

Training and development

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Marketing has been formally operating in the professions for two decades now. From those faltering beginnings we now have a marketing community numbering a few thousand. On the face of it, our sector looks healthy.

Yet, one of the main concerns of those in charge of marketing and business development (BD) teams is recruitment. And it's not just down to market economics.

A recent PSMG seminar was entitled 'Where has all the talent gone?' - a terrible indictment after all this time. And I am regularly contacted by recruitment consultants asking "Do you know any PR people looking to move? *Good ones*."

The revolving doors of the marketing departments became legendary; in the early 90s a two year stint was considered an achievement. Many people didn't get that far and left the sector altogether, without a chance to build their careers and talent, at least in the professions.

"Attrition rates in the legal sector in general are poor," says Jo Uttley, senior manager in business development at lawyers Clifford Chance. "There has been low kudos in marketing and the role has been misunderstood or undervalued by lawyers. We have recognised that training and development is vital and that alumni perception is incredibly important to us."

Beverly Landais, Director of Marketing and Business Development at law firm Baker & McKenzie LLP, has been successful in maintaining a retention rate averaging three years per person, but she recognises that the overall perception is damaging. "In my view law firms have got an unfair reputation for being difficult to work for and it has put off talent coming in from other sectors," she says.

So what's going on here? Originally, partners just wanted a 'brochure department' and there was a huge clash of cultures between professions and creativity. The approach to strategy, roles and status was negligent. And while the situation has improved hugely, not all firms recognise that BD people need career development as much as the 'professionals'.

Training is vital to changing this situation. The benefits are twofold; an improvement in competency and thus in performance, and a leap in self esteem and thus job satisfaction.

CASE STUDY

Baker & McKenzie LLP

Baker & McKenzie LLP has a strong training ethos for its people, including its worldwide BD staff of around 250. The London based Director of Marketing and Business Development, Beverly Landais explains how three years ago the Professional Development Team put together a framework for both lawyers and staff based on skill development.

Each individual puts together a training programme with their own budget and this is integral to their objective setting and appraisal process. The programme includes a course on client management for lawyers and on client service for the BD staff. An understanding of the business is also an essential element. Qualifications are recognised and supported, especially the CIM diploma.

Staff can sign up for internal and external courses and the firm strongly supports networking and training events such as those run by the PSMG. It has also made a great investment in global conferences. 60 senior staff will come together this month (November) in Chicago for its Global Marketing Summit and similar ones are run Europe-wide for the more junior staff.

As the case studies here show, some firms are realising the importance of planned, continuous training and development, and they are blending BD training of staff and fee earners.

Another element is qualifications, which may see the end of the divisive 'professional' and 'support staff'. We now have our own CIM diploma, offered by Cambridge Marketing Colleges (CMC) in conjunction with the PSMG. The tailoring, says Charles Nixon of CMC, is in the work-based assignments. There has been an encouraging 100 per cent pass rate in the first graduates, all of whom were sponsored by their firms.

Over half of Drivers Jonas' BD team is currently sitting the (general) CIM exams. "I think qualifications are hugely important to the professional services marketing world. I wouldn't interview someone for a marketing executive or manager position without at least the CIM post graduate diploma," says Marketing Director Richard Crook. "These qualifications also help the BD team stand on an equal footing with the surveyors in the practice, as they are recognised as leaders in their field."

CASE STUDY

Drivers Jonas

The 15 strong business development team at property firm Drivers Jonas is trained in exactly the same way as the surveying fraternity. Training is covered as part of their six monthly appraisal process and training needs for the next six months are identified.

An extensive in-house training programme, with courses including presentation skills, time management and assertiveness, is supported by professional training courses run by relevant professional memberships. The firm pays for all members of its BD team to become members of the CIM, pays their annual subscriptions and encourages them to take the CIM professional exams (also paid for by the firm, with study leave).

"The main reason for developing this training programme was because of the increased demands of our partnership to meet new business targets," says marketing director Richard Crook. "These targets have meant we need a more sophisticated approach, which means we need the latest techniques and the best people."

The BD team also undertakes a full day BD training course run by the PACE Partnership. This is a shortened version of the four day course that all senior surveying staff are put through. Consequently, the BD team receives as much training as professional staff, if not more.

Of course, no one ambitious is expected to stay forever in one place. "If someone has a clear idea as to what they want from their career and their firm is unwilling or unable to provide what they need, they will eventually have to move on," says Landais.

Ok, I hear you say. We've trained them, paid for their qualifications and now they'll be off to the nearest competitor. Well, that attitude is maturing as well says Richard Crook. "We live in the real world, and we realise this might make our staff an attractive catch to others, but we usually feel the long term benefit of having highly trained staff who stay loyal to the team and partnership."

So next time you're about to apply, or sign off that form, for a training course, ask yourself, where does this fit in the career plan? If you can't answer the question you have work to do.

CASE STUDY

Clifford Chance

Clifford Chance now has around 120 business development professionals working globally under its brand. As part of an overall programme in BD to improve global operations, senior manager Jo Uttley has been tasked to build a global training and development programme.

The firm already has an Academy for all staff where they can build on their technical and personal development abilities. But to tackle the profession's recruitment and retention pressures in BD a more tailored programme is being developed.

"Many people felt they had to leave the firm in order to progress their roles," explains Jo. "Our challenge is to work with them to maximise their potential, perhaps deepen their experience within the firm through, for instance, secondment or mentoring opportunities."

This is done in four steps:

- Promoting a strong employer brand with staff, recruitment agencies and potential recruits.
- With a global training curriculum all BD staff worldwide will be offered a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme, collecting points from internal and external training courses as well as conferences.
- Organisational development, working towards a global competency standard.
- And lastly a measurement system.

Several staff have also completed or are studying for qualifications such as CIM and MBAs.

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