

# Breaking Down Business Silos

## THE INTEGRATION IMPERATIVE

Suzanne Lowe

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In her latest book, *The Integration Imperative*, Suzanne Lowe has chosen to wrestle with a number of thorny obstacles to effective marketing and business development within professional service firms. The author deliberately stands back, considering firms as one entity and highlighting the gaps that all too frequently emerge between fee earners and specialist marketers.

Lowe's material draws heavily on her consulting experience and numerous surveys conducted primarily in the United States. This well-researched insight helps put into context why firm growth is often retarded but the true causes remain undiagnosed and left unchecked.

*The Integration Imperative* targets a wide audience including executive managers, professional marketers and senior fee earners. In Lowe's words, "anyone who has decision-making responsibilities ... for the marketplace future" of his or her firm.

The breadth of the target audience means that many readers will find certain sections thoroughly compelling and other parts less relevant. Helpfully, *The Integration Imperative* is split into three distinct parts so the reader can focus on the topics that most appeal.

The first part explains the size and scope of the issues created by marketing and business development silos. It is useful for people who are either unfamiliar with the need for greater integration or are required to build a case within their firm for greater integration.

In the second section, Lowe outlines the necessary concepts to create greater marketing and business development alignment within firms through three imperatives: process, skills and support.

The final section provides 11 case studies that illustrate how individual firms have benefited from removing the functional silos that limited marketing and business development effectiveness. Each case study describes the challenges faced by each firm and the steps taken to overcome them.

Lowe's perspective is well supported with numerous tools and checklists; however, she makes no apologies for stopping short of providing us with a how-to manual.

For this reason some readers may find themselves suddenly alive to challenges impacting their firm but wanting more than the "structural frameworks and cultural paradigms" that Lowe outlines.

While Lowe has made great efforts to look at worldwide research, the book has a distinctly US flavour to it and I suspect many Australasian firms have moved beyond some of the cultural challenges she discusses.

Nonetheless, if you seek help in diagnosing internal firm challenges or guidance on how to create greater collaboration, Lowe provides an important perspective that demands consideration.

Recommended reading for all marketers and professional managers searching for a complete picture on the roadblocks to sustainable firm growth. ■

**WAYNE STEWART**

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