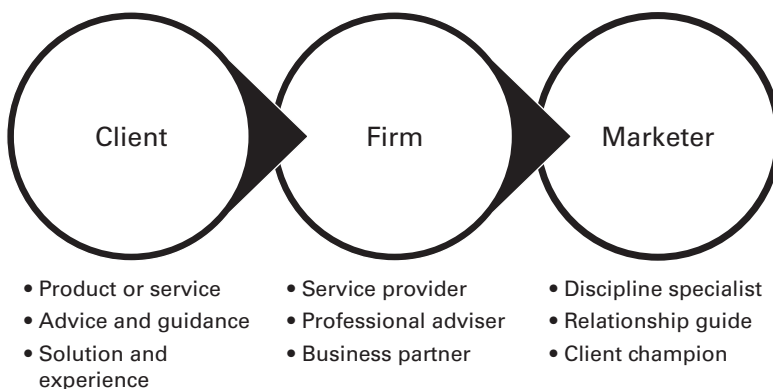


Thankfully, we are now seeing that new breed of marketing and business development professional step forward: leaders who do not accept that they are a 'support function' working in a subsidiary role to the firm's partners or directors. They are individuals and teams working alongside the current and future leadership of the business to design, shape and drive successful client strategies.

This book is for this new breed of professionals – not only marketing, business development and sales specialists, but also the firm's technical practitioners – who want to play a full role in their firm's obsession with client relationship development. This means stepping up as a leader in the business and having a material and measurable impact on everything the client demands from your firm. If you see yourself as merely a member of a support function who just delivers tasks, then stop reading here; read on if you want to be involved in setting the agenda and both lead and increase the impact and influence you have on your firm.

This book will help you understand how the development of your role and career can, in fact must, match the changing requirements of your clients and the corresponding opportunities for your firm (Figure 0.4).

FIGURE 0.4 Client, firm and marketer changing together



Today's top marketing leadership themes

To give you the ammunition to step up in your firm and become a client champion, we focus in this book on the themes we think are most relevant today to the modern professional services marketer. We also concentrate on how you apply knowledge of those themes and learn from experience and practical examples. Your value to your firm will come from knowing not just what to do, but how to do it.

Theory is critical – you have to be able to back up your advice and decisions with a solid foundation of knowledge and fact-based evidence – but you will not gain sufficient influence if you cannot both evidence and justify your plans for putting ideas into practice. This, therefore, is not a book that covers the A to Z of professional services marketing and client development theory. There are many good texts already covering that ground. In fact, if you are starting out on your journey of developing knowledge and skills in this area, I would encourage you to start with a text or course not specific to the professions. The core theories and models of marketing and client or customer development hold universal truths that transcend industry sector boundaries. Much is written about why the professions are different, but there is more that can be learnt from mainstream product or service marketing theory.

This book is therefore less about the 'why' and 'what' of marketing theory and more about the 'how' of marketing practice. It takes the themes we believe are relevant to all professional services leaders today and explores how some of the world's most successful firms are tackling them.

These themes are:

- 1 Growth – identifying and choosing markets and clients;
- 2 Understanding – listening and responding to client needs;
- 3 Connecting – connecting with clients and stakeholders;
- 4 Relationships – developing and managing client relationships;
- 5 Managing – influencing the marketing organization.

We have chosen these themes for the following reasons.

Growth

We start with growth because identifying and selecting markets and clients is a common and persistent obsession for all businesses. 'Who do you want to work for?' and 'How far and fast can you go?' are two questions that always consume a business leader's thinking.

We could have called this theme 'strategy', but in today's market your business strategy is undoubtedly driven by a growth objective. Firms are today refocusing on growth, and so marketers are challenged to help identify the right markets and clients to focus on.

They also need to consider whether the firm's business model needs to change to realize that growth, what globalization means for the growth imperative, and whether the firm can retain its DNA and values as it grows.

Understanding

Throughout this book we will propose that a marketer needs to be the client champion in their firm, helping the business to listen and respond to client needs. So few firms do this well that it has to be a priority for improvement.

