

Pitch management

Enable report October 2017

Pitching to win:

How law firms are managing their pitching process to win new business



enableplc.com/pitch-management-report

ENABLE BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

ENABLE PROVIDES SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS FOR A RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW FIRMS ACROSS FOUR CONTINENTS.

WHY ENABLE UNDERTOOK THIS REPORT?

In talking to a spectrum of national and international law firms about the challenges which they face, it became apparent that there was a relative shortage of comparative published information about the pitch management process, in particular the pitch document. Enable therefore decided to undertake research via a survey of leading law firms operating in the UK to address some of these issues. The key findings of this report will hopefully add value to those involved in the pitch management process. Beyond that, Enable will thoroughly analyse the results to build the key findings into the Enable PitchPerfect platform and family of products going forward.

ABOUT PITCHPERFECT

Enable's popular pitch software, PitchPerfect, allows users to create high quality branded pitch documents effortlessly in Word and PowerPoint.

Bespoke templates are accessed via the PitchPerfect ribbon which sits in Word or PowerPoint, and allow for saved and approved content to be added into a document using simple PitchPerfect searches.

Everything in PitchPerfect is accessed from a familiar location: Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, which means less training, fewer questions, and faster adoption.

For more information or a demo please contact jade.walton@enableplc.com

'PitchPerfect is so user-friendly, we saw immediate adoption across our global offices. For the first time, we are all using one system to produce documents that are consistent in content and branding.'

Christine Jung, Associate Director of Communications, Baker Botts

METHODOLOGY

The Enable Pitch Management Report analyses the results of a survey conducted by phone and email in May-June 2017. Using a detailed questionnaire, the survey canvassed the views of 46 law firms, each of which is among the 100 largest law firms operating in the UK by revenue. Respondents were asked 20 questions, both quantitative and qualitative, about their firm's production of pitch documents, typically with importance ranging on a 1 (very important) to 5 (least important) scale. Additionally, respondents were given the opportunity to offer anonymous commentary on the specific challenges that they face in the production of pitch documents. Finally, a series of additional in-depth interviews were undertaken in relation to some of the key issues.

LIST OF PARTICIPATING FIRMS

Addleshaw Goddard	Ince & Co
Allen & Overy	K&L Gates
Ashurst	Kirkland & Ellis
Baker Botts	Lewis Silkin
Birketts	Macfarlanes
Blake Morgan	Mills & Reeve
Bristows	Mishcon de Reya
Brodies	Osborne Clarke
Browne Jacobson	Reed Smith
Burges Salmon	RPC
Charles Russell Speechlys	Shearman & Sterling
Clyde & Co	Shepherd and Wedderburn
CMS	Shoosmiths
Dentons	Stephenson Harwood
Farrer & Co	TLT
Fieldfisher	Trowers & Hamlins
Foot Anstey	Veale Wasbrough Vizards
Forsters	Walker Morris
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer	Ward Hadaway
Fried Frank	Watson Farley & Williams
Hogan Lovells	Weightmans
Holman Fenwick Willan	White & Case
Howard Kennedy	William Fry

KEY FACTS & FINDINGS

THE PARTICIPATING FIRMS

46
of the Top 100 UK law firms

£13bn+
in total annual fee income

22,000+
lawyers

60,000+
pitch documents generated each year

FINDINGS

43%
train their lawyers in pitch document content and production;
57% do not

65%
have experienced increased RFP demand

71%
do not create pitch documents that are **significantly** customised

78%
see more procurement departments requesting RFPs

89%
have senior management which is very involved (28%) or
somewhat involved (61%) in pitch strategy; 11% are not involved
at all

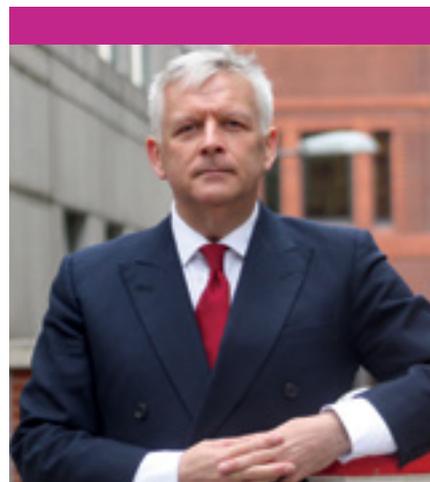
98%
believe it is very important (70%) or somewhat important
(28%) to make each pitch document unique

REPORT AUTHOR: Dominic Carman

Dominic Carman is a freelance writer, journalist and consultant. He executes bespoke projects for international law firms and investment banks – from thought leadership and report writing to digital content, ghost writing and speechwriting. He also writes reports for Legal Business, the Times and Legal Week.

