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## Managing your career in a changing market: Part I

In Part I of a three-part blog series, we take a look at why the current landscape makes for a good time to review your career, and what steps you can take now to drive your job in the right direction.

The UK has been in uncharted waters, the likes of which we have never seen. Following on from the banking crisis, where some areas are still struggling to pick up, to Brexit and what is happening across the pond as we speak, I think most people will agree, this is a market that no-one can really predict.

It is our experience, however, after the initial knee-jerk reaction from some firms to Brexit (relatively few) that the professional services market has picked up. Indeed, in talking to clients, we have found that Brexit is proving to be an opportunity for law and accountancy ? certainly in the short term. There is some nervousness and anticipation about the future and none of us can foresee what will happen once Article 50 is triggered. But at the moment, firms have been recruiting, both into new roles and replacing people.

Corporate clients continue to focus on value for money and are less prone to long term loyalty. They expect their providers to really understand the many issues and opportunities their businesses face from a commercial standpoint. It is a sophisticated buyer's market and professional services firms rely on their BD and marketing teams to ensure they have the right client focus. Technology, including artificial intelligence, is also being extensively deployed to improve efficiency and new ways of working. This, in turn, is having an effect on how professional services firms market and differentiate themselves. There appears to be a clear shift as firms adopt more commercially-oriented approaches to running their businesses, including looking at much more innovative ways to deliver legal services with the right pricing models for clients.

### How does this affect you and your career?

There are obvious implications of this for BD and marketing professionals. In larger/international firms, teams are only growing in sophistication and requirements are always high for specialist/sector expertise, often encompassing a more global remit. But the search for cost-efficiencies has also brought about new regional opportunities. More firms are moving their business services teams outside of London to Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Belfast and Scotland. There is a huge variety of roles offering quite different opportunities across all locations.

So, in this ever-evolving market, how do you decide how you want to build your career and what you want to do?

### Let's take a look at your current role:

- What do you do on a day-to-day basis? If you noted down everything you did for a week, this would probably be much more than your CV would indicate.

- How long have you been with your current firm? Has it been a long time or are you relatively new there?
- What's changed in your firm and how has this affected your role? How has your role evolved?
- What attracted you to the role in the first place? Is it what you thought it would be?
- If you could change something, what would that be?
- What do you really enjoy doing? Is there scope for you to do more of that?
- What would you like to do or try that isn't necessarily part of your role at the moment?

## The direction you want your career to take

One of those interview questions that everyone dreads, but you can apply to yourself (it's okay to be completely honest with yourself!) is where do you want to be in five years? time: a BD manager, a PR or comms specialist, a 'head of' or director of a team, or a client relationship/pitch specialist? Do you want to focus on a particular industry sector? Do you want to be in the professional services sector at all?

Thinking this through, together with the other questions above, will help you fine-tune your job requirements and determine whether your current role aligns with your more long-term goals. But remember, irrespective of how long (or not) you've been with a firm, you don't necessarily have to look externally to change things. Sometimes it can be easy to miss the opportunities right under your nose. Even if your role isn't what you want it to be, it's always worth exploring whether you can find ways to move it in the right direction via the right internal conversations.

The most important first step, however, is being honest with yourself, asking yourself the right questions and using the answers to establish what you really want out of your future. Only then can you start moving the right pieces into place to achieve real long-term career satisfaction, whether via your existing firm, or elsewhere.

*In Part II of this piece, we will look more closely at steps you can take to meet your goals and improve your career potential within your existing firm, before Part III provides advice should you decide you need to explore job opportunities elsewhere.*

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