Firms need to understand better what clients want and tailor their approach accordingly, and marketers must champion that client-focused approach in their firms. If listening and understanding clients are innate skills that all professionals need to develop, marketers must use them to change their firms for the better. They must also use what the latest research says about client requirements and their expectations of their professional advisers.

Connecting

This is more than just ‘old school’ marketing communications. Businesses need to move away from marketing campaigns that just pump out messages on products or services that interest them. Connecting is about building a conversation with clients and other key stakeholders. Here, marketers must combine all aspects of their role as discipline specialist, relationship guide and client champion.

‘Content marketing’ is a hot topic across different industries and media, which professional services firms must understand and grasp. Even if content is king and firms have something valuable to say, being heard is increasingly difficult in a world of cluttered communications. Marketers must understand how to cut through the noise, build connections and generate business.

Relationships

Firms now obsess about relationships, but developing and managing your most important client relationships successfully requires processes, capabilities and a shift in mindset that goes far beyond a trite phrase or plug-in software solution.

Great firms are built on great client relationships, but the development and management of those relationships cannot be left to chance, and marketers can set the pace in key account management. They must understand how to identify and focus on the relationships that really matter – and what you do with the others. The firm might be clear on what they want from a relationship, but by definition it is a two-way process – so marketers should build understanding of what the client wants from their relationship too.

Managing

This is where it all comes together, both as a leader in the marketing and business development team but also the wider firm. A marketer cannot achieve all of the above on their own, so their impact will most likely be measured by the influence they have on the team around them and the wider audience of the firm.

If great firms are built on great client relationships, the marketing organization must add to the value of those relationships, thrive and be credible in the wider firm and be clearly accountable for its actions and results. Marketing leaders need to develop and lead their team but, more importantly, the marketing capacity of the whole firm. Then they must measure and demonstrate the value of marketing through tangible results.

We explore each of these five themes through the eyes of a team of expert contributors whose experiences, of both success and failure, cover the full range of professions, size of firms and geographic locations. Whether you work for a global law firm, a regional accountancy practice or a small management consultancy, there are lessons and advice here that you can use tomorrow in your business. Moreover, if you work outside the professions, for instance in another service delivery business, you can compare and contrast your experiences with those of our experts.

Each theme has a short introductory chapter explaining its relevance, followed by three or four chapters authored by a theme expert. We then summarize lessons for each theme.

After these themes we return in a concluding chapter to exploring how the role of a client champion will evolve and what the future looks like for marketing and business development professionals.

Characteristics of a professional services firm

We stand by the assertion that there are more similarities than differences in best-practice marketing and business activities across sectors. The claim that everything about professional services marketing is different is overplayed. Nevertheless, there are some characteristics of the professional services sector that are important to understand.

The following are what we consider to be the 10 most important characteristics of a professional services firm that define the sector in comparison to others (Table 0.1). If you ignore these characteristics you will limit your ability to influence and impact the success of your firm. They should all be familiar to experienced marketers, but there is no harm in regularly reviewing whether you are paying enough attention to each in your marketing, business development and management programmes.

Some of these characteristics arise because we operate in a people-dominated service rather than a physical product market, others because firms are principally interested in business customers (clients, to use the preferred professional services term) rather than consumers, and a few are just peculiarities of the professions and related disciplines. All of them are important for marketers to understand and consider when designing and implementing policies, plans and programmes.

