

Size counts?

Tim Skipper looks at how a firm can determine its optimal marketing headcount.

This article originally appeared in *PM* magazine. For further details go to www.pmforum.co.uk

Investment decisions are never easy. But perhaps it is even harder in a function like marketing and business development (BD) where much of the success is predicated on finding and fulfilling a firm's often hidden potential. Growth here needs to be justified with convincing evidence of reward that may not yet be in plain sight. It's a tough ask for even the most seasoned marketing/BD professional.

Much of the investment decision-making will revolve around the unique requirements of each firm – location/s, internal and external forces, growth into new markets/sectors/geographies, and so on. This can only be achieved by sound internal strategic review.

But, at the same time, firms always need to know what the rest of the market is up to. Are other firms making similar decisions? Does their resourcing stack up to yours? Sometimes you'll want to strike out, invest heavily to do something different that enables your firm to seize market share. Even then, though, you need to know where the land lies to understand the likely impact of your actions.

This is where we wanted to help. In partnership with US recruitment firm J. Johnson Executive Search, we compiled data from 31 UK and US law firms, to show the ratio of practising lawyers to full time marketing/BD/communications professionals.

We are often asked to provide this kind of data, which can support a firm's decision making on how best to resource this critical function in today's legal business. The results should not only help



It's not just that the right skills help firms expand their footprint, but that they help build a firm's brand reputation too, enabling them to cement that growth.

give a snapshot of typical marketing & BD headcounts across firms, but also give the directors and heads of this function solid market data to help substantiate the case for investment.

Our findings

Overall, the numbers of practising lawyers to full time marketing/BD/communications professionals ranged from 10.2:1 to 37.1:1. Further breaking these down, we could see that:

- The largest teams in this function share a ratio of 10.2 lawyers to one full-time marketing/BD/comms professional. No fewer than seven firms are within the 10:1 to 11:1 range, with a further 12 firms sharing ratios from 11:1 to 13:1. By accident or design, the majority of respondent firms (61%), therefore, seem to be maintaining similar headcounts.
- At this end of the ratio scale, US and UK firms are closely aligned, with the top US headcount at 10.4:1 and the UK at 10.2:1.
- At the other end of the ratio scale, however, US firms feature far more prominently. The eight firms with the smallest teams are all US firms – with ratios ranging from 21.8:1 to 37.7:1. The smallest team among UK firms has a ratio of 16.5:1.
- Larger firms (of more than 2,000 practising lawyers) maintain bigger teams on the whole than smaller firms (of less than 1,000 lawyers). The lowest marketing headcount among the largest firms had a ratio of 12.7:1 compared to 37.1:1 among the smallest firms polled.

