

## BREAKING THE BARRIER...

### *...Between Traditional Marketing And Practice Development*

**THE INTEGRATION IMPERATIVE**, by Suzanne C. Lowe. Professional Services Books, Concord, MA. Paper, 248 pp. \$29.95. Order [here](#).

There is more mystery in marketing – particularly professional services marketing, than there is transparency. So much of it is performed by mindless rote – by its mechanics rather than by either science or reason or artfulness – that it's difficult for those for whom marketing is practiced to take marketers seriously.

Today we face yet another problem for which, it seems, too few marketers, lawyers and accountants are prepared – the growing realization that the principles of *practice development* – the process of actually reaching out to bring prospective clients into the fold – are beginning to be recognized as an entity apart from -- rather than subsumed by – *traditional marketing* techniques. When practiced effectively, each requires different skills, different training, and, ultimately, different objectives. There is, as well, too little understood about the relationship between *marketing* -- the devices and activities that broadcast a firm's skills, foster name recognition, and imply the ability to solve legal or accounting problems -- and *practice development* – the activities specifically designed to bring clients into the practice.

And therein lies the extraordinary value of Suzanne Lowe's *The Integration Imperative*. Her aim is to define these techniques on both side of the equation, and to demonstrate how they can be made to work together to develop growth and enhance the ability to keep a firm relevant to the dynamic needs of its clientele. At the same time, she puts the entire marketing process under a microscope for a rare clear view of it.

Lowe addresses the concept of marketing as being in one separate category, or *silo*, and practice development in another *silo*. Both, she says, have to be integrated with one another to allow each to contribute to successfully advance a firm in the highly competitive marketplace.

In *The Integration Imperative*, she takes what is a simple (if often ignored) concept --- that there is a lack of integration between what we call *marketing*, and selling – turning the marketing activities into a sale to actually generate a new client or retain an old one. Some of us have written for years that reputation and name recognition may be important in projecting a firm's capabilities, but rarely directly produce clients. Marketing activities may sell products, but nobody hires a lawyer from an ad or even a direct mail letter. Selling in person is ultimately necessary. So too are the activities that turn the prospect into a client.

What she does with this basic reality is to note it, expand on it, and demonstrate how and why it works. By doing so, she offers a blueprint – a map – to the process that represents a significant advance in thinking about the total marketing process.

The book is divided into three parts, the better to get to the beating heart of the problem.

*Part 1* defines the problem in all its ramifications. Headed *The Challenges to Integration*, she discusses the challenges to integrating marketing and business development, both structurally and culturally, the paradox faced by professional firms in change of any kind, and her concept of how and why the two processes --- marketing and business development -- are each in their own silos.

*Part 2* defines and explains the integration imperative and how it can work. She introduces the concept of the *Integration Imperative* --- making the structures in each silo work together. In the several chapters in this section, she discusses the process, the skills, and how integration can help both professional firms and their clients.

*Part 3* uses abundant case histories to demonstrate integration at work.

This is no ordinary and elementary marketing book. It's comprehensive and thoughtful, based upon experience and research. Nor is it mere academic theory. Her exploration into process and relationships is virtually philosophical, but still practical and down to earth. She is, remember, an experienced and successful practitioner.

For the marketer, it's a Master's Degree in the structure, process, and roles of both the marketers and the people they serve. The imperative is not only in traditional marketing and practice development, but also in the need for better marketers and professionals to absorb and practice the book's message.

On a personal note, I've known Suzanne Lowe for many years, and watched with wonder her attempts -- mostly successful -- to get to the root of the marketing mystery. She is meticulous, thoughtful to the point of brilliance, experienced, and a great communicator. No one does a better job of putting an idea under a microscope, dissecting it, and reconstructing it to a greater degree of usefulness.

And on another note, I wonder why it has taken so long for marketers to recognize a simple fact (one that I wrote about as early as the 1970s) -- that the articles, the press coverage, the seminars, the press coverage, the seminars, etc. by themselves do not create clients. Nobody, we discovered early on, hires a lawyer or an accountant from any of these marketing devices. Even direct mail works only to gain entrance to the prospect's lair, at which point somebody has to sell. Furthermore, the techniques of practice development are in many respects different from those used in traditional marketing. Still, it was many years past *Bates (1977)* that practice development techniques were refined, and selling techniques taken seriously.

In looking back on the history of professional services marketing as I've seen it since well before *Bates*, I observe that very little in professional services marketing has changed. Once we finally got the hang of it -- about 5 years after *Bates* -- why is it only now that we recognize the significance of practice development in the professional services marketing mix as apart from the traditional marketing practices? Suzanne Lowe does recognize it, and spells it out in this lovely, thoughtful book. Buy it, and if you can, get your clients or your firm's partners to read it. It will substantially increase the value of your marketing efforts.