

Yes, Virginia, Law Firms are Hiring Sales Professionals!

By [Jim Cranston](#) on November 4, 2016

The Cubs won the world series, Donald Trump may be our next President, and law firms are hiring sales professionals. What? Really?

From 40-lawyer firms to mega firms like DLA Piper and Baker & McKenzie, law firms have silently hired sales executives (also known as business developers or business development executives) for top line growth. I honestly expected this trend to take hold ten years ago, but then again . . . we are talking about a very skeptical, resistant to change and risk adverse group. But eventually market forces dictate change, and a top driver of growth (and the second oldest profession in the world) is sales. So there you have it. If you are considering sales professionals in your firm, here are five compelling reasons why a sales professional makes good sense.

1. **Core Competency** – Sales executives are trained experts in driving revenue and competing for business, overcoming objections, getting past gate keepers and solution selling strategies in a complex sales environment (many buyers and many sellers). Lawyers, well . . . are trained to be lawyers first and foremost.
2. **Time** – That's right, time. Partners have very little time, and sales professionals have nothing but time. Sales success is a marathon, not a sprint. Partners often give up on new opportunities when the follow up takes up too much of their billable time. It's all about the opportunity cost.
3. **Getting in the Door** – I remember a partner telling me that a certain company would never hire our firm. That's all the motivation I needed (they eventually became a big client). Sales executives have a knack for opening doors that are seemingly locked to everyone else.
4. **Client Strategy** – A sales executive will be agnostic as to what she wants to sell the client. She will develop a client strategy, probe for needs and align resources accordingly. Most lawyers will instinctively focus on their own services because that's what they know best.
5. **Key Client Relationship Management** – With a strategy in place, a sales executive will develop a relationship map of the client, identify key buyers and influencers and create a series of action steps to get in front of the key decision makers. This takes time . . . and patience.

Hiring a sales professional will undoubtedly be controversial at first; but as many firms have already discovered, it's a big plus to reaching revenue goals to have some of these skilled professionals on your firm's team.

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