



2022 State of Professional Services Marketing and Business Development Teams

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March and April 2022, Ackert Inc. conducted a market-wide study on the strengths and weaknesses of professional services marketing and business development teams. This industry study examines survey responses of marketing and business development professionals at 247 primarily U.S.-based law, accounting, financial services, engineering, and consulting firms.

KEY FINDINGS:

When asked to rate the importance of each of seven business development activities – content creation, social media presence, networking, collaboration, pipeline management, time management, and identifying a specialization/ differentiation – an average of nine out of 10 respondents rate each as somewhat, very or extremely important.

Nearly all respondents work with seller-doers to create business development plans.

Nearly as many marketers and business developers touch base with seller-doers on their business development plans weekly as those who do so monthly.

Seller-doer coaching is a widely used support tactic, with a majority of firms providing internal coaching and slightly fewer providing outsourced coaching.

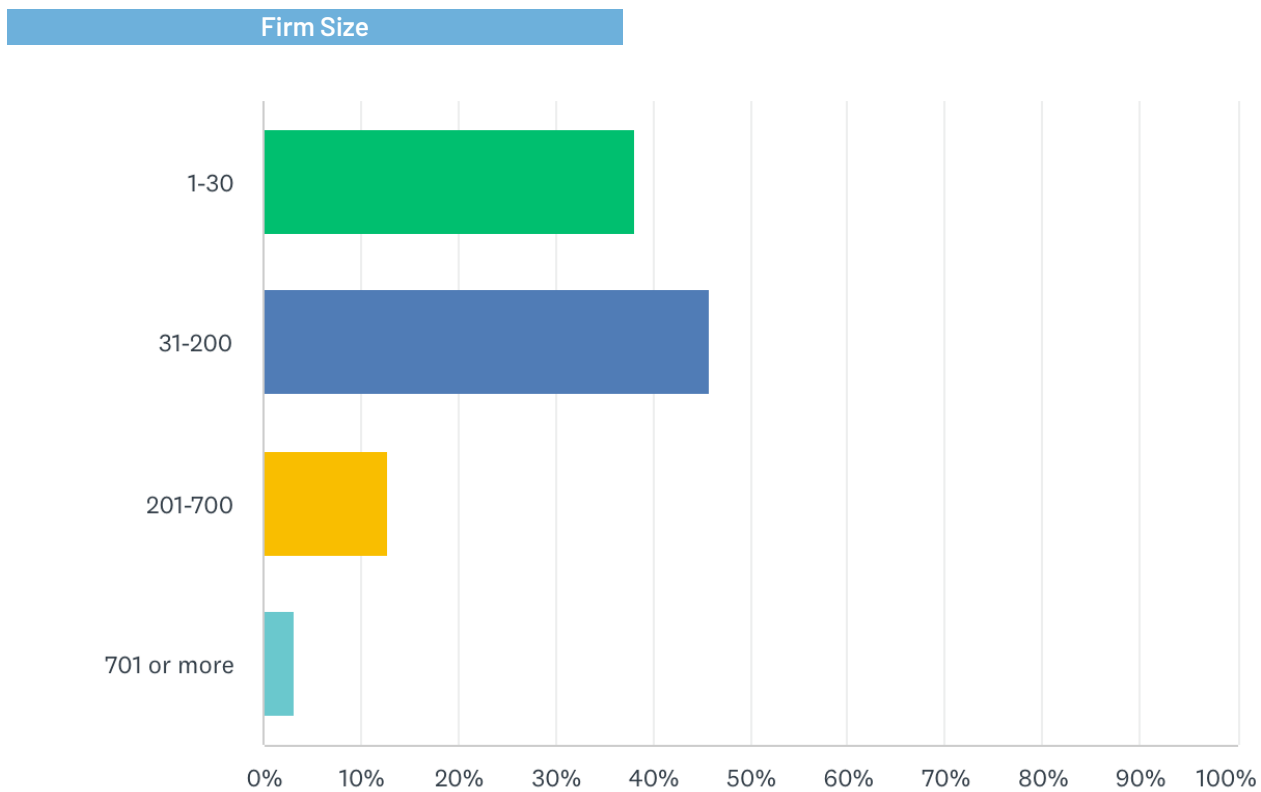
The highest percentage of firms say a combination of coaching (internal or external) and technology is what they find to be most effective.