TABLE 0.1 Top 10 characteristics of a professional services firm

Characteristic	Definition	Consideration for marketers
1. Perishability	As a former colleague once put it, 'Consulting is like being in the airline business. Every day a plane takes off with seats for all your consultants and you want to make sure a client is paying for every one of them to fly. You can't sell a seat today for yesterday's flight.' Many businesses deal with perishability – think of soft fruit in a supermarket – but professional services and consulting businesses have a particular challenge. There are some results- or success-based charging models, but most firms sell time, and time expires every minute, hour and day.	Your role may be to plan for the future and implement campaigns that will deliver market, client and project opportunities, but you must not ignore the fact that your operational colleagues always have one eye on what they and their teams are doing today, tomorrow and next week. You have to see the short- and long-term pictures together. There will be no tomorrow if you cannot sell today. Utilization/billability/chargeable time is an obsession in firms, so you should think about that too and understand the finance fundamentals underpinning the business.
2. Professional pyramid	The pyramid comes in all shapes and sizes, with multiple layers, but it exists in every firm. At the top you have the partners, directors and senior management. They may own the business; they certainly set the agenda and manage most of the clients and all of the people. Below them are those aspiring to make the top tier; they might not run the client relationships, but they are probably delivering day to day your most important projects. Towards the bottom is the majority of the team: the engine room of the business, churning out the projects, racking up the chargeable time and making most of the profit for the firm.	You probably work with, worry about and listen to that top tier most of your time. If you're lucky, in the right firm culture and doing a great job, they may even consider you one of them. If you are not, you are unlikely to realize the influence and impact we talk about through the book. You are right to aim the majority of your time here, because that is where client interaction, relationships and sales are concentrated, but don't ignore the other tiers. The middle tier contains the leaders of the future and they will value your advice on developing their client skills. Help them now and they should repay you when they make it to the top. You may also find it easier to gain traction here, especially with new ideas and programmes, than you might with the top tier. The lower tier will have a thirst for knowledge, again in developing client-friendly skills. Also, they are a massive part of the brand experience for your client. If you can instil the right behaviours here, early in their careers, they will do your job for you.

TABLE 0.1 *continued*

Characteristic	Definition	Consideration for marketers
3. Intellect and challenge	Your 'product' is highly intelligent, very professional and passionate about what they do. Once convinced by a course of action, it will be a highly effective and compelling force, but it will not necessarily accept the course proposed and will require convincing. It will also have doubts and uncertainties on certain activities; in particular, marketing and business development, because the natural role of a professional is to 'advise' or 'tell', not 'enquire' and 'understand'.	You are privileged to work in such an intellectually stimulating environment. If you value debate, collaboration and a constant desire to improve, you will thrive. You will also find an audience that values your professionalism, because it is the bedrock of a firm and you bring something new to the mix. However, don't expect to get your way just because you say so and you 'understand marketing'. Expect to be challenged, always have data to justify your case and, while being determined and resolute, be prepared to change and reach a collegiate outcome. You will also need loads of emotional intelligence to read a room and work out how to get a sometimes-disparate group to the right outcome.
4. Consistency	People are different in the way that a product, eg a widget, is not. That's what makes working with people interesting, stimulating and fun. Your clients want all the intellect, innovation and ideas that come from human interactions, but they also want the job delivered as planned and, probably, would like the experience to be similar, if not identical, to their last project. If you deliver projects to different standards and styles, dependent on the vagaries of the individual or team involved, you don't have a firm or a brand: you just have a ragbag collection of individuals who happen to trade under the same banner.	Consistency and brand are essential bedfellows, so if you care deeply about the latter you need to obsess about the former, too. Behaviours, training, processes, systems, method statements etc may not seem the natural territory for a marketer, but they all help to underpin consistency in a firm. Get involved!

TABLE 0.1 *continued*

Characteristic	Definition	Consideration for marketers
5. Intangibility	<p>Not only are two widgets the same, but you can also pick them up. They have substance. You can see and touch what you're buying before you part with your cash. You can probably even ask for a sample to try first. You can meet a lawyer, accountant or engineer etc but you can't see what they are going to advise or design before you sign the contract. A client can start small and give the firm a minor commission before risking a large, critical one, but in most instances you can't take home that sample before committing to any purchase.</p>	<p>You have to do all you can to minimize the client's fear of intangibility. You have to help demonstrate expertise and experience – 'we may not have done this for you, but we've completed successful projects for other similar clients'. You have also to show empathy and identify ways that you and the client can share in developing a solution and build trust. If you can help the client shape the outcome, they will have more faith in you to deliver it when they finally sign the contract. And don't ignore the symbols of tangibility: smart offices, well-dressed professionals, impeccable behaviours... all play a part in reassuring the client and building confidence that there is more to your sales pitch than just words.</p>
6. Project risk	<p>In many instances the cost of professional advice is not a client's largest project outlay: consider the advisers' fees as a percentage of an acquisition cost or your solicitor's costs when you buy a house. But the risk to the client of making the wrong choice of adviser and receiving bad advice far outweighs the fee paid. There is an old adage in UK law: 'A General Counsel has never been fired for hiring a "magic circle" law firm.' What is the risk to the client of hiring you?</p>	<p>You and the firm will think about various aspects when taking on the project – what is the revenue/profit, how will we resource it, what is the delivery risk, what are the contract terms, how much insurance cover must we offer etc. That is all important information, but you need to see your appointment in the context of the client's overall project. What is the cost of that? Where are their risks? Irrespective of the fee, how important are you to the whole equation? Focus on that, not your metrics alone.</p>