His clients include: Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Hogan Lovells, Sullivan & Cromwell, JP Morgan and the European best friends of Slaughter and May. In addition, he undertakes projects for leading independent law firms in Europe and has increasingly been retained by management consultancies and IT companies servicing the international legal market.

Dominic's clients say that they improve their results when they improve their communication skills – this is what he helps them to do.



A MOMENT IN TIME

‘You’ve got to understand the client’s problems and issues, and sympathise with those problems and issues: share the pain, demonstrate understanding, and then use that understanding and sharing to validate the solution that you’ve come up with, and effectively lead the client to confirm their approval of your solutions.’

Richard Grove, Global Marketing, BD & Communications Director at Allen & Overy

‘The approach now is often to try and display in a short, and succinct a way as possible - four or five bullet points - why we are the very best firm in this space.’

Andy Towler, Associate Director of Business Development at Kirkland & Ellis

Winning business from a combination of new and existing clients is paramount for every law firm. Faced with ever more sophisticated competitive tendering, pitch documents (PDs) usually form a key part of the process. Some are more formal than others. Timeframes can vary enormously, as can the amount of detail required by the Request for Proposal (RFP). ‘There is a lot more thought that goes into the document and the planning behind it than there was before,’ says Kirsten Sutcliffe, Senior Business Development Manager at Macfarlanes.

Typically, organisations issue RFPs to between 5 and 25 law firms. As an effective method of selection, evaluating responses can, nevertheless, be as time-consuming for these organisations as it is for those producing them. To anticipate this, each law firm’s aim should be to create a bespoke offering that is concise, cogent and compelling. The only problem is that they have to do that hundreds, sometimes thousands of times a year, often at short notice.

Richard Grove at Allen & Overy summarises the challenge: ‘You’ve got to understand the client’s problems and issues, and sympathise with those problems and issues: share the pain, demonstrate understanding, and then use that understanding and sharing to validate the solution that you’ve come up with, and effectively lead the client to confirm their approval of your solutions.’

This may be seen by some as the refined art of effective persuasion, and by others as the elusive quest for perfection. However, this report seeks to analyse more of the science involved: the challenges faced by large law firms in the PD production process, what they do differently and why, and to what extent lawyers work with their business development teams in delivering a bespoke document which will ultimately convince prospects to choose them ahead of the rest.

‘The days of solely drafting long, text heavy pitch documents have gone,’ says Andy Towler, Associate Director of Business Development at Kirkland & Ellis. ‘In the past, the thinking often was: if we put 100 pages in front of them, they’re not going to read it, but it looks like we’ve done a lot of stuff.’ Economy is his current watchword. ‘The approach now is often to try and display in a short, and succinct a way as possible - four or five bullet points - why we are the very best firm in this space.’

Of course, there is considerably more to the pitching process than the simple production of a short, yet potent document. Scoping, research, evaluation, planning, team building, pricing, timetabling, reviewing and presenting - all play their part. But writing, proofing and submitting the pitch document is a key element. As Matthew Fuller, Director of Business Development & Marketing EMEA at White & Case, explains: ‘The pitch or proposal is a moment in time in a relationship with a client. It’s not a one off, or shouldn’t be.’

Despite some exceptions, his point is entirely valid: careful thought and detailed planning are needed, even before an RFP arrives; and again, after it is submitted. Excluding much of the before and after, what follows is primarily an examination of that figurative ‘moment in time’ – in reality, a process that can fluctuate enormously in scope and scale, depending upon the size and complexity of what is needed.

One simple rule prevails throughout: give the client what they want.

DOES SIZE MATTER?

