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## Must-do Tips No 67 – Taking The Cross (Out of Cross Selling)

Even in these tougher times, some deeply unsuccessful behaviours can be difficult to shift. For example, a firm looking to its existing client base to explore untapped potential to do more business sounds perfectly logical and sensible. It's called cross selling - and unfortunately, in some cases, rightly so for the tetchy and unco-operative response it gleans from some professionals that we have met..

*"Sometimes people are frightened of cross selling or by the concept of it..maybe because they're getting on OK with their own clients, or concerned about introducing clients to others, or they're even concerned about coming across as too much of a salesman". **The Lawyer, 1 February 2010***

Such peculiarities of the professional sensibility are by no means limited to lawyers and can no longer be considered charitably as "quaint". They are stopping many professional service firms from undertaking business development activities that could be crucial to survival. This month we offer three tips to help the development of positive cross selling behaviours.

### Tip 1 - curiosity is good

In this market, a practice development approach based upon remaining shackled to the desk and waiting, Micawber-like, for something to turn up has proved stubbornly popular - if not at all successful. The best cross sellers have a highly developed sense of curiosity: about their clients' businesses in the round (i.e. beyond the limits of their own speciality); with a desire to be asking relevant questions that uncover more client issues and potential opportunities for the firm to be passed on to colleagues; and a networking approach that gets 'out there' externally to make more client contacts and, internally, to educate colleagues in what they can offer their and the firm's other clients.

Such curiosity merits encouragement and rewarding.

### Tip 2 - knowledge (but NOT expertise!)

**"How can I sell new services to my clients?? I don't know anything about them!!"**

Another quaint (and increasingly redundant) part of the professional mentality is the comfort blanket that is expert power. Wedded to it so closely, many assume that you HAVE to be an in-depth expert at everything in order to be credible. You don't.

For most cross selling purposes, professionals only need to know enough to recognise a potential client need and the confidence to make an introduction to the right person.

N.B. This does not mean, however, that you can get away with knowing nothing about what other departments or practice groups offer! So get out there to learn what the firm does and who can do it best!

### Tip 3 - take the 'don't sell' sales approach

The mortal fear of professionals being perceived as "salesmen" is highly subjective and usually linked to a lack of understanding of what good selling is. So their range of responses can be anything from "hesitant" and "too polite to be noticed" through to the knee-jerk, indiscriminate presentation of services to any and all contacts - never mind whether the client needs/wants it or not.

The two prime directives for effective cross selling by professionals are: firstly, don't try to sell at all. Being curious and using that curiosity wisely as described in Tip 1 will generate information and opportunities to take up and introduce others. Secondly, whatever solutions your professionals discuss with and offer a client must demonstrably help and/or add value to them and their business or organisation; this approach should stop the 'scattergun' presentation of inappropriate or irrelevant solutions that can annoy clients when it happens.

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Best regards.

JAMES NEWBERRY

People Scope, 6 River Court, Chartham, Canterbury CT4 7JN, United Kingdom. Telephone: 01227 730411.

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