TABLE 0.1 *continued*

Characteristic	Definition	Consideration for marketers
7. Client concentration	To use a quote from George Orwell's <i>Animal Farm</i> : 'All animals are equal. But some animals are more equal than others.' All your clients are important, but some are probably more important than others, ideally in both revenue and profit terms. Many firms glibly use the 80:20 rule and say that 80% of the revenue or profit comes from 20% of the clients. However, in our experience, in most firms it is at least that order of magnitude and sometimes even more concentrated.	You should understand your client concentration ratio and know exactly who fits in that 'more equal' bracket. Those clients should be your focus for any client relationship programme and underpin your thinking on strategy, market choices, service development, skills and recruitment etc. You should understand these clients better than anyone else. You should also work out how to manage the other 80–90% of clients.
8. Switching costs	Choosing a professional adviser is not necessarily for life but, like a pet, it should be for longer than Christmas. The client may just want someone to 'do a job', but it's more likely that they are looking for a firm to work with over a period of time, even if it is a series of discrete transactions. In part, that is because, as social animals, we like to develop relationships, but also switching costs for professional advisers are high. To change advisers, a client needs to find someone else they trust and then invest in bringing them up the curve of knowledge about their business and particular circumstances.	If you are the incumbent adviser, you should recognize the cost of switching and do everything you can – assuming that the relationship is mutually beneficial and profitable – to cement it. Invest in the relationship, identify compatibility in contacts, work on the points that will make the relationship 'sticky' and hard to undo. If you are looking to remove an incumbent, you need to reduce the switching costs: build empathy, understanding and trust ahead of the appointment, try to climb the client's knowledge curve by stressing compatibility through other sector experience and make personal connections.
9. Purchase complexity	Formal and informal purchasing procedures now dominate decision processes in professional adviser appointment: rules and regulations, framework agreement, procurement panels and portals, purchasing departments etc all complicate a process that might once have been just one person's decision and completed in a single meeting.	Understand the procurement processes in your client's business and do not think that direct appointment is inevitable or within your contact's grasp. Build your network of client contacts beyond your principal contact. Construct a relationship map and overlay the client process so that you can understand who influences, recommends and decides an appointment. That will show if you know the right people well enough and where else you need to focus your relationship effort.

TABLE 0.1 *continued*

Characteristic	Definition	Consideration for marketers
10. Brand	Your brand is about what you stand for and how you are different from everyone else. But it is not decided by you, it's defined by how your clients and other key stakeholders see you. They decide your brand – not you – and whether it is consistent or differs depending on the audience. In professional services firms, brands are notoriously difficult to define and shift, in many cases because of some of the points above, eg consistency and intangibility. Perception is reality and changing perceptions takes time. It is much easier to destroy a brand overnight than it is to build one up.	You should work hard and communicate consistently what your brand stands for and how you are different, but you should also invest in understanding how successful you are in getting your message across, how others see you and work out how to close any gaps. Recognize that any changes you want to make will take time – branding is a long-term process. And, of course, brand is not about colours and logos, although they have a part to play because we are all susceptible to visual stimuli. Remember, everything you do in response to points 1–9 could impact your client's perception of your brand.