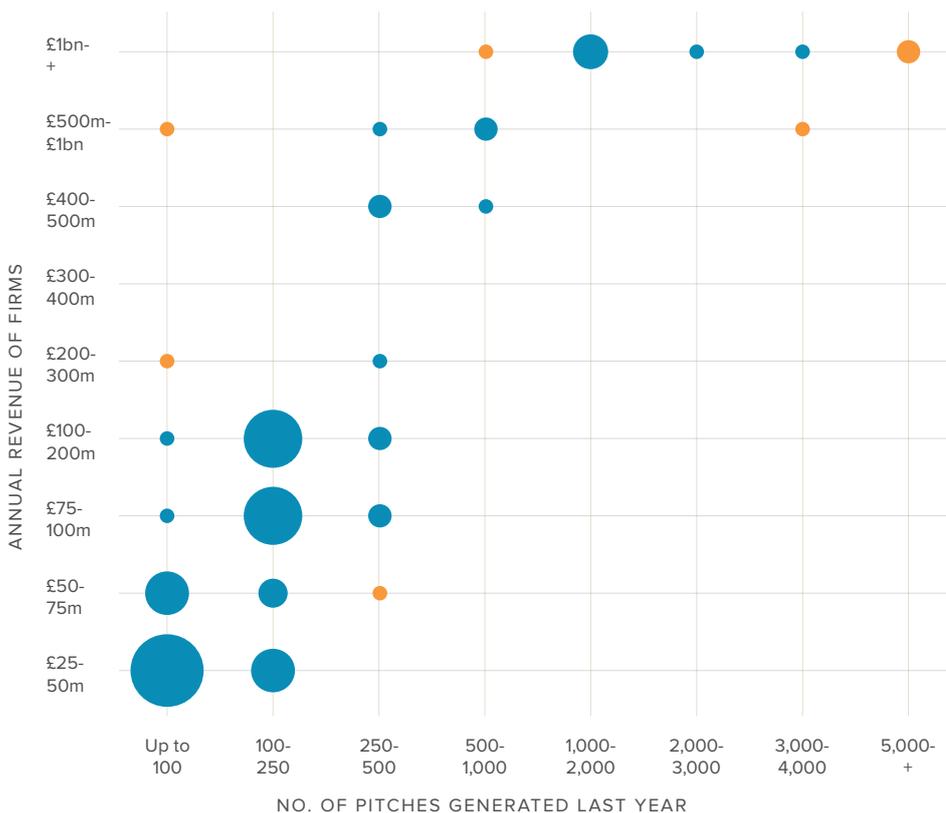
Completed by their business development teams, the 46 respondents to the Enable Pitch Management survey include four of the top ten law firms in the world by revenue. Overall, they comprise nearly half of the 100 largest law firms operating in the United Kingdom, mostly in the City of London. Every respondent is a top 100 law firm by total revenues, including half of the top 50 domestic UK firms.

However, the report findings cover the full spectrum - while eight respondents have annual revenues in excess of £1bn, a further eight are in the up to £50m bracket. A third of all respondents have annual revenues between £75m and £200m.

The BD teams tasked with producing PDs for each of these firms are necessarily sizeable: most number 20 or more while 14 firms (31%) have teams exceeding 40 staff. With one exception, every firm creates all their own PDs. Perhaps a by-product of differentials in internal accounting, there are distinct variations in how much budget is allocated to marketing and business development as a percentage of their annual revenue: 1-2 % (22 respondents); 3-4% (12) and 5% or more (3). The remainder do not know.

Before looking at PD volumes, it is worth examining how many RFPs never make the cut because they are declined at the outset. Data is less often recorded. 'We don't track opportunities that we don't pursue,' says Stephen Rowe, Senior Business Development Manager at Mishcon de Reya. 'But probably a quarter of opportunities that come in we decide just aren't for us.' He explains that 'there may be particular types of work that we would prefer not to do, so right at the start there should be consideration as to whether the rewards outweigh any detriments.' »

Volume of pitches generated in relation to firm revenue



Most firms with revenue of less than £200m are producing up to one pitch document a day. The biggest firms are producing one every 15 minutes.

‘You have a different mindset working with an existing client versus a green field site...coming to a new relationship, you can take an alternative approach and do something a bit different in your proposal.’

Geraint Evans,
Head of New Business at CMS

Deciding what to pitch for, or not, is ‘a decision that lies very much with the partners,’ says one BD Director. ‘They certainly won’t forward me a request and say: what’s your opinion, should we pitch for it? They have done all their due diligence before they come to us.’ This is perhaps untypical since the BD teams in most firms are often involved in the go/no go decision. Fuller adds: ‘There are certain sectors where we don’t have the expertise and we haven’t bothered to pursue particular clients because of that - there are better things that we can do with our time.’

Decision trees can be used in determining the cost-benefit/potential reward equation. In doing so, it is not uncommon for some firms to consider pitching now in the hope of winning business later. The more this happens, the more ambitious the team, argues one BD head. Another sees it as wasteful of resources and too scattergun an approach, unless it is part of a carefully formulated strategy to woo a particular client.

In aggregate, it is self-evident that bigger firms generate more PDs, although the correlation between size and number is not automatic. Notably, some firms with less than £250m in turnover create almost as many PDs as firms nearly twice their size. The highest figure given by one respondent firm is approximately 9,000 a year, equivalent to 173 pitches a week. **Meanwhile half of all respondents create up to 250 PDs a year - an average of just under one a day.**

A necessary caveat must apply when comparing these differences: in crude data terms, working on a single pitch for two hours counts exactly the same as crafting another which takes two weeks. But if successful the potential value of the latter would usually be greater. ‘We should be able to pull a document together in an hour’ confirms Towler. ‘If it’s a big, wide-ranging RFP, that can take a week or more of back and forth.’ Another BD director identifies the parameters at their most extreme: ‘Pitches range from 4-month long panel pitches to one-page fee quotes.’

