Law Firm Business Development: A Team Servicing Approach

By [LawVision](#) on October 3, 2014

As much as I'd like to think that my blog post entitled "*Law Firm Business Development: Make Selling a Team Sport*" (April 2014) has caused a paradigm shift in the marketplace resulting in a recent emphasis on the development and deployment of client teams, I don't believe that it's true. That said, something has certainly happened. We've been approached by a number of clients within the past few months to help them with their client team programs, including client identification, team member selection, team leader training, developing the plan, and approaching the client.

As someone who spent a number of years at Ernst & Young on the forefront of the development and deployment of the firm's Client Team program, I joined the legal industry a decade ago thinking that client teams would be viewed as client service activity de rigueur rather than something found in a mystery novel. Alas, that was not the case. Client Teams—along with a team approach to business development generally—were more the exception as they were the rule; whether compensation credit getting in the way of team-oriented activity was truly an impediment to teaming or simply an excuse for active exclusion, I cannot say with the benefit of empirical support. I know that there are several (many?) of you out there thinking to yourselves "He doesn't know what he's talking about. We have had client teams longer than he has been in the legal industry." I assure you that, any occasion that I could find to dig deeper into another Chief Marketing Officer's claim that "they had client teams", I would. I'm quite familiar with the subject and, as such, thoroughly enjoy talking about it. The conversation would start out with the mention of the firm's long-established Client Team program along with an impressive number of client teams to boot, but when I asked how many of these teams were functioning at high levels while meeting or exceeding their success metrics, the conversation and related conviction to the program broke down. However, I believe that we're seeing a paradigm shift related to client development and growth, which includes best-in-class approaches to Client Teams as well as Client Feedback. This is really good news for the industry and I'm delighted to have a small role in this evolution.

So, to those of you who have had successful Client Team programs that may have even included client participation, I salute you. To those of you who are accepting the notion that 'team servicing' is the wave of the future, I commend you. And, for the numerous (small, medium, and large) law firms who are still holding onto the lone wolf approach to client service, I wish you luck. You will need it. The advent of Client Teams is a good thing for law firms, because it's a great thing for their clients. In my opinion, to those firms who adopt a team servicing approach go the spoils.