All respondents recognize the importance of having real-time KPI tracking for their marketing and business development efforts.

A surprisingly high percentage of marketers and business developers are directly impacted by The Great Resignation.

DATA ANALYSIS

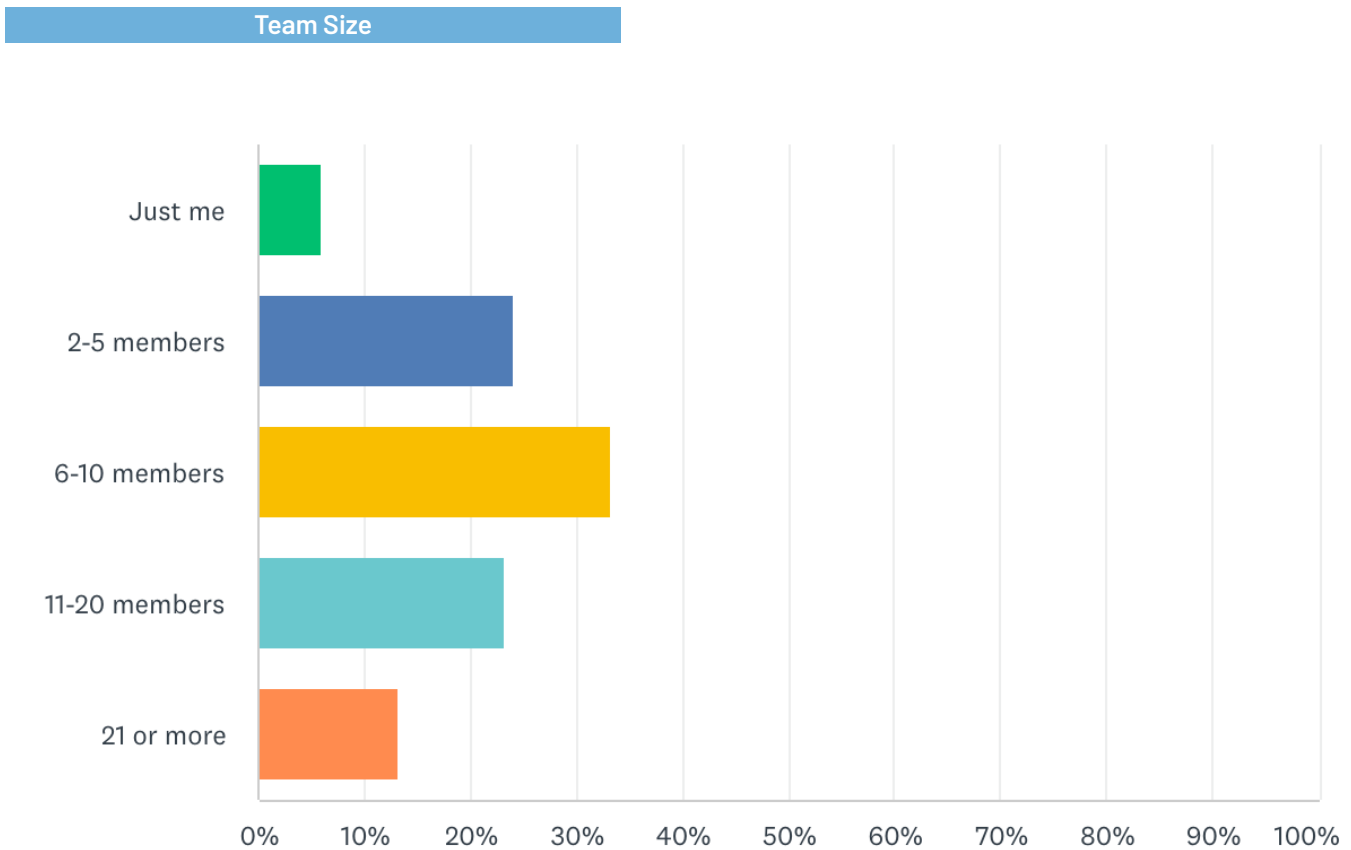
We asked 247 professional services marketing and business development professionals to answer a series of questions regarding seller-doers' marketing and business development challenges, how they support seller-doers, KPI tracking, and the Great Resignation.