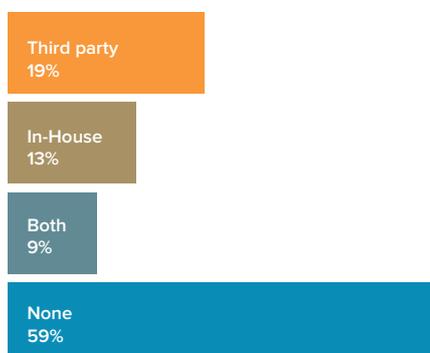
Because effective time management is imperative, BD productivity can also appear to deviate significantly. The most common number of PDs produced by individual BD professionals is up to 40 a year, or just under one a week. However, there are four firms where each BD team member is involved in at least 80 PDs a year. The same caveat, given above, may help to explain the difference.

A further disparity lies in the average number of hours taken in creating a PD. Four respondents suggest that this is five hours or less, while seven firms say that between 21 and 25 hours are needed with nine firms indicating that it takes 25 hours or more. The mode - between six and ten hours - applies at 26% of all respondent firms. Most (59%) do not use any dedicated software to create their pitch documents. Of the 41% of firms that do, 19% use third party software; 13% have built their own software in-house, while 9% use both.

The different discrete practice areas and modus operandi of each firm, the type and number of RFPs that they are each receiving, and the selection criteria applied in deciding whether or not to pitch, leads to one distinct conclusion from this assortment of data: every firm is unique. Individual firms, even of the same size and with comparable practices, can have notably different approaches to the pitching process in the resources allocated, the number of PDs created and how they are produced.

Critically, each potential client is also unique, as are their specific requests. Because it is not an exact science, pitching is neither standard nor formulaic. The process requires flexibility and creativity since every pitch has different elements requiring different responses: what works for one prospect might not work for the next; what works for one service line may not be relevant for another.

Breakdown of software use



A UNIQUE OFFERING

Nearly two thirds (65%) of all respondent firms are experiencing an increase in the number of PDs which they create. Arguably, this is reflected by increased revenues in the majority of UK law firms, as evidenced by their most recently reported revenue figures. The remaining third say that volumes are stable with no respondent experiencing a decline. In terms of procurement departments requiring the completion of their templates, 20% of respondents are experiencing a large increase with a further 58% seeing some increase.

'The increase in formalised tender processes and pitches is predominantly client led,' suggests Geraint Evans, Head of New Business at CMS. 'It's mainly due to clients professionalising the way in which they procure legal services.' He draws a clear distinction in approach to PDs between existing and potential new clients.

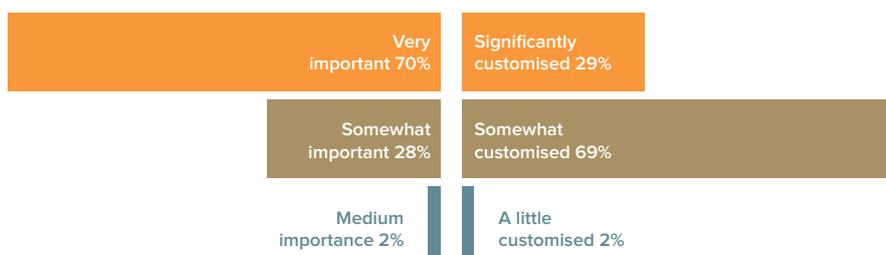
'You have a different mindset working with an existing client versus a green field site,' he says. 'Where your firm is already on the panel as an incumbent, then naturally you should be at an advantage to tender and retender, because you know that client well: you have an existing relationship, they understand you, you should understand them very well, how they work and like to operate. That should give you an advantage - and most of the time it does. The key though is not to have taken anything for granted or to be complacent in the relationship.'

Potential clients, he argues, are different. 'Coming to a new relationship, you can take an alternative approach and do something a bit different in your proposal,' he says. 'Although on the face of it there is little to lose, on the down side, you won't know the client as well as those advisors who have been working with them for several years.'

Whether for a new or existing client, 70% of respondents believe that it is very important to make each PD unique, with 28% thinking it somewhat important. Only one respondent suggested it was not that important. Given that these firms are producing many tens of thousands of PDs a year between them, making each one genuinely unique so that it stands out must indeed stretch the creativity of many BD professionals to the limit, not least because of time pressure. »

70% of law firms say that it is very important that each pitch document should be unique, but only 29% of them produce pitch documents that are significantly unique. This is more than a failure of expectation. Lack of time, lack of resources, lack of creativity, or lack of effort?

