

# Business Development and Marketing in Professional Services: **The Future**

How have business development and marketing functions within professional services managed during the COVID-19 pandemic? How well did they adapt to remote working? Did their tactics and strategy change? And will part-office, part-remote working be the future for these functions? These questions were answered by an esteemed panel in our recent webinar “Business Development and Marketing in Professional Services: The Future”. Hosted by Hannah Taylor, we were delighted to have Leor Franks, CMO at Augusta Ventures moderate the session.

The speakers included:

- **Peter Thomas**, CMO, Accenture Europe
- **Chris Pullen**, Business Development Director Law, EY
- **Alessandra Almeida Jones**, Director of Marketing, Baker McKenzie
- **Amanda Wadey**, Head of Practice Development - Commercial Disputes, RPC
- **Emma Baker**, Head of Marketing & Communications at Charles Russell Speechlys

Below are the key takeaways from the session which focus on **strategy**, **tactics** and **people**. You can watch the full webinar [here](#).

## Strategy – What has the impact been on your firms’ business development and marketing strategy?

### A change in strategy

Overall, the general consensus by the panel was their long-term marketing and business development strategies didn’t change. However, what did change was the prioritisation of how they would conduct their marketing activities, the channels used to contact clients and the type of content they created. Each panellist agreed that personalisation was key to ensuring their marketing was as effective as possible. Amanda Wadey commented “You had to look after your own team first then focus on clients then, it was very much looking at what can we do right now for our clients. We focused on staying in contact with our clients which became the short-term strategy”.

Peter Thomas said that his firm’s overall marketing strategy didn’t change and remained “to focus on what our brand stands for in

the market and use our relationships with clients to explain our story in a way that is personal and as a company. What did change was the prioritisation of what we sold to them and how we did that engagement so less in a change in strategy more of a change in prioritisation.”

Businesses with global offices were being impacted by COVID-19 at different times throughout the year meaning that offices were in different stages in terms of responding, thus strategies across the globe would be different depending on the market. Alessandra Almeida Jones commented that her firm put in place a “3R model”: resilience, recovery and renewal”. This was in place so the firm could better help clients through the different, and potentially recurring phases of the pandemic.



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“  
**You need to constantly look at the data  
and adjusting plans accordingly**  
”

### Budgets

“Marketing budgets were viewed through a COVID lens, leading to discussions about overall marketing activity and especially whether non-COVID initiatives should be put on the back burner” said Chris Pullen. There was a shared agreement among the panellists that COVID-related communication activities rocketed to the top of the agenda and everything else took a back seat. Some firms decided to slash budgets, others deferred. Was this correct? Only time will tell.

### Personalisation

The panellists agreed that understanding each client's unique circumstance was key and as such a personalised approach would be the most effective. Amanda said “With so much legislative changes, law firms wanted to get as much of their content out to their clients saying this is going to happen in your world very quickly. We sent a lot of personalised emails saying, ‘we think this may affect you please get in contact with us’ but avoiding a lot of marketing speak”.

## Tactics – How have your tactics changed during the crisis?

All the panellists agreed that everyone's tactics focused on creating content.

Alessandra commented “Content and digital became more important. There was a real panic towards doing more digital content and broadcast which turned into a bit of a ‘content rave’. We wanted to better what we do digitally and increase genuine personal contact as events and other means to have face-to-face contact with clients no longer exists”. She continued that for her firm “the pandemic has highlighted the real need to use digital properly and more broadly so that we not relying on email communications”.

Most firms created content which they didn't plan for nor did they anticipate just how much content would be created. The panellists agreed that there was quickly an overload of content being pushed out into the public. Peter Thomas said that for his

team they took a more measured approach “we looked at what content were we going to produce. Was the content relevant and timely?” However, Peter highlighted that deciding where to take this content to market had changed “The channel used to get content to market was forced because you couldn't do anything physical and so everything has to be remote in some way, shape or form. There was a big effort on making sure that clients were only receiving from us a certain amount of relevant material and they weren't being bombarded by every different service group”.

Emma agreed that the focus on channels was very important, she stated “we challenged our teams on the ways they were delivering content. So, there's a temptation if you're doing a seminar to make it a webinar when actually that isn't always the right way to do it. So really looking at the content and finding the best channel for that.”

## How have you found working from home during lockdown?



**21%** Positive in every way



**68%** Efficient but I miss  
the social interaction



**9%** Difficult



**2%** None of the above

## How has the crisis impacted the teams you managed and how will affect the future of your teams working from home?

The 'new normal' for working is something that is spoken about regularly and we asked the panellists how working from home has been received and how it will impact their teams going forward.

"There was a lot of positivity about working from home than negativity" said Chris Pullen. "The concern was making sure everyone was able to work from home, making sure they were

ok in their environment as each person's circumstance is unique". The panellists believe that people are currently in the business-as-usual phase in which things have settled, they are comfortable with the technology and this is now the way in which most businesses will work going forward. Making sure people are comfortable with the part-office, part-home office style of working for a long period of time is the next big consideration to be made.



*Are we going to go back to pre-COVID normal where we're all in the office most of the time? I think general feeling is probably not*



Naturally there are benefits of working in the office that you don't get when working from home, Chris highlighted this point by saying "The undervalued element of working in an office is the social interaction of just being able to pop around people to saying "I was thinking of doing this" or "let's go grab a coffee and have a conversation which leads to all sorts of other interesting aspects of some of your day job which you hadn't thought about before".

Amanda echoed this point and stated that regular communication will be even more important given that people won't be in an office environment, "staying connected is vitally important when working from home. Regular meetings and 'water cooler' moments are important to have such as talking about what they did over the weekend. This helps to maintain and build relationships".

### Career aspirations



**25%** are looking to be promoted in current firm



**42%** Move for a promotion



**22%** Move firms for the same level



**3%** Move firms for a different function



**8%** Happy where you are

Finally, the panel were asked for their top tips for anyone looking for progress their career.

- **Peter** "Be Curious. Be Relevant. Be Connected"
- **Alessandra** "Be flexible, adaptable and be prepared to go beyond your job role"
- **Chris** "Take calculated risks and don't be afraid to fail. If you try to do what's gone before you won't get anywhere"

- **Amanda** "Get under the skin of the areas in the business and talk the talk"
- **Emma** "Don't be fixated on having a plan. Be flexible and adaptable"

You can watch the full recording of the webinar [here](#). For any further information, contact Hannah Taylor.