

# Marketing

SALLY J. SCHMIDT ■ SOLUTIONS YOU CAN USE

## Finding the Right In-House Professional

Attending the Legal Marketing Association's 2003 Annual Meeting, I was reminded of the amazing growth in the number of marketing positions in law firms. Although in-house marketing professionals are no longer a new phenomenon, the numbers now would probably surprise more than a few lawyers. This year's LMA conference was attended by 600-plus firm marketers, representing several different countries and working in firms ranging from small and local to large and global.

Unfortunately, that doesn't mean these are always happy unions. Turn-over among marketing people is still more prevalent than most firms would like to admit. Too many of these arrangements seem to result in mutually unsatisfying relationships. It needn't, however, be that way. Based on experience in assisting law firms seeking in-house marketing personnel, here are thoughts for law firm employers and their potential marketing professionals that may help both parties in their search for the perfect match.



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### On Experience

**Employers:** Keep an open mind about candidates' backgrounds and experience. While "law firm experience" often makes lawyers more comfortable and reduces the risk that a candidate can't make it in a law firm, many of the most talented law firm marketers today came from outside the profession. In addition, too much job-hopping from firm to firm may send up a red flag about loyalty or personal ambition.

**Candidates:** Working in a law firm is different. There have been very bright and talented marketing professionals who could not stand, or survive, the rigors and realities of working in a partnership setting. Don't gloss over the differences.

### On Expectations and Job Descriptions

**Employers:** Probably the most common reason for unsuccessful hires is a failure to clarify expectations. Some firms' marketing job descriptions are copied from other firms. Some contain everything from the highest, most strategic responsibilities (such as marketing planning) to administrative activities (like organizing files). If you want to hire the right person, make an effort to articulate what you are really hoping someone will do for you. If it's PR you want, say so. If it's business leads you expect, write it down. Your expectations and the job description should directly influence the types of qualifications, skills and experience you seek in candidates.

**Candidates:** Some firms spend a lot

of time and energy writing the job description; in those cases, it is fairly easy to ascertain the firm's priorities just based on the order of the "responsibilities." Other firms, however, don't really say (or perhaps even know) exactly what they want from the new hire. So don't rely on the job description to figure out what the firm really expects. Ask a lot of questions to ferret out the firm's top marketing priorities, what deliverables are expected and how the firm intends to measure the success of the position.

### On Fit

**Employers:** Don't underestimate the importance of "chemistry." If you have a small (or one-person) marketing department, or if this is your first marketing hire, how the lawyers feel about the person will influence how they feel about the function.

**Candidates:** Every firm has its own culture and personality. The way someone might fit within those characteristics can be every bit as important as the skill set. So, although you might appear to have the perfect background on paper, you still may not be the final choice—or even make the list of finalists—for some very good reasons.

### On Titles

**Employers:** There is something to a name. A director is different from a manager, which is different from a coordinator. These terms signal levels of responsibility and oversight to candidates, so don't use the titles arbitrarily.