The importance of making each pitch document unique versus how customised each pitch document is



In terms of unique output, expectation seems to be tempered by reality with the percentages almost reversed: while 29% of respondents indicate that their PDs are significantly customised, 69% are only somewhat customised. Again, only one firm concedes that their PDs are slightly customised. With one exception, every respondent monitors their win rates. A surprising 9% of all respondents, however, do not actively seek feedback should they not succeed. More remarkably, two firms have no ambitions either to examine their win rates or to ask for client feedback.

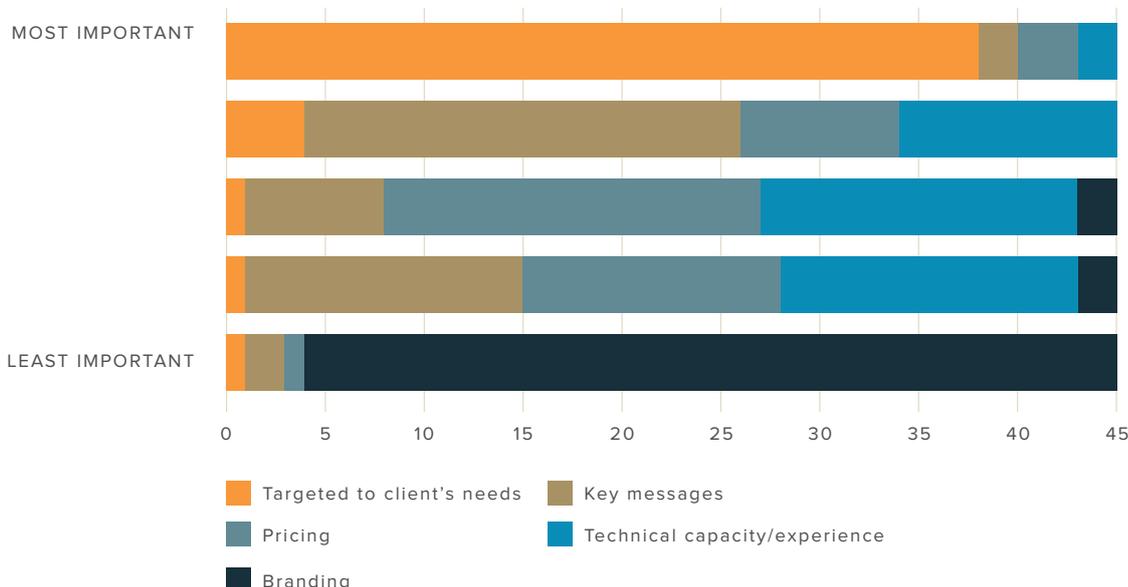
On one theme, there is significant common ground: understanding what the client wants is imperative. In choosing between five key criteria for each PD, targeted to client needs emerged as by far the most important and branding as the distinctly least important. But even here, the picture is not uniform: seven firms suggest being targeted to clients' needs is not the most important with one firm saying it is the least important consideration.

Sutcliffe says that 'it is critical to ensure that we're up to date on the client - if things are changing in their world that we have read the news and thought about the sector they are in and what's affecting them.' Rowe adds: 'We engage our business insights team to research the particular company and sector or market and do an analysis solely so that we can target the document and make it more focused on what the client is after.'

The significance of other criteria is more variable. Key messages is seen as the second most important criterion, followed closely by technical capacity/experience and pricing - although three respondents put the latter as the most important issue while 65% put it in their top three most important list in recognition that price can be a key differentiator.

Firms update their intelligence on clients to produce a bespoke PD in different ways. One BD head says that 'there are many firms where the media and marketing department have a far closer relationship with clients. Herbert Smith Freehills do that: they have client relationship managers who work within the BD team. But given the very nature of our client base and our firm, client relationships should be with the partners: they are the people who are dealing with these guys on a day-to-day basis.'

Importance of pitch elements, by ranking



TRAINING & STRATEGY

One of the biggest frustrations for many BD professionals is the time allocated and quality of input given by the lawyers to the pitch document itself. Although 93% of respondents suggest that partner level input in the pitch creation process is regular, significantly more than 7% express dissatisfaction in the commentary on challenges (see below) with how this works in practice.

Training divides opinion. In response to the question: are your lawyers trained in the art of pitch document content and production? the answer is 43% yes; 57% no. In evaluating variations by size of firm, there is no apparent difference. Ultimately, it is a question of culture.

‘We use external trainers for pitch training’ for Macfarlanes lawyers, says Sutcliffe, ‘and tend to focus this training on more senior solicitors and recently promoted partners. The BD team often attends the training to ensure that it is tailored to our style of pitching.’ This shows, perhaps, that the BD team is firmly in the driving seat.

Likewise, another BD director adds: ‘The big frustrations come when partners or lawyers want to have a say in the look and feel of a pitch document. If it is something that looks like it’s going to be quite a long way from the norm at the outset, I’d want to discuss this with the lead partner on the pitch and say: let’s set out now what you need.’

