

# THOUGHT LEADER PROFILE

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This is the second installment in a monthly series profiling “thought leaders” in the field of legal marketing and client development. Each installment will feature the thoughts of a different expert in legal marketing on a topic that they see as a critical concern. This month’s profile features Sally Fiona King, Regional Chief Operating Officer for the Americas Region of international law firm, Clifford Chance. Profiles are created and produced by the LMA Resources Committee thought leaders Catherine Alman MacDonagh and John Cunningham.



SALLY FIONA KING,  
Regional Chief Operating  
Officer for the Americas,  
Clifford Chance

## Culture and Intimacy

BY JOHN O. CUNNINGHAM

Forward-thinking marketing and business development professionals are going beyond the mere execution of sales strategies. They are helping their firms to grow service-minded cultures and deeper levels of intimacy with their clients.

“Everything in a service business goes back to culture,” says Sally Fiona King, the Regional Chief Operating Officer for the Americas at Clifford Chance’s New York office. King, who has to integrate marketing functions with other operational functions that she oversees at the firm, asserts that support functions “should work together to provide a concierge level of benefits to lawyers.”

“Building a service culture begins at home,” she says, asserting that marketers should be providing lawyers with everything they need to know their clients and grow more intimate with them. “It is not the job of the partners to do market research or develop a cheat sheet on every client; it is their job to practice law and bill for it.”

King contends that marketers should help lawyers to understand a client’s culture because it is one of the keys to growing intimacy with the client. She points to General Electric, her former employer, as an example. “If you wanted to work with GE, then you had to know what Six Sigma was and you had to anticipate problems and peer around corners. We were looking for strategic advisors and not just people to dig us out of a hole,” she reflects, noting that GE lawyers did not just react to something like a labor problem, but actively sought out legal pathways to implement outsourcing or other solutions.

A firm with a true service culture will not just solve problems for their blue chip clients, such as GE, but will look to see if those solutions are a fit for other clients. “If you can discover who else needs those solutions, then you can hold down *their* costs while solving *their* problems as well,” says King.

She adds that marketers should help lawyers to connect on a personal level with their clients because “selling is much more a function of intimacy than it is an intellectual process.” King suggests that one of the best ways to become intimate with a client is to spend time with client contacts at their facilities. Once there, it is much easier to sit down and ask them what more they want from the relationship.

Marketers can also benefit from following the advice they give to lawyers, says King. "Technology is great for communication, but face-to-face is always better. You have to get to know your own lawyers just like they are your clients," she asserts. "Knowing your own culture and developing a happy relationship with your own partners at home is essential to understanding how your own firm can best serve your clients."

She credits Clifford Chance with encouraging intimacy between business development and legal professionals by including them all in critical practice area and partner meetings involving client issues. "It makes us a more effective team," says King.

### Looking To the Future

Sally King sees an expanded role for law firm marketers in the future—one that may include:

- The facilitation of succession planning and associate development so that clients are bonded from generation to generation;
- A role in developing the values and culture of each firm that seeks to become "an employer of choice" for the top talent that clients demand; and
- A role in screening, hiring and promoting talent that fits the culture.

To build a service culture, King suggests an industry model. "Look at Four Seasons hotels. What sticks out is . . . [their] personal attention and service, and that's what we should be providing inside and outside our firms."



JOHN O. CUNNINGHAM is a consultant, freelance writer and contributor to various legal and business publications. He practiced law for 16 years and served as general counsel for both Pizzeria UNO and Chief Auto Parts (later merged into "AutoZone"). Comments and inquiries may be sent to him at [C3cunningham@aol.com](mailto:C3cunningham@aol.com).

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