Respondents represented firms of all sizes, with the majority qualifying as small- to mid-size. We asked them to quantify the size of their firms based on the number of seller-doers. 46% have 31-200 seller doers, 38% have 1-30, 13% have 201-700, and just 3% have 701 or more.

SIZE OF FIRMS' MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

We asked respondents to quantify the size of their teams. Nearly six out of 10 firms have teams of between two and 10 members. 23% have 11-20 team members, 13% have 21 or more, and just 6% of firms have one-person teams.

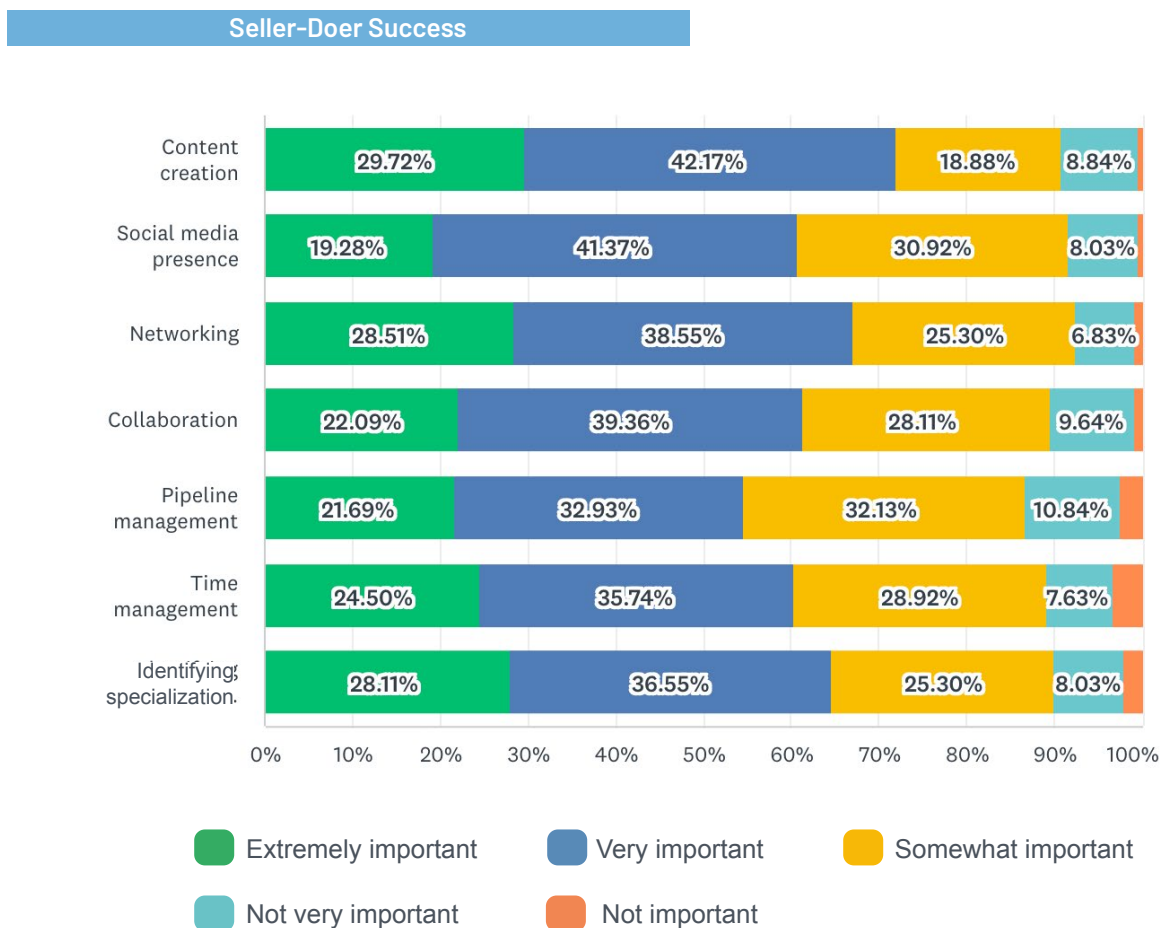


Nearly six out of 10 firms have teams of between two and 10 members.

MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

RANKING THE IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR SELLER-DOER SUCCESS

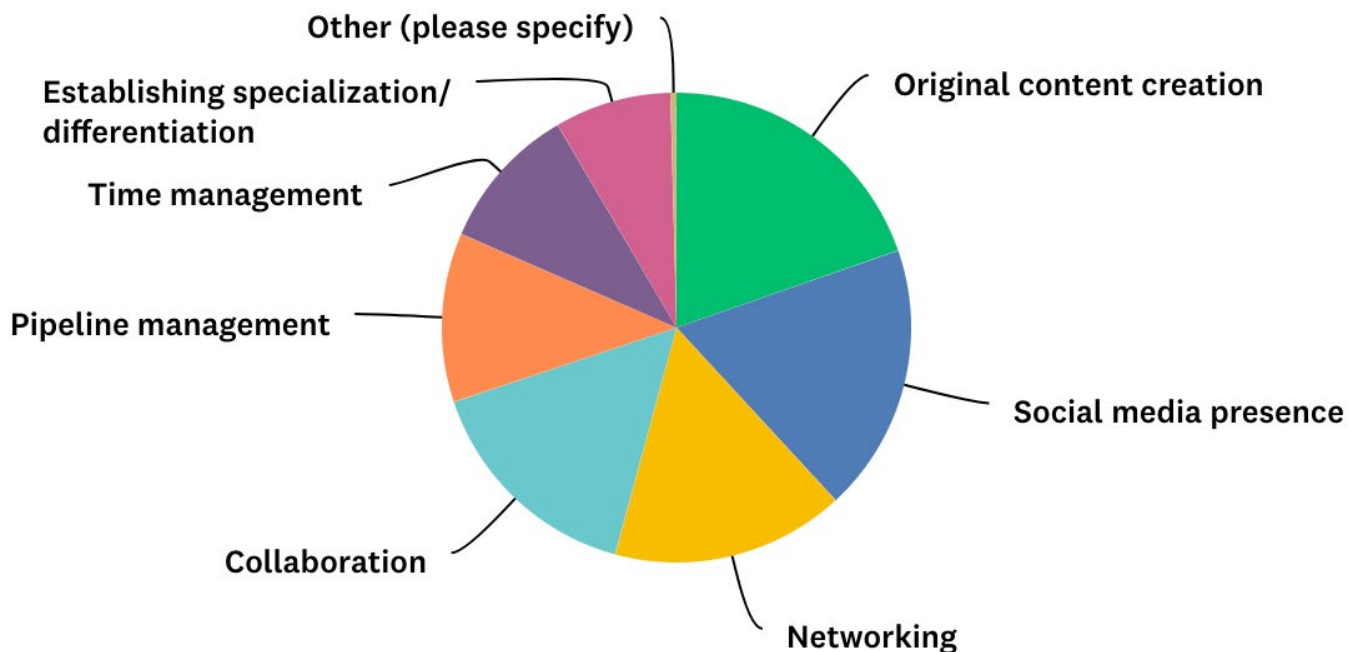
It's no wonder most seller-doers are easily intimidated by and hesitant to do business development. After all, it requires proficiency in a host of areas not addressed in their extensive education, including content creation, social media, networking, collaboration, pipeline management, time management, and specialization. We asked respondents to rate the importance (on a scale of not at all to extremely important) of each of those critical marketing and business development activities plays in seller-doer success. An average of 90% of respondents rate each activity as somewhat, very, or extremely important. More than seven out of 10 respondents rate content creation as the most important activity, with 72% of respondents responding that it's either very or extremely important. The second and third most important activities are networking and identifying a specialization/differentiation (rated very or extremely important by 67% and 64%, respectively).



THE ACTIVITIES SELLER-DOERS STRUGGLE WITH MOST

We then asked respondents which one of the seven marketing/business development activities seller-doers struggle with most at their firms. The marketing/business development activity seller-doers struggle most with is content creation (20%). According to respondents, the top two and three activities seller-doers struggle with are social media presence and networking (18% and 16%, respectively). The activities they struggle with least are time management and establishing a specialization/differentiation (10% and 8%, respectively).

