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BREAKING NEWS

08.03.09 CMO Council releases first benchmark of the Customer Experience Board: Findings indicating that competitive crunch and convergence in communications marketplace is fueling increased customer churn, and testing customer loyalty. [Download now](#) »

7.20.09: B-to-B Magazine names the Who's Who in the world of BtoB: Donovan Neale-May, executive director of the CMO Council, named to the list of notables in the 2009 BtoB Magazine Who's Who list. Congratulations to CMO Council members recognized for their work, achievement and talents. [View the entire list](#) »

FEATURE ARTICLE

The Real Holy Grail of Professional Service Firm Marketing and Business Development Effectiveness

*By Suzanne Lowe, President of Expertise Marketing LLC, is the author of two books for leaders and marketers at professional service firms: **The Integration Imperative: Erasing Marketing and Business Development Silos – Once and For All – in Professional Service Firms** and **Marketplace Masters - How Professional Service Firms Compete to Win.***

When it comes to growing revenues and market share, professional (PSF) and B2B service firms keep looking for the business version of the Holy Grail in all the wrong places: "Hire big-time rainmakers!" "Acquire that hot boutique firm!" "Revamp our website!" All too often, these ballyhooed initiatives fail to deliver on the expectations that they could increase the enterprise's marketing and business development effectiveness.

Narrowly-Focused Initiatives Aren't Working

Moreover, marketing and business development leaders, from both small PSF's and large global enterprises, are increasingly taking it upon themselves to champion initiatives they believe passionately will directly benefit the marketplace future of their firms.

Many narrowly focused initiatives to improve PSF's and B2Bs' marketing and business development results aren't necessarily wrong. But they're not working. To understand the reason why, we have to take a step back to get a view of the underlying problem.

The Root of the Problem

Professional and B2B firms must face the fact that they have a critical, fundamental problem: Marketing and selling functions aren't effectively integrated throughout the enterprise. Their organization-wide disconnects prevent them from competing effectively, impede their financial success, and hinder them from delivering optimal client service.

The *real* Holy Grail is a lot closer than they realize. It can be found by ensuring that marketing and business development are integrated into every function. Marketing and business development must become part of *every* person's job (although each person would have his or her own role).

PSF's and B2Bs should consider using three structural frameworks to connect marketing and business development functions together. I've called these frameworks the Integration Imperatives. The three structural frameworks pertain to the process, skills and support of marketing and business development. Firms can use these along with cultural frameworks to break down the silos that have crept in to their marketing and business development functions.

The Process Imperative – Expand the Range and Shine a Spotlight on It

The Process Imperative calls for PSF's and B2Bs to create a broader purview for their marketing and business development functions, and a better prioritization of all marketing and business development initiatives. It also includes making the marketing, business development, and client service processes more discernible to everyone in the firm, and more obviously iterative.

The Skills Imperative – Grow the People

The Skills Imperative calls for executive managers to reframe advancement pathways for practitioners and nonrevenue generating staff, and to more clearly direct the steps every professional can take toward competency growth in marketing and business development.

The Support Imperative – Reframe Administrative Relationships

The Support Imperative calls for PSF and B2B managers to reframe the lateral working relationships between their firm's administrative peers in human resources, information technology, finance, legal, and other operational functions. The Support Imperative is illustrated by two cases featuring collaborations between administrative functions aimed at improving marketing and business development effectiveness.

In addition to these three structural solutions, PSF's and B2Bs should consider using three cultural Integration Imperatives to connect marketing and business development functions together. They include the adoption of an updated, well-assimilated common lexicon about marketing and business development; the creation of new formal collaboration, shared accountability, and co-leadership models for marketing and business development; and the practice of making expectations more explicit about how everyone can contribute to marketing and business development.

Articulating a New Meaning of Marketing and Business Development

The first cultural imperative is to articulate the new meaning of marketing and business development for the enterprise. It addresses a particularly vexing hurdle to integration: defining of the terms *marketing* and *business development* varies widely from individual to individual, firm to firm, and sector to sector. Not surprisingly, one's understanding of a term leads directly to one's expectation about the role and function of the job. And this is no small matter.

Creating New Collaboration, Accountability, and Co-Leadership Models for Marketing and Business Development

PSF and B2B executive managers can adopt a second cultural imperative: increasing formal avenues for collaboration, shared accountability and co-leadership on marketing and business

development. Sure, professional service firms *do* encourage their people to collaborate or share leadership with their colleagues, but typically these pathways are obscure and unevenly available. A friend told me recently: "I wish I could count on the work I'm having to *convince* people to do. All this asking and favor-building; all this monitoring, negotiating and coaxing. It's a huge waste of time and energy. Wouldn't it be better if I could hold people accountable?"

Making Expectations More Explicit about How Everyone Can Contribute to Marketing and Business Development

The third cultural paradigm is making expectations more explicit about how everyone can contribute to marketing and business development. Many PSF and B2B service firms have made great strides in using internal communication when a particularly important internal "expectations" message arises.

But executive managers also must apply a potent new kind of cultural glue: reviewing and integrating job descriptions, checking and integrating reporting relationships, and reframing performance management guidelines to ensure that people understand how they are expected to work together in new ways toward meeting the organization's revenue, market share, and client added-value goals.

The Holy Grail Lies *Inside* the Enterprise

Sometimes, the best answer is right beneath your nose. Professional organizations must look *internally* to improve their marketing and business development effectiveness. Ultimately, when they apply structural solutions to erase their marketing and business development disconnects, they will improve their firm's value to clients. It's a competitive imperative.