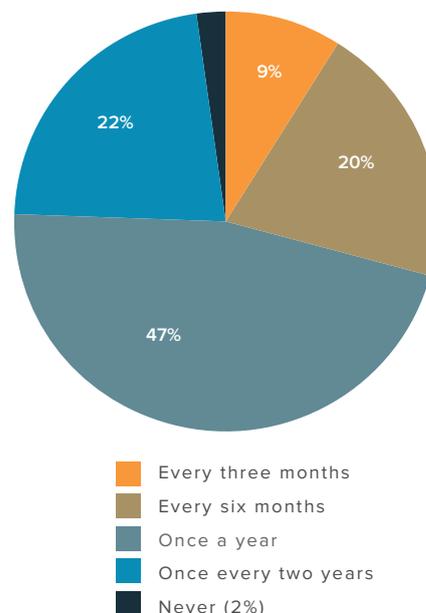
At the newly merged CMS, now a €1bn revenue firm, Evans explains that ‘from the moment our lawyers become trainees, newly qualified, to associate, senior associate and then the senior associate programme that goes into the partnership track, pitch training covers many different elements. Within that is winning the work, pitches and tenders, and pitching to clients.’ He adds that includes ‘the project management element, the development of a proposition, or benefits and understanding what benefits to the client mean.’

Similarly, White & Case believes that lawyers need to know about pitches. ‘We put a lot of effort into training our lawyers and increasingly our associates,’ says Fuller. ‘We believe very strongly that they should have a very significant part to play in the production of pitches. So we’ve made a real push in engaging our associates and getting them more involved in pitch production. It’s good for their careers: if they want to become partners, they have to have their own business and need to understand the levers and mechanisms around how you win and sustain business.’

However, Kirkland & Ellis does not believe in training its lawyers in PD content. ‘We would have a significant sit down session with attorneys at the beginning of the pitch process and plan out how this pitch is going to look,’ says Towler. ‘That hopefully minimises the chances of sending back a draft and it not being totally on point.’

Since Kirkland is one of the most profitable law firms in the world and the London office of White & Case has the highest revenues of any US-based firm in the City, opposing strategies appear to work equally well for both firms. ➤