Activities for Seller-Doer Success



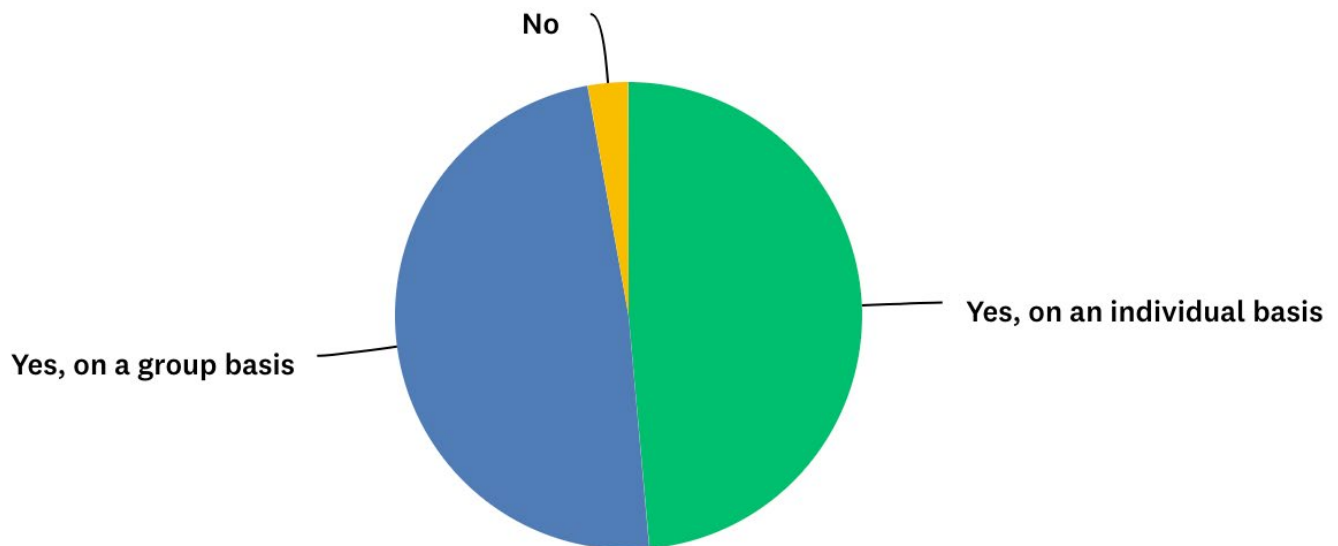
The highest percentage of respondents (20%) say seller-doers struggle most with original content creation, the same activity the highest percentage of marketers and business developers deem very or extremely important to business development success.

SELLER-DOER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS

HOW MANY MARKETING/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAMS WORK WITH SELLER-DOERS ON BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLANS?

Creating a business development plan is another challenge for seller-doers, but most marketers would agree it's critical for business development success. More than nine out of 10 respondents (97%) report their teams work with seller-doers to create business development plans. An almost equal percentage of marketers and business developers work with seller-doers on business development plans individually, as do those who work with them on a group basis (49% vs. 48%, respectively).

