



Q: My firm can't cross sell. What are we doing wrong?

A: It's not just you, most law firms, in fact, most professional services firms, struggle with cross selling different practice areas to existing clients. The problem is that everyone *thinks* that everyone's doing it better than they are. Trust me, they're not. There are many logical internal obstacles you encounter when attempting to cross-sell. Further complicating the problem is that the reasons given for failing to cross-sell are usually in code.

Here's what the lawyers say and what it often means:

"There are no additional opportunities with that client."

"I was so busy talking about myself during lunch that I never asked the client anything about her goals, plans or legal needs."

"There are no opportunities with this client outside of my practice area."

"I would not recognize a tax issue if it bit me, and do not want to look stupid in front of my client."

"He promised to call when he needs us."

"Yes, I've known him for over 20 years, but I have no idea what he does at his company. We talk about our golf games, our kids and the Bears, not his work."

"We do not handle that type of law."

More often than not: "No, really? We do?" An internal communication program kicked into high gear could help with this.

"I don't think Harry would be a good personality fit with XYZ Co."

Danger Will Robinson! This could mean, "Hey, the billings from this client put food in my children's mouths; I would rather send the work to another firm than risk having my partner Harry botch it or steal the client." Avoid further cross-selling discussions with that attorney; the barriers are insurmountable and life is too short.

"My client does not need an attorney in that area."

"I'm getting enough work in my practice area to keep me happy, and I don't want to look like a pig."

"My client would think they are too expensive."

If that's a valid complaint, the firm has bigger problems to worry about than cross-selling. This probably means, "I'm too busy billing my 2,000 hours. I asked you to leave me alone."



"My client is satisfied with its existing counsel."

"I am not going to ask about anything outside of my practice area."

"My client would resent the intrusion."

"I told him what a good litigator I am and he still gave the case to another firm. Marketing is stupid." A lawyer whose sales style is intrusive is doing it wrong. Get some training.

"My client has long-term relationships with law firms in other practice areas."

"Note that I called it *my* client, not *the firm's* client. Figure it out."

"I am too busy doing client work."

"The firm does not reward me well enough to make the effort."

"I'll talk to my client as soon as I can."

"'When Hell freezes over' sounds about right."

"Their tax needs are already well covered."

"I don't understand tax law, and I don't want to look stupid by asking the wrong questions."

"They don't need any litigators."

"If I send work to the litigation department and they lose the case, I could lose my client. I'd rather send the case to some other firm."

"I know the client; I'll pitch the litigation work myself."

"Sure I'm an ERISA lawyer, but our compensation system would give so much of my origination credit to my litigation partner if he helped bring it in that I'd rather wing it myself for full credit."

"My client doesn't need an estate plan."

"We charge, what, \$500 for a Will? I'm not going to waste my time on chump change."

"Expanding my client's relationships in the firm will reduce its portability. If I can not take this client with me if I leave, the firm may fire me or cut my pay."

OK, they won't really say that, but for the last 20 years, they have been thinking it.

So, the next time that your marketing partner complains that your firm doesn't cross-sell enough, you can at least tell him/her that most of your competitors aren't doing it especially well either. That's not to say that it can't work, it can, but it's *much* harder than most of the articles and commentators lead you to believe. And you can tell them I said so.