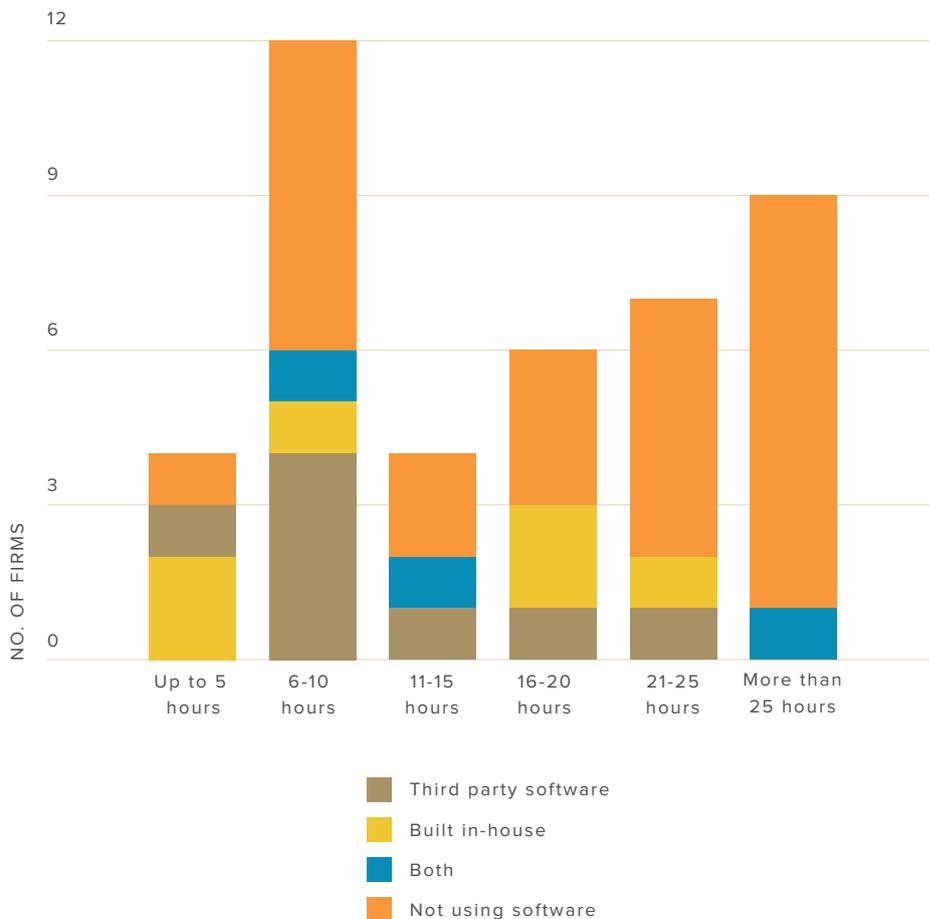
How often is pitch strategy reviewed



In examining their PD strategies, firms again diverge significantly. The frequency of reviewing their pitch strategy is broadly spread: every three months (9%); every six months (20%); once a year (47%); every two years (22%) and never (2%). How much senior management choose to involve themselves in the pitch process polarises much more: at 13 firms (28%) they are very involved, at 28 firms (61%) somewhat involved, and at five firms (11%) not involved at all. Again, size of firm is not a determining factor, either in the frequency of review or the degree of management involvement.

Among the minority whose senior management are very involved is Mishcon de Reya. Inevitably, senior management are most hands on 'in larger tenders, for example at the initial stage where we consider whether or not the opportunity is for us,' says Rowe. 'Then there's a period during which the technical elements of the pitch are pulled together by relevant partners and the business development team. The document will then be circulated more widely before it is sent to a prospective client, to ensure everyone is happy. That's a second opportunity for senior management to provide input.'

Time taken to create pitches with and without software



CHALLENGES

Respondents to the survey provide plenty of commentary about the challenges which they face. Their answers were supplied on the basis that they are not attributable to an individual firm. As a consequence of guaranteed anonymity, the responses given are more candid than they would otherwise be with several of them being reproduced verbatim below.

In asking about the pitch document, a host of related issues come to the fore concerning the wider process. While some themes are universal, others are particular to the firms concerned. Overall, the points addressed may echo with every law firm to some degree.

One BD Director suggests that 'an existing relationship is an essential criterion within the go/no-go decision.' Pitches, she explains, 'are hugely expensive and win rates are notoriously poor where there is no pre-existing relationship either with the client or an individual who has recently joined the client. A pitch request qualification telephone call is a mandatory requirement. It makes a huge difference to the personalisation of the pitch and subsequent presentation stage.' Politely declining to pitch, she adds 'is not a negative thing to do.'

At another firm, one BD head evaluates the strategic shortcomings of his firm and the way in which that impacts adversely on their pitch process. It is reproduced in full since among the many points raised, some may have wider resonance for others.

'Firstly, the firm needs to be much more strategic about which opportunities we actually pursue. With increased competition and demanding budgets, the tendency is to chase everything. This is not a strategy that will work. We need to focus our efforts on growing our existing relationships, yet a third of our RFPs are to new contacts. This has to change.

'The second challenge is getting partners to understand that you do not win a RFP on the day of the presentation, you can only lose it if you haven't put the ground work in. Customer relationship management/key account management is almost always more important than the RFP process. If you have a truly deep relationship, success will be demonstrated by the lack of RFP activity. Some regulated industries have no option, but there is still too much emphasis placed on the RFP and not enough on development of the relationship.

'Third, law firms have too many clients. Greater rigour needs to be applied to the selection of clients and therefore the RFPs that should be participated in. It's still true for most firms that 80% of revenue comes from 20% of clients, and even if that is changing, there are still thousands of small clients that get the same service as a top billing client. It doesn't make any sense, but it's hard to change attitudes until there is greater focus on a mix of metrics including profitability.'

Beyond such opinions based on personal experience, shortage of skills, time and resources are more commonly raised as complaints in relation to the PD than might be imagined from the data alone. Of those who added comment, more than half raised one or more of these concerns about how they impact adversely on the quality of pitches produced. »

'Lawyers have a tendency to write in very technical legal language, which can be necessary depending on the opportunity we are responding to. The challenge is to balance this with commercial USPs and create documents that are accessible for our clients.'

Not attributed

One respondent says: 'We have a large demand for proposal development, but limited resources with the experience and knowledge to create compelling proposals.' Another comments: 'Our biggest challenge is qualifying opportunities so that the time spent on pitches is targeted at winnable opportunities which deliver the most revenue to the broadest cross section of practice areas.'

A third respondent summarises their challenges as: 'Getting partner input into the process of substantively tailoring pitch documents; managing our library of content and experience; incorporating infographics and other visually interesting content into our pitch materials.'

Four key areas of pitching:

Preparation



Pricing



Technology



Tracking



'In relation to pitches,' a BD at one top 30 firm says 'challenges are usually around the look and feel of documents that are used. Lawyers have a tendency to write in very technical legal language, which can be necessary depending on the opportunity we are responding to. The challenge is to balance this with commercial USPs and create documents that are accessible for our clients.' On a positive note, he adds: 'We are currently reviewing our pitch templates for formal opportunities (e.g. RFIs/RFPs) and developing new designs that will be user friendly for our business development team, while also visually appealing from a marketing perspective.'