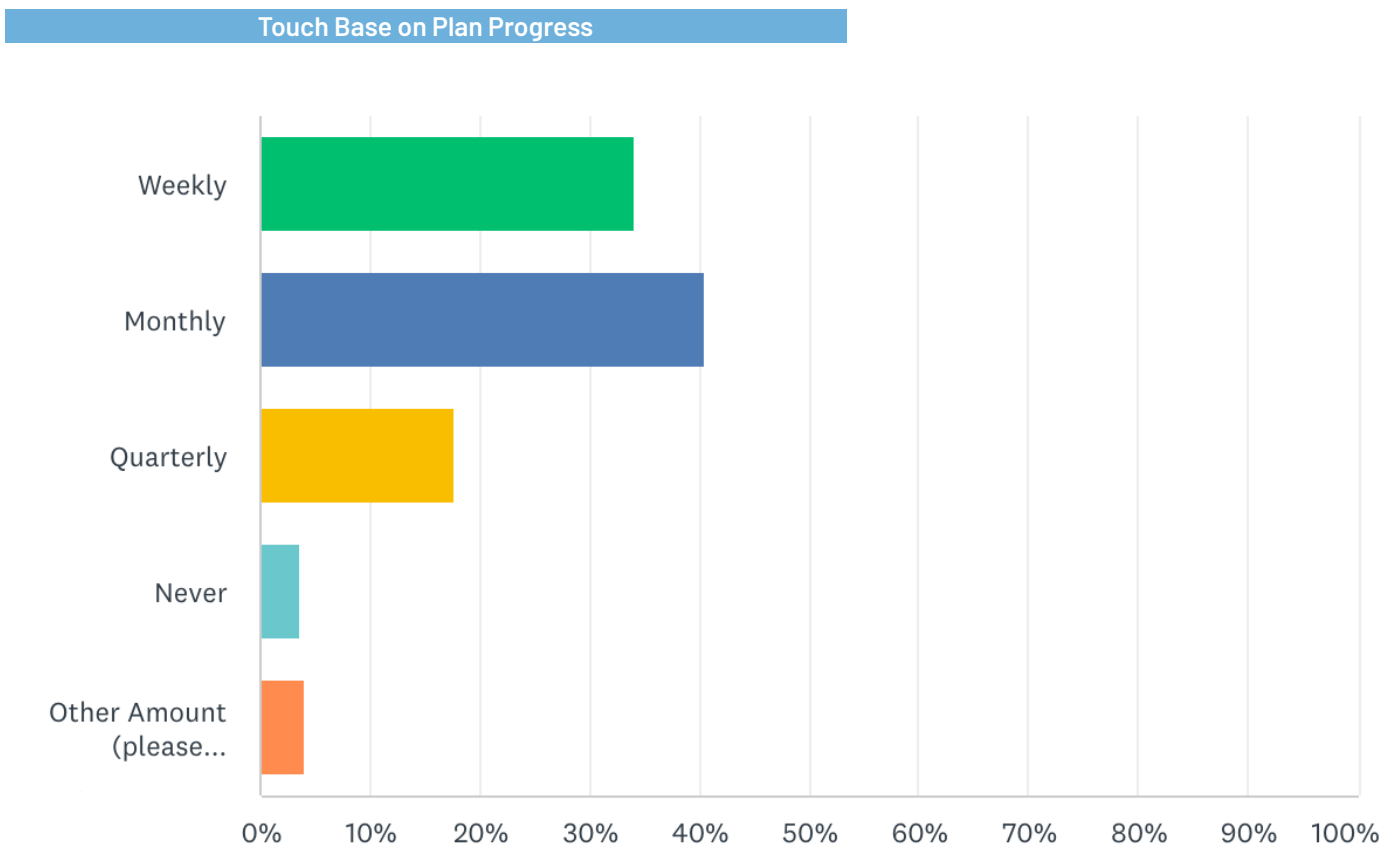
Work With Seller-Doers to Create Business Development Plans



More than nine out of 10 respondents (97%) report their teams work with seller-doers to create business development plans.

HOW OFTEN DO TEAMS TOUCH BASE ON PLAN PROGRESS?

But even the best business development plan can get off track soon after implementation, given that seller-doers prioritize client demands. That's why it's imperative that marketing and business development teams check in on progress to help keep plans on track. Four out of 10 respondents touch base with seller-doers on their business development plans on a monthly basis, and 34% do so weekly. 18% of respondents follow up with seller-doers on plans every quarter, while just four percent offer no follow-up. The remaining respondents share that they follow up with seller-doers annually, bi-weekly or as needed/depending on the individual.

