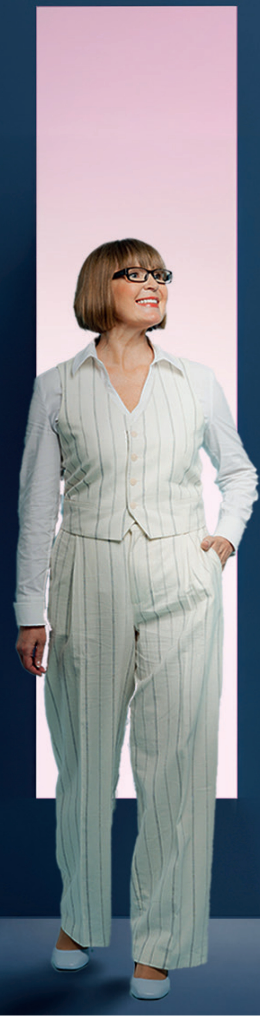
Legal Marketing, BD and Corporate Affairs

Industry Update

What's shaping hiring, brand and commercial strategy across the legal sector.



In this update

01 A market in transition

02 The strategic divide: Global vs. mid-market

03 Key hiring trends

04 Key hires

05 Brand investment: Joining the dots between brand & demand

06 Business development's evolving role

07 Salary benchmarks

01

A market in transition

The legal sector is undergoing a profound structural shift, driven by a relentless pursuit of margin, scale, and international reach. The past two years have witnessed a marked surge in C-suite and Director-level hiring, signalling a market rapidly reorganising itself for a new era of competition.

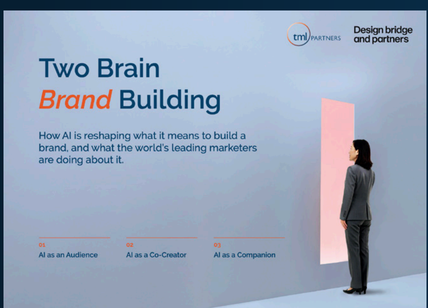
At the apex of the market, consolidation is highly visible. Transatlantic combinations between established heavyweights – such as Ashurst and Perkins Coie, Winston & Strawn and Taylor Wessing, alongside Hogan Lovells and Cadwalader – are redefining global scale. Concurrently, firms like Charles Russell Speechlys and Macfarlanes are establishing their inaugural North American footprints, opting for organic international capability over full-scale mergers.

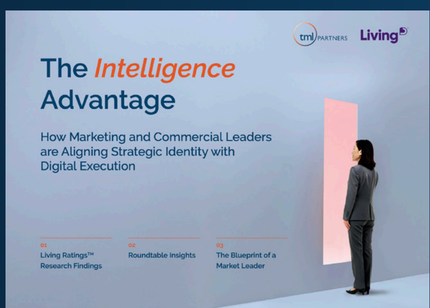
> *While M&A volume continues to rise into 2026, the market is not consolidating uniformly. We are observing a distinct polarisation: a high frequency of small-firm mergers on one end, juxtaposed against market-defining combinations at the top.*

This unprecedented consolidation introduces a critical commercial risk for the next three to five years. As the top tier expands into massive global platforms, the pool of senior commercial, marketing, and business development talent equipped to operate at such an immense scale is inherently finite. For business leaders focused on driving long-term profitability and shareholder value, failing to proactively plan leadership pipelines and succession strategies today guarantees severe talent shortages tomorrow. Firms must act swiftly to secure leaders who can navigate this transition smoothly and effectively.

Recent reports

We have recently produced the below reports, following exclusive breakfast roundtable events for our marketing and commercial leadership communities across various sectors. Click the reports below to view.





02

The strategic divide: Global vs. mid-market

As the market polarises, so too does the blueprint for commercial success. Global and mid-market firms are deploying contrasting go-to-market strategies, requiring vastly different leadership capabilities to drive overarching business growth and alleviate the pressure of delivering both immediate results and long-term future-proofing.

Global firms: The industrialisation of commercial growth

For top-tier global firms, the strategic imperative is building highly sophisticated, integrated commercial functions. Business development, pricing strategy, data analytics, and client account management are no longer siloed; they are merging into unified, revenue-generating business functions.

To inject the required commercial rigour, these firms are increasingly recruiting leadership from outside the legal sector, targeting financial services and corporate backgrounds. The mandate for these leaders is clear: transform the business development function into a strategic advisory unit that directly impacts the bottom line.