Elsewhere, a series of weaknesses are identified, surprisingly, at a major firm: 'We are not able to devote sufficient time to the process generally, which leads to a lack of proper scoping on receipt of invitation; insufficient team brainstorming to come up with relevant key messages and examples of ways our skills can translate into tangible benefits for clients and little time for rehearsals. We also need to be more creative around fee proposals.'

Such issues are not exclusive to that firm. A selection of comments below, each from different firms, reinforce these points, and address another common concern: price.

- 'There is no overall umbrella strategy'
- 'Consistency across jurisdictions/languages is one of our bigger challenges'
- 'We have a large demand for proposal development, but limited resources with the experience and knowledge to create compelling proposals'
- 'Our challenges: lack of ownership; lack of engagement (by lawyers) in bid/ no bid process; limited opportunity for scoping meetings (public sector tendering); insufficient tailoring of informal credentials documents'
- 'Lawyers need to be engaged in all of the pitches, but sometimes the engagement comes very late in the process'
- 'Differentiation and not resorting to rhetoric / marketing-speak are constant challenges'
- 'There is a race to the bottom on price for some clients'
- 'Clients will often say that we did not win due to price to maintain good relations'
- 'The biggest challenge is always pricing. Clients have some unreasonable expectations as to 'value' and typically spend more rectifying 'cheaper' firms' advice'

Providing a more upbeat conclusion, four key areas are identified by a final respondent: 'Preparation: ensuring adequate time is given to considering whether we want the work, getting the right people in the room at an early stage, and discussing what the client really wants and how we best provide it. Pricing: ensuring that our value for money is communicated effectively. Technology: automating our pitch template so that we operate more efficiently. Tracking: ensuring pitch details are tracked and stored, and that the prospective client is approached for feedback.'

KNOWING YOUR CLIENTS

If the pitch document is a moment in time, it can be a very demanding sixty seconds' worth of distance run for those BD professionals who create and shape the content. Well-executed, they can become a work of craftsmanship. When giving advice, law firms similarly aim to deliver a service to their clients that is bespoke, like a Rolls-Royce. This aspiration is further reflected in the pitch document ambitions of BDs: 98% believe that it is important or very important to make each pitch document unique.

But the practical constraints of time and mass production mean that the PD process is more like a Ford assembly line in the level of output required: the progressive assembly of interchangeable parts as the semi-finished PD moves from workstation to workstation where parts are added in sequence until the final document is produced.

This is not a criticism, but a reality since only 29% of respondents indicate that they do create pitch documents which are significantly customised. Many BDs are stretched with insufficient time or resources to create the perfect pitch every time. 'Many of our law firm clients find that their business development resources are overstretched, which is why we created PitchPerfect as a solution to help make the pitch process much easier and more time efficient.' says Liam Flanagan, Founder and CEO of Enable.

There is no automatic answer to every challenge, but it manifestly does not lie in blaming the client for their expectations on cost. Pricing is a complex issue. At its heart lies value, and the subjective perception of value as determined by the quality of advice and service delivered, set against the price paid. To enhance their value propositions, law firms need to have a deep understanding of their clients' businesses. That also has to be reflected in the proposal document. And yet a distinct lack of understanding, or indeed, interest in the business, is a perennial concern for many clients as evidenced by the findings of repeated surveys among general counsel.

In formulating their value proposition in a PD, the eternal law firm challenge is how to differentiate themselves from the competition. Some firms may benefit from having partners being closer to the PD process, not in all the minutiae, but in demonstrating how and why their firm really understands the client, and not just saying that they do.

As an example, there may be something to learn from the City's best-known corporate lawyer, Nigel Boardman. A man of power, influence, and affluence - and a rapier tactician - he knows a thing or two about winning clients and making a difference to their business. Boardman wears off-the-peg high street suits made by one of his clients, attends football matches at the home ground of another client, and buys his petrol at the garages of a third client. Not only is he fiercely loyal to his clients, he also really understands their business.

Such tangible dedication is generally not possible. But the mindset is. By streamlining and refining the more routine elements of the pitch process there can be time for finding out what makes the client really tick, what keeps them awake at night, and why. It may take considerable energy and research effort from lawyers and BD professionals working together to achieve that level of understanding. But in a very competitive market, it might just make the difference.

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71% of respondents indicate that they do not create pitch documents which are significantly customised.

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Liam Flanagan, Founder and CEO of Enable

Perfect

As well as our suite of applications, Enable offer services in Microsoft Office template creation, consultancy, project management, implementation, and software development

enableplc.com | +44 20 3743 9626 | info@enableplc.com