

The Case of the Misunderstood Marketing and Business Development Team

By [Silvia L. Coulter](#) on August 29, 2023

In the complex landscape of modern law firm businesses, certain departments shine brightly while others linger in the shadows of misunderstanding. Among the latter group, the Marketing and Business Development Department (hereafter referred to as the 'MBD Department') often finds itself veiled in confusion. Unlike the Finance Department, IT Department, Knowledge Management/Library Department, or HR/Talent Department, the roles within the MBD Department seem enigmatic to many.

This raises two crucial questions: What causes this disconnect and how can a path toward clarity be illuminated?

The answers lie in a single word: Leadership. The responsibility rests on the shoulders of the firm's leaders to steer the course and elucidate how the MBD Department is an integral part of the overarching firm strategy. By leaders, we include the firm's executive team and those responsible for the MBD Department.

It is incumbent upon leadership to scrutinize the MBD Department's key initiatives and effectively communicate how they align with the firm's overarching goals. For the leaders of the MBD Department, implementing an intake form for every request can prove invaluable. This form would capture essential details such as the requester's identity, whether the task pertains to an existing or prospective client, and how the task ties into client acquisition, retention, or growth. This data-driven approach is paramount, as it prevents the MBD Department from becoming entangled in a web of disjointed tasks. Similar to the IT Department's 'ticket' system, establishing a tracking mechanism and reporting system is essential to bridging the understanding gap across the firm.

Communication and information exchange stand as the foundation of success. Assuming key stakeholders inherently understand the daily functions of the MBD Department, can lead to the Department's downfall. To prevent this, it is crucial to keep firm leaders well-informed. Utilizing the intake data as evidence, the MBD Department can showcase the beneficiaries within the firm and demonstrate how its resources are being harnessed and deployed. By helping firm leaders connect the dots between the MBD Department's activities, the lawyers requesting assistance, and the final outcomes achieved, the gap between the perceptions of some and the actual reality of the MBD team's contributions can be closed.

Intriguingly, a parallel can be drawn with the IT Department's systematic approach. Just as tracking tasks and requests allows the IT Department to efficiently address issues, the MBD Department's data-driven approach empowers the Department to articulate its value proposition cogently.

In conclusion, the story of the misunderstood Marketing and Business Development Department is one of perception and communication. While other departments enjoy clarity, the MBD Department navigates a more intricate path. Leadership emerges as the guiding beacon to dissolve confusion, champion transparency, and highlight the department's indispensable role. Through data, communication, and strategic alignment, the divide between the MBD Department and the rest of the firm can be bridged. By embracing these principles, firms can ensure the light shines on all aspects of their operations, banishing the shadows of misunderstanding once and for all.