

When Chief Marketing Officers Are Called to Manage Sales

By [Steven M. Bell](#) on September 26, 2022

As LawVision's Jim Cranston suggested in a recent article—[Five reasons why a Sales professional at your law firm can work](#)—firms continue to contemplate the addition of business professionals skilled at winning new engagements. In recent days, we are also hearing that more and more Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) are being assigned to lead, and even to help develop, the Sales Departments in their firms.

This presents a new set of management challenges for CMOs. Successful Salespeople are often high-energy individuals who have skill sets unfamiliar to many CMOs, and who need independence to do their jobs well. And while generally they are team players, Salespeople often don't respond well to micro-management. CMOs who will oversee Sales should consider educating themselves about the discipline, perhaps by signing up for training in Sales, Sales leadership, and Sales management.

While the trend of assigning CMOs to lead Sales presents challenges, it also offers a few unique opportunities.

1. Most law firm equity partners believe the purpose of Marketing is generating profitable new revenue. The addition of Sales resources to the CMO's arsenal helps connect the lead-generation activities of Marketing with the relationship-advancing and business-closing activities of Sales. In short, it addresses the expectations partners have for their Business Development investments.
2. CMOs bear significant responsibility for the growth components of overall firm strategy. Specifically, in interpreting strategy, CMOs have responsibility for deciding which companies should be new clients five or 10 years in the future and which existing clients will become designated strategic accounts. Left to their own discretion, most ambitious Sales professionals understandably will pursue prospective clients that are the easiest to bring on board, even if these new clients are not well-aligned with firm strategy. In a position of Sales leadership, CMOs can direct Sales resources to target lists that correctly align with overall firm strategy.
3. All major Business Development processes specify roles for both Marketing and Sales as potential clients move from Unawareness to Awareness to Interest to Conviction to Purchase to Expansion of the Relationship. When CMOs assume leadership for the Sales function, they can control the entire Business Development continuum and ensure the collaboration of all Marketing and Sales professionals in helping clients move from Unawareness to Satisfied Client status.
4. Often and understandably, because law firm Sales professionals operate close to the point of sale, they receive the lion's share of accolades for their roles in winning new client engagements or expanding existing ones. This can create tension among other staff professionals. As leaders of both the Marketing and Sales functions, CMOs are in a strong position to foster departmental teamwork by ensuring proper recognition of contributions by all department members in attracting, nurturing, and winning new clients.

LawVision's professionals have served in the most senior of Marketing and Sales leadership roles at law firms. As a result, we understand firsthand the challenges faced by CMOs who are called upon to develop and lead Sales functions. If you are interested in learning more about CMO leadership of law firm Sales functions, please reach out to me directly at 202-421-5988 / sbell@lawvision.com.