

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT/SALESPEOPLE IN FIRMS: A GROWING TREND

March 30, 2008 by Nancy Myrland, Myrland Marketing, Inc.

Respected marketing consultant [Ed Poll](#) posted comments in his [Law Biz Blog](#) about the growing trend in firms to hire non-practicing lawyers to “sell” the firm, or to develop business, and wondered whether this would actually catch on.

Here are the thoughts I shared based on the time I’ve spent in sales and business development with not only professional service firms, but also in corporate America:

The model Ed is discussing is seen frequently in other professional services firms. In fact, it is uncommon in these cases for BD/salespeople to have the professional license or degree of those who will do the work. I understand there are ethical restrictions to this in law firms. These business development specialists, or salespeople, “work” the community full-time, spread the good word and reputation of their firm, and watch out for opportunities. When they spot them, they pursue them—all day every day. It is also common for them to then send in “the troops;” those who will hopefully perform the work for the potential client. This relieves some of the burden of selling from the professionals, or in the case of Ed’s blog post, the attorneys, but brings them in at the crucial time to talk specifics about the needs of the client and how the firm might match those needs.

With competition for business and clients the way it is today, I would imagine we will continue to see this trend grow in law firms and all professional services firms. It truly is a position that can pay for itself with a small amount of business every year.

In my opinion, this doesn’t eliminate the responsibility of all attorneys, architects, financial planners, etc., and professionals to develop business, and to get “out there” whenever possible, and even to pursue business when the opportunity presents itself. What is important is to make sure salespeople, rainmakers and business developers in every firm are comfortable talking to potential clients, that they know how to network, how to ask questions and to truly listen to potential clients. Then, and only then, they have earned the right to begin selling and matching skills to needs.

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Nancy Myrland, President, Myrland Marketing, is a Professional Marketing Advisor with more than 20 years experience in partnering with clients to build their

business by strengthening their relationships with their clients so they become more profitable. She is innovative, passionate, loyal, strategic, wise, and has a depth of knowledge to share with clients that comes from working in sales and business development, in marketing in corporate America with Time Warner, professional services, higher education, not-for-profits and membership associations. To find out more about Myrland Marketing, or to read Nancy's blog, please visit <http://myrlandmarketing.com/about-us>, or email Nancy @ nancy@myrlandmarketing.com.