Mid-market firms: Hyper-specialisation and private equity

Conversely, the mid-market is fiercely protecting its position by pivoting away from full-service breadth in favour of deep, sector-led specialisation. Howard Kennedy's strategic concentration on seven core specialisms exemplifies this shift, allowing firms to carve out a highly focused competitive edge.

This segment of the market, particularly regional and consumer-facing legal services, is also attracting heightened private equity investment. According to the Law Gazette, there have been 15 PE-backed legal transactions in just the first five months of 2026, versus 12 in the whole of 2025 and 12 in 2024. Recent deals include DWF/Inflexion, Lawfront, Fletchers, HF, Adeptio Law Group/FBC Manby Bowdler, Harper James/LDC and Orwins/Aliter.

As PE firms accelerate technological and operational scale, operating partners and investment directors require pre-vetted, reliable commercial leaders capable of presenting well to executive committees and delivering immediate bottom-line growth.

Global firms

- Significant capital investment in pricing, data analytics, and client intelligence platforms.
- The normalisation of "Clients & Markets" and "Growth" titles at the Chief and Director levels.
- Integration of business development, pursuits, and marketing into a single client-facing narrative.

Mid-market firms

- A pivot toward sector-led strategies over traditional full-service models.
- Targeted, high-impact client programmes designed to secure market share.
- The hiring of commercial leaders tasked explicitly with moving the revenue needle, rather than simply managing processes.

03

Key hiring trends

Sectors & clients

Where client demands cut across multiple practice groups, and jurisdictions, sector groups have become crucial agents for firms to be closer to their clients, and ultimately be in a position to sell in their practice specialisms.

With more revenue sitting inside of existing relationships, an extenuated need for law firms to understand their clients businesses fully, cross-selling becoming more sophisticated, and international coverage becoming more prevalent, demand is growing for BD leaders who can connect client intelligence with cross-practice opportunities, develop sector propositions and coordinate strategic account plans across teams and geographies.

Private Equity: PE work spans M&A, finance, tax, real estate, disputes and more. The fund itself is only one part of the relationship. Portfolio companies, management teams, lenders, co-investors and other stakeholders all sit around it, creating a significant key account management opportunity. That's why PE-focused BD leaders are increasingly expected to combine sector knowledge with client intelligence and commercial strategy.

Energy and Infrastructure: Clients need financing, disputes and regulatory expertise delivered on a global basis, with growing markets such as the Middle East adding further complexity. Firms are therefore looking for people who can connect the dots across practices and geographies, identify where existing client relationships can be expanded, and develop sector propositions around major themes such as the energy transition, infrastructure investment and decarbonisation.

Life Sciences: Specialist sector credibility matters here because clients operate in highly regulated, technically complex markets covering IP, R&D, clinical trials, licensing, regulatory issues, product liability, transactions and disputes. A major pharmaceutical, biotech or medical-device client might interact with a firm through several specialist teams at once, which makes relationship orchestration as important to the BD leader's value as sector knowledge itself. That's why, despite how knowledge-intensive the sector is, firms have been willing to look outside it for BD leaders who can hold that orchestration together.

03

Key hiring trends

Practice: Litigation & Disputes Dominance

Demand remains strong for BD leaders with deep practice group expertise. The expectation now goes beyond support: firms want practice-aligned BD professionals to act as strategic business partners who drive proposition development and convert client pursuits, not just coordinate them. That expertise increasingly needs to travel, with firms pushing for a unified practice strategy across international and global offices rather than one that varies by region. Litigation and disputes has been the standout area this year, though demand remains strong across the board.

Thomson Reuters' latest market analysis found that while transactional practices plateaued in late 2025, demand in litigation, bankruptcy and labour and employment accelerated, driven by regulatory pressure, economic uncertainty and growing workforce complexity.

That has made disputes central to many firms' strategies, as they seek to rebalance their practice mix away from reliance on transactional work.

Digital transformation and operations

Significant investment continues in CRM transformation, data analytics, revenue operations and client intelligence platforms. AI is accelerating all of it: firms are investing in AI-enabled pitch and proposal tools, client and market intelligence, and content generation, and are hiring for the skills to implement and govern that responsibly, not just the tools themselves. Demand is growing for digital marketing specialists, campaign managers and commercially minded, data-literate professionals. Candidates are increasingly assessing firms on the maturity of their technology and data capability just as much as firms are assessing candidates.