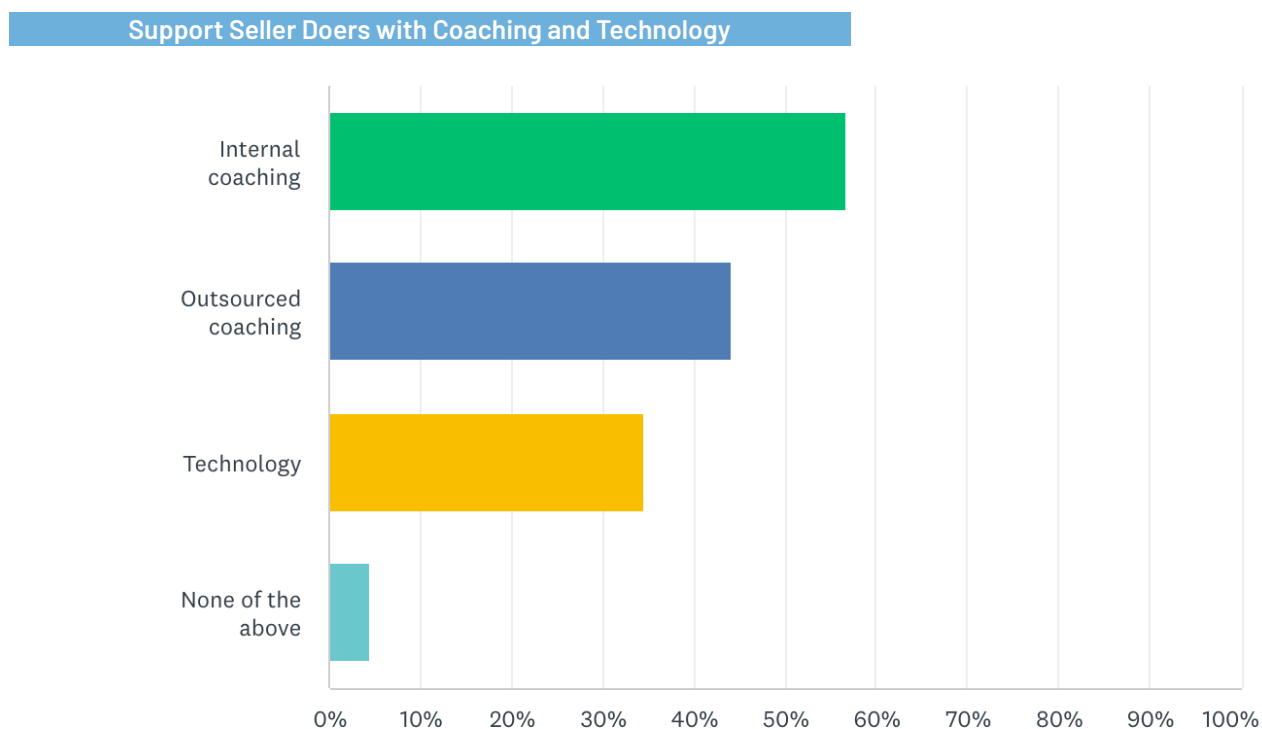


Four out of 10 respondents touch base with seller-doers on their business development plans on a monthly basis, and 34% do so weekly.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
SUPPORT GIVEN TO
SELLER-DOERS**

HOW MANY FIRMS SUPPORT SELLER-DOERS WITH COACHING AND TECHNOLOGY?

We asked respondents how they support their seller-doers in their business development efforts, with internal coaching, outsourced coaching, and/or technology. Seller-doer coaching is a widely used support tactic, with 57% of firms providing internal coaching and 44% providing outsourced coaching. 35% report they support seller-doers' business development efforts with technology. While this is a significant number, our [previous research](#) shows that marketers feel seller-doers lack the technology they need to succeed in business development. In addition to more firms needing to provide technology, it seems many firms may need to reconsider the technology they're currently using.

