

The Integration Imperative

Suzanne Lowe – Professional Services Books

£13.25/\$29.95

In this book management consultant Suzanne Lowe talks of a professional services firm whose marketing department produced well-developed 'think pieces' demonstrating the firm's thought-leading credentials. However, the documents saw little use – partly because the business development team members didn't know about the materials and so didn't use them in client meetings.

This is the sort of disconnect I've observed in many professional services firms, where the BD and marketing staffs work in separate silos and seemingly, in separate worlds. Different personalities, different methods, different values.

With well over two decades of experience working in and as advisor to professional services firms, Massachusetts, USA-based Lowe is well qualified to discuss this topic. *The Integration Imperative* is a follow-up to her 2004 book, *Marketplace Masters: How Professional Service Firms Compete to Win*. She says in her latest book that many professional firms have come to realize that they must create the market-focused infrastructure she recommends in the earlier work.

This next book takes those ideas a step further, showing

firms why they can and must integrate the often-separate functions of BD and marketing.

In the book, Lowe first builds a case that the BD and marketing

are not relevant to her or his situation. For example, the part discussing the reality and consequences of the marketing/BD divide are most useful to readers who do not understand the situation, or who

need to convince others of its seriousness.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its basis in sound research. In the interests of full disclosure, Suzanne Lowe was my mentor for about three years in the early years of my own consulting practice.

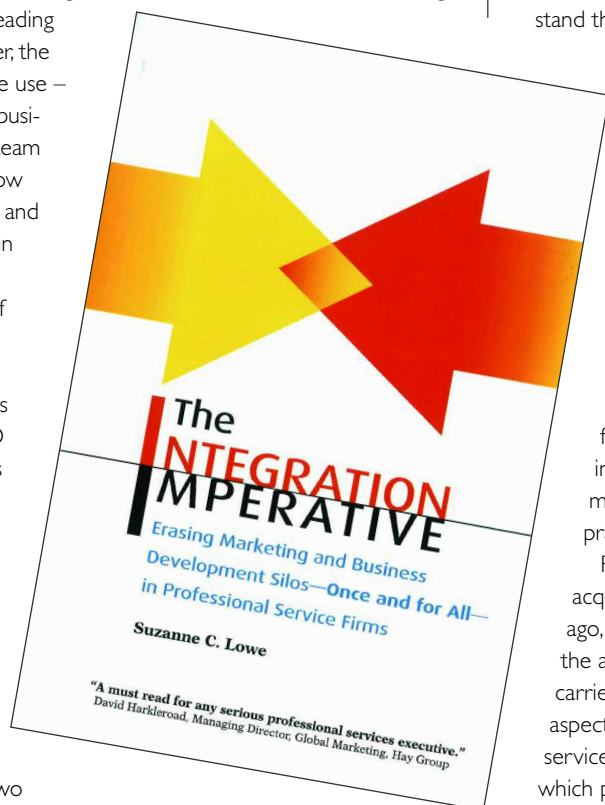
Right from our first acquaintance a decade ago, I was impressed with the annual surveys she carried out on various aspects of professional services firm marketing, which provided fresh information each year for her extensive public speaking tours. She's continued this emphasis on original research in her books – both of them fairly bristle with research findings, both her own and those she credits to other authorities. She cites her collaboration with well-known names in professional services firm management and marketing, such as Ken Lizotte, Larry Bodine and the Bloom Group. This gives readers confidence that these are not just Suzanne Lowe's opinions – they are conclusions based on hard data.

Well-researched and highly relevant to professional services marketers, I found the book to have two limitations. One is that the examples, conditions and situations are almost all American, with only the occasional nod to other parts of the world including Australia, Europe and the UK. This may limit its international usefulness. Also, Lowe appears to focus on midsize to large organisations, perhaps because it is only they who have fully-developed marketing and BD staffs. There is less in the book that could be implemented by smaller firms.

However, the book is a well-considered look at a serious issue facing today's professional service firms and business-to-business enterprises, with some sound suggestions on how to remedy the situation.

Carl Friesen
Emerson Consulting
Group inc.

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functions really are disconnected in many firms, and that this has consequences for their abilities to attract, retain and grow clients.

She then plants her idea that the marketing and BD functions need to be integrated, follows this with some models that can be used in implementing her ideas, and then provides several in-depth case studies that show the validity and practicality of her ideas.

The book is intended to be read 'à la carte' – the reader is encouraged to skip parts that

COMPETITION

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