Differences between professional services firms

I believe these characteristics hold true for most, if not all, professional services firms, but of course there will still be some differences driven by the business and culture of individual firms.

One obvious difference will be the technical discipline or sub-sector in which the firm operates. All professionals share characteristics such as intellect, technical qualifications, the adviser role, client service and a high level of commitment to standards (see Characteristic number 3), but lawyers, accountants and engineers, for example, are not interchangeable in their nature, training or common behaviours.

This book is not about the style and preferences of individual professions. If you are joining a professional services firm for the first time or switching between professions, I would advise you to spend some time getting to know how your particular colleagues think and operate. You could do much worse than spend time over a coffee or lunch with a few of them to understand why they chose their profession and what for them are its defining characteristics, practices and preferred operating styles.

With regard to marketing and business development, there is a stereotype that says management consultancies and accounting firms are more advanced in their thinking and practice than law firms and other professions. That may have been the case 10 to 15 years ago, but I think it is now a dangerous assumption to make. It is also risky to assume that the 'Big 4' accountants or the 'Magic Circle' law firms are

ahead of their smaller or more regional competition. I have encountered firms that are leaders and laggards of all sizes and in all professions. It is probably a cliché, but the first sign of a business or sector in decline is often when it adopts the complacent belief that it has achieved an unassailable lead and has nothing to learn from others.

One difference that is always quoted as setting professional services firms apart from other industries is the peculiar nature of partnership. There are not many sectors where the owners and managers of a business are one and the same, make up a significant number of the staff and have usually been with the firm for most of their careers. I have worked in and with firms that are partnerships, privately owned by third parties and publicly traded, and in my experience the ownership structure drives more differences in a firm's culture and style than the individual nature of the profession.

Overall, partnership drives many positive characteristics: a strong and consistent culture, leadership continuity, passionate and involved owners, commitment to career development, more control over the firm's destiny and direction, and fewer external shocks, to name but a few. There is an inherent conservatism in partnership, which I touch on in the introduction to our 'Growth' theme, but, from my experience, the premise that partnership also drives an inevitable 'us and them' culture is unfounded.

There are partnerships where those who have ascended to that rarefied position see themselves, and are treated, as an untouchable 'super race', but that is not desirable and, indeed, actively discouraged in most modern partnerships. Partnership should not imply a right to management or the authority to overrule on operational decisions. Partners need to be accountable and take their responsibilities as owners seriously, but quite rightly they expect management and leadership to come from all levels and quarters of the business, not least the marketing and business development team.

Given the predominance of the partnership model in the professions and the firms contributing to this book, throughout the five themes we talk a lot about partners and the need for marketing and business development leaders to establish strong and mutually trusting relationships with their firm's owners. It is a defining and necessary feature of anyone wanting to achieve a leadership role.

If you are unable to earn peer status with your firm's partners, or with whoever leads your business if you have a different ownership structure, then you are unlikely to achieve the influence or demonstrate the impact that we talk about in this book.

Characteristics, differences and excuses

I would encourage you to get under the skin of the characteristics of your particular firm, be they driven by its profession, ownership structure, history, geography or size. You should also understand its differences – you may call it distinctive culture – that set the firm apart from others in its sector or the wider professional services industry.

However, you should not focus too much on either characteristics or culture, and certainly not use them as a reason for accepting the status quo. The difference in characteristics between the professions and other industries and within the professions themselves can be overstated and used too often as a reason to avoid or abandon a progressive agenda. A line of thinking or response that starts with 'that will never

work here because...’ is usually a poor opening gambit and little more than an excuse for inaction.

Of course, you need to be flexible and adaptable – no pyrrhic victories please – and find out how ideas and solutions will fit your firm, but the needs and preferences of your clients and your own professional judgement, experiences and skill should be your primary drivers for decision and action. That is especially the case in marketing and business development, where successful leadership demands new thinking, fresh ideas and positive action.

I would encourage you to take the ideas in this book, whichever firm or sector they come from, and test truthfully how they can add to the success of your firm and your career.

**COPYRIGHT MATERIAL
NOT TO BE REPRODUCED**
<http://www.tbbookshop.com>