

ZEN AND THE ART OF LEGAL NETWORKING

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INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON
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Are Your Cross-Selling Efforts Stalling? Maybe You're Doing It Wrong...

BY LINDSAY GRIFFITHS ON AUGUST 11, 2016



Today, I'm bringing you a guest post from my friend, [Lance Godard](#), a Business Development Manager at Fisher & Philips. I know that "cross-selling" is often a hot (maybe too hot!) topic, and Lance delves into some candid reasons for why it may not be working – if you really want to make it work for you, take a look at his thoughts on the subject.

Whether you call it cross-marketing or cross-targeting or some other variation on the theme, cross-selling is not a new concept for most lawyers and firms. And it's not particularly complicated to do: align the work you actually provide a client with the services they need, and implement a program for connecting their needs with your practices. Easy-peasy, right?

So why is it so hard to find cross-selling success? Here's what I've learned over the past 25 years:

- 1. You're focused on the wrong solution.** By framing the problem as "how do we cross-sell more services?" you're unwittingly eliminating all the other ways you can derive value from your client base. Yes, expanding the scope and breadth of representation is a pretty solid way to maximize a relationship with Company X or Y. But your existing clients can provide you a wide range of other types of opportunities. Perhaps you can use expertise you've gained working for an industry leader to create a practice devoted to solving the problems of similar businesses. Or draw on the individual relationships you've developed with clients to get more referrals. Or even work with an in-house lawyer to author an article that allows you to share your insight with a new audience. Whatever the tactic, if you re-frame the problem as how to leverage the value of existing clients, you'll have a new perspective on solving it.
- 2. You're not trying hard enough.** Cross-selling is hard. It requires perseverance and time, the kind that is measured in years, not quarters of an hour. You need to bring people together and ask them tough questions and find compromise and solutions that may not please everyone. There are no shortcuts to successful cross-selling initiatives. Most firms – and many lawyers – don't have the patience and long-term vision to pull that off. Sure they'll introduce an IP lawyer to their real estate client, but they give up on the concept of cross-selling if that single new relationship doesn't bear fruit in a month or two. That's not to say that you're never going to get results with a single phone call, but if you want your cross-selling efforts to produce new representation you're going to have to work at it.
- 3. You're setting the wrong objectives.** It's true: most firms look at cross-selling as a way to grow their revenue stream, to increase profits with minimal expense. After all, the cost of expanding work for an existing client is always going to be less than that of acquiring a brand new client. And that's a fine objective: like every other business, law firms have to make money to survive. But the firm that seeks to provide more work to current clients because that's the best solution for *the client* – because it allows *the client* to increase efficiencies and drive down costs, because it allows them to benefit from the institutional knowledge their lawyers have of their business, because it offers them better services at a more reasonable rate – is going to be more successful than the one looking to make more money.

* * * What could you do to improve your cross-selling efforts?