PR, corporate and change communications

Investment in external communications, reputation management and PR leadership is rising, particularly among firms building brand presence in new markets. This is partly a branding play, but increasingly structural: as clients use large language models to research and shortlist advisors, a firm's content and narrative shape how it's represented and trusted within those models. That makes communications talent as much a discoverability decision as a reputational one.

The same investment is showing internally too. Firms navigating mergers, PE investment or lateral hires need change communications to land those transitions with their people, and the shift to new ways of working, including AI adoption, is driving demand for internal comms professionals who explain change rather than just announce it.

04

Key hires

A snapshot of senior hires shaping the market over the past year:

Craig Annis
Chief Brand and Communications Officer

Freshfields

Katie Cramond-Hill
Senior Director of Business Development, EMEA

Gibson Dunn

Andrew Towler
Director of Marketing & Business Development

Willkie Farr & Gallagher

Andy Peat
Chief Client Officer

Simmons & Simmons

Anne Callender
Chief Business Development Officer

Akin Gump

Katie Lior
EMEA Director of M&BD

Fried Frank

Nicholas Barrows
Chief Marketing Officer

Devonshires (first CMO appointment)

Victoria Bennett
Group Marketing Officer, Partner

Irwin Mitchell

John Babtie
Director of Business Development, Practices & Sectors

Reed Smith

Kayleigh Zell
Chief Marketing Officer, Americas

Hogan Lovells Cadwalader

JeanMarie Campbell
Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer

Jenner & Block

Amanda Schneider
Chief Marketing & Business Development Officer

Ballard Spahr

Laura Chamberlain
Global Head of Business Development & Strategy, Disputes

Hogan Lovells Cadwalader

James Wallis
EMEA Business Development Director

Proskauer Rose

05

Brand investment: Joining the dots between brand & demand

Brand is increasingly front of mind for leadership, with several global firms undertaking significant repositioning exercises over the past 12 to 18 months. Freshfields, Clifford Chance, Dechert, BCLP, Slaughter and May, Proskauer Rose, Stephenson Harwood and Forsters have all launched brand refreshes, revisiting purpose, narrative and market positioning in response to heightened competition and market volatility. In uncertain markets, trust and clarity of identity have become critical assets.

However, with this increased investment comes increased scrutiny. Brand is no longer protected from commercial accountability. Boards are asking sharper questions about the relationship between brand equity and pipeline performance, and marketing leaders are being challenged to connect narrative positioning to measurable demand generation.

> *Brand as a standalone communications exercise is over.*
> *It now sits at the heart of the wider growth strategy, not alongside it.*

For the C-suite, that means tighter integration between brand strategy, digital performance, business development and revenue reporting, owned as one system rather than four separate ones.

06

Business development's evolving role

BD now sits at the intersection of client strategy, commercial growth, pricing and market intelligence. Senior BD professionals are expected to understand profitability, pricing strategy, fee structures, financial performance and data analytics, not just relationship management. The traditional model of BD centred on events, directories and pitches is disappearing quickly, and firms still hiring for that model are hiring for a role that no longer exists in many firms.

Pricing and commercial growth

As firms move beyond traditional hourly billing, BD is playing an increasingly important role in value-driven pricing and productisation. Pricing decisions still sit with partners, pricing teams and matter leaders, but BD can help shape propositions around client outcomes, articulate value and develop clearer, more differentiated offerings. This is becoming more important as AI-driven efficiencies lead clients to question the billable hour itself. BD is increasingly acting as the bridge between client value and commercial strategy, helping firms justify cost, increase deal value, support alternative fee models and, ultimately, move from selling time to selling value.

Talent implications

Competition is growing for BD and marketing candidates who combine legal sector expertise, commercial acumen, financial understanding, strategic pricing capability and data literacy. Future hiring will increasingly prioritise pricing analytics, business intelligence, CRM and financial systems experience, and revenue forecasting capability. Firms that hire to yesterday's job description will lose this talent to firms that don't.

CMO vs Chief Growth Officer: An evolving leadership model

Firms are increasingly testing whether growth is best led through a single CMO/Chief Growth role or through a split model, with the CMO owning brand and marketing while a CBDO/Chief Growth Officer focuses on clients, business development and revenue.
The emergence of broader Chief Growth roles reflects the growing expectation that BD and marketing should sit closer to the firm's overall commercial strategy, rather than operate as separate functions.

Outlook

Over the next five years, expect pricing teams to keep growing and become more strategic, financial literacy to become essential for BD leadership progression, and the lines between BD, pricing and commercial strategy to blur further.

