



Legal Vendor Strategies

A strategy for growing your business in a difficult economy: Outsource your sales efforts!

By Larry A. Crāpo

In these difficult economic times, law firms and legal departments are tightening their purse strings forcing legal vendors to re-examine their budgets and run leaner operations. Many companies under these circumstances are tempted to look immediately to the Sales and Marketing Departments for drastic budget cuts.

It makes good sense to make sure that your marketing department is running efficiently and has the legal market savvy to make the right decisions. That said, "Business School 101" dictates that not only should you maintain your marketing budget but even consider increasing it.

The sales department, however, is a completely different animal. Good sales people that really know legal are very hard to find. Once the rumors of cutbacks get started in the sales department several things may happen; the ones you want to stay may seek greener pastures and the ones you want to leave, may dig in, and stay. Either way, the sales department may end up with a few open territories.

The immediate temptation may be to shift the load of open territories to the remaining sales reps, resist the temptation. The existing reps need to increase their efforts in their territories and not be burdened working an unfamiliar territory. Another option is to begin a search and try to hire sales people to fill the voids. Any CEO knows that good sales people are hard to find and that the process is usually lengthy and expensive. Recruiters will present scores of resumes of "qualified candidates," but the interview and screening process will be lengthy and painful. Another thing to consider is that during tough economic times,

the best sales people will be unlikely to leave a stable company.

What's the answer then?

Consider temporarily outsourcing part of your sales effort (and no, we're not talking about offshore). Outsourcing has been around for quite a few years in the general business community and has been embraced as a successful option. The legal vendor community has been slow to embrace this option because the legal market has a set of unwritten rules that you must abide by in order to sell to them. If you have a company representing you and selling into the legal vertical that is unaware of these rules, it could damage your company's reputation in the legal market. That is why it is very important to look for a sales outsourcing organization that is legal specific and run by high profile, legal sales veterans with a broad background of selling to all levels of the legal market.

How can you really verify their talents and abilities?

Thoroughly check out the references they provide and then check out their resumes with the legal vendor community. If they are really high profile sellers, this should be easy to do because the legal vendor community is very small and very "tight."

What are the benefits of outsourcing sales to a company like this?

- No fixed overhead
- No additional employee benefits

- Flexibility
- Quick ramp up on products/services,
- Senior level sales talent with excellent communication skills
- Experience dealing with C-level Executives, Managing Partners and Office Administrators
- Vast, across-the-board knowledge of the legal market and competitive landscape
- Access to an extensive network of contacts in the legal vendor and law firm communities
- Experience identifying and resolving roadblocks to the sales process
- Quickly fill an open territory (interim or long term)
- Experience opening doors to areas of the legal market that you have not been able to reach

Do you need help finding a good sales representative?

Outsource Sales Organizations that have the experience described above can be of great assistance with the search, screening and hiring process. As mentioned earlier, recruiters will inundate you with resumes of “qualified

candidates” that may take you weeks to screen, only to find that a very small percentage is actually qualified. A good Outsource Sales Organization can save you a lot of time and money by stepping into the middle of this process and pre-screening resumes, conducting telephone interviews, verifying resume information with the legal vendor community and conducting background checks on the candidates. This effort will result in a short list of highly qualified candidates that are presented to the V.P. of Sales or the CEO for final interviews.

As companies become more conscious of their bottom lines, outsourcing the sales effort can be a very valuable tool for small and medium sized legal vendors that are already in the legal vertical market. It also makes sense for a company of any size that is new to the legal market (or new to the U.S. legal market), to use this resource to test the viability of their products or services in that market.

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With more than 70 years of experience managing sales teams, marketing, business development, and operational activities, the principals at Legal Vendor Strategies have the knowledge and the skills to analyze, recommend, and deliver increased profitability.