> ***The most sought-after legal BD professionals are becoming commercially minded operators who combine client development, data, pricing and strategic thinking to drive revenue growth and protect profitability.***

Firms hiring against that standard now will be better placed than those waiting for the market to catch up with them.

07

Salary benchmarks

The salary data below provides a snapshot of current remuneration trends across senior BD, marketing and communications roles, with a focus on the London, European and US markets.

BD and Client Development

Including Proposals and Account Managers

Location	Assistant	Coordinator	Specialist	Manager	Senior Manager	Assoc. Director / Head of	Director
London	£30,000-40,000	£40,000-55,000	£55,000-80,000	£75,000-105,000	£95,000-140,000	£140,000-200,000	£220,000-300,000
Paris	€25,000-€35,000	$70,000-100,000	$110,000-150,000	$160,000-230,000	$200,000-270,000	$240,000-325,000	$275,000-410,000
Frankfurt / Munich	€30,000-€40,000	$65,000-90,000	$100,000-135,000	$150,000-210,000	$180,000-255,000	$220,000-310,000	$250,000-370,000
Washington DC	€40,000-€55,000	$65,000-90,000	$100,000-140,000	$150,000-220,000	$180,000-260,000	$220,000-310,000	$250,000-370,000
New York	€55,000-€75,000	$70,000-100,000	$110,000-150,000	$160,000-230,000	$200,000-270,000	$240,000-325,000	$275,000-410,000
Boston	€75,000-€110,000	$65,000-90,000	$100,000-135,000	$150,000-210,000	$180,000-255,000	$220,000-310,000	$250,000-370,000
Washington DC	€110,000-€140,000	$65,000-90,000	$100,000-140,000	$150,000-220,000	$180,000-260,000	$220,000-310,000	$250,000-370,000
LA	€145,000 - €180,000	$70,000-100,000	$100,000-145,000	$160,000-230,000	$200,000-270,000	$240,000-325,000	$270,000-410,000

Marketing

Including Events, Campaigns and Digital

Location	Assistant	Coordinator	Specialist	Manager	Senior Manager	Assoc. Director / Head of	Director
London	£25,000-30,000	£40,000-50,000	£55,000-70,000	£70,000-90,000	£90,000-115,000	£120,000-150,000	£160,000-220,000
New York	$45,000-70,000	$60,000-90,000	$80,000-140,000	$130,000-190,000	$170,000-220,000	$200,000-250,000	$230,000-300,000
Boston	$40,000-60,000	$60,000-85,000	$80,000-120,000	$120,000-170,000	$160,000-200,000	$180,000-220,000	$210,000-280,000
Washington DC	$40,000-60,000	$60,000-85,000	$80,000-120,000	$120,000-170,000	$160,000-200,000	$180,000-220,000	$210,000-280,000
LA	$45,000-70,000	$60,000-90,000	$80,000-140,000	$130,000-190,000	$170,000-220,000	$190,000-250,000	$220,000-300,000

Corporate Communications

Including external and internal, content, executive comms

Location	Assistant	Coordinator	Specialist	Manager	Senior Manager	Assoc. Director / Head of	Director
London	£25,000-35,000	£35,000-50,000	£55,000-75,000	£75,000-95,000	£95,000-125,000	£130,000-170,000	£180,000-240,000
New York	$50,000-70,000	$70,000-95,000	$100,000-140,000	$140,000-200,000	$190,000-260,000	$250,000-310,000	$290,000-410,000
Boston	$50,000-60,000	$60,000-90,000	$90,000-130,000	$130,000-180,000	$180,000-240,000	$250,000-280,000	$280,000-370,000
Washington DC	$50,000-60,000	$60,000-90,000	$90,000-130,000	$130,000-180,000	$180,000-240,000	$250,000-280,000	$280,000-380,000
LA	$50,000-70,000	$65,000-95,000	$100,000-135,000	$140,000-200,000	$180,000-260,000	$250,000-310,000	$280,000-410,000

About tml Partners

tml Partners is a global specialist in executive recruitment for marketing and business development roles, covering executive search, manager-lever recruitment, interim management, fractional consulting and leadership intelligence.

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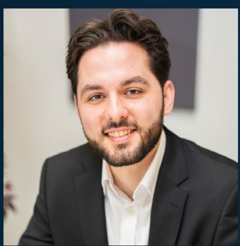

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