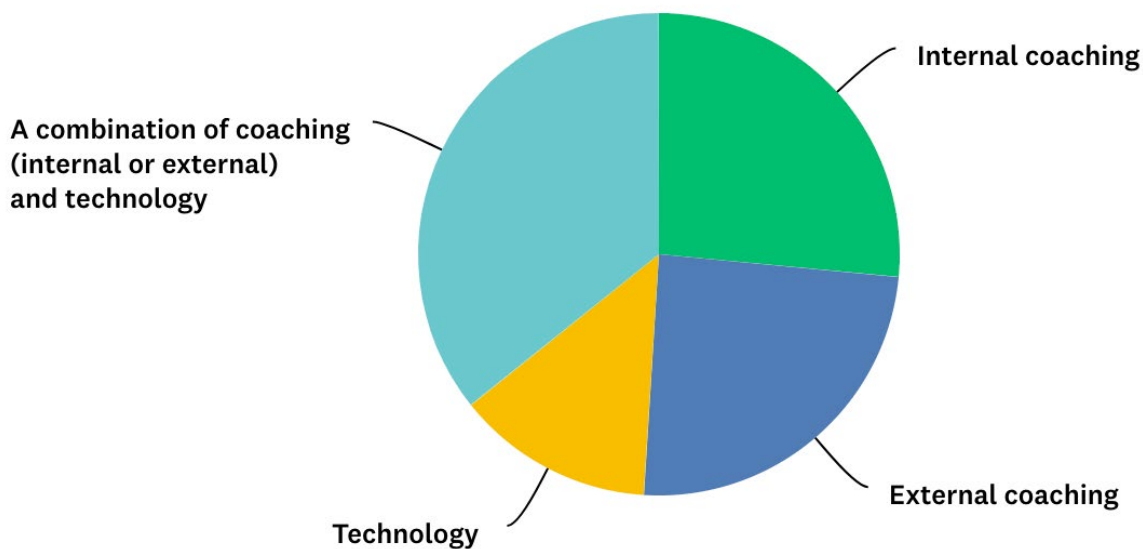


Seller-doer coaching is a widely used support tactic, with 57% of firms providing internal coaching and 44% providing outsourced coaching.

THE MOST EFFECTIVE SELLER-DOER SUPPORT

We then asked respondents, in their experience, what is most effective in supporting seller-doers in their business development efforts, internal coaching, external coaching, technology, or a combination of coaching and technology. The highest percentage of firms (36%) say a combination of coaching (internal or external) and technology is what they find to be most effective. An almost equal percentage of respondents say internal coaching is the most effective business development support they can provide seller doers as do those who say external coaching is (24% vs. 27%, respectively). Just 13% find technology alone to be the most effective.

The Most Effective Seller-Support



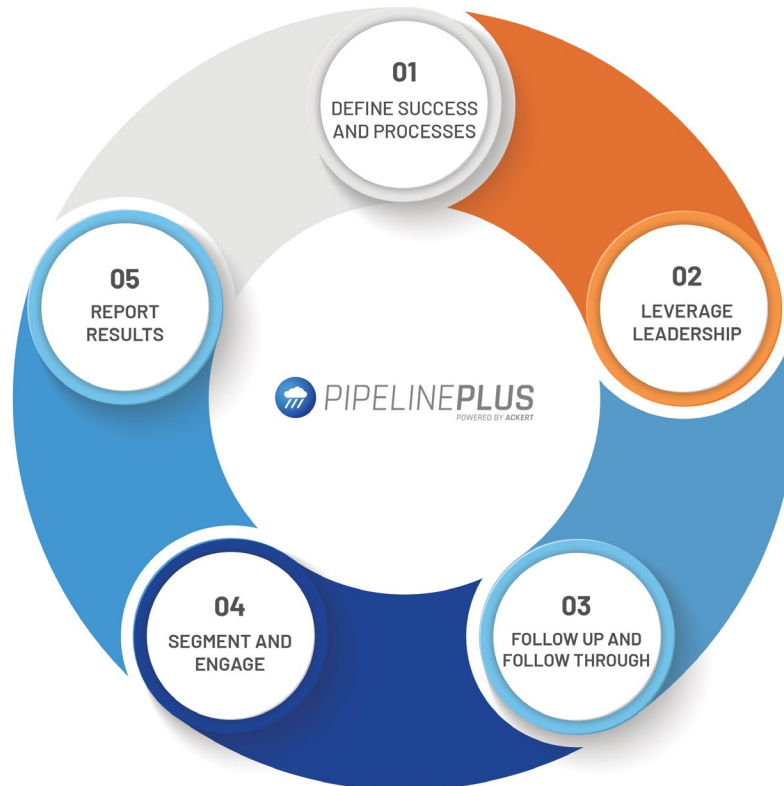
The highest percentage of firms (36%) say a multi-faceted combination of coaching (internal or external) and technology is what they find to be most effective.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TECHNOLOGY AT FIRMS

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE MARKETING/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAMS AT INTRODUCING NEW TECHNOLOGY?

The power of coaching is undeniable and, in our experience, extremely effective when combined with technology. But our respondents' challenges with technology effectiveness could likely be tied to how they implement it. At Ackert, our client success team helps clients optimize the adoption and implementation of our sales acceleration platform *PIPELINEPLUS*, using a [Success Wheel](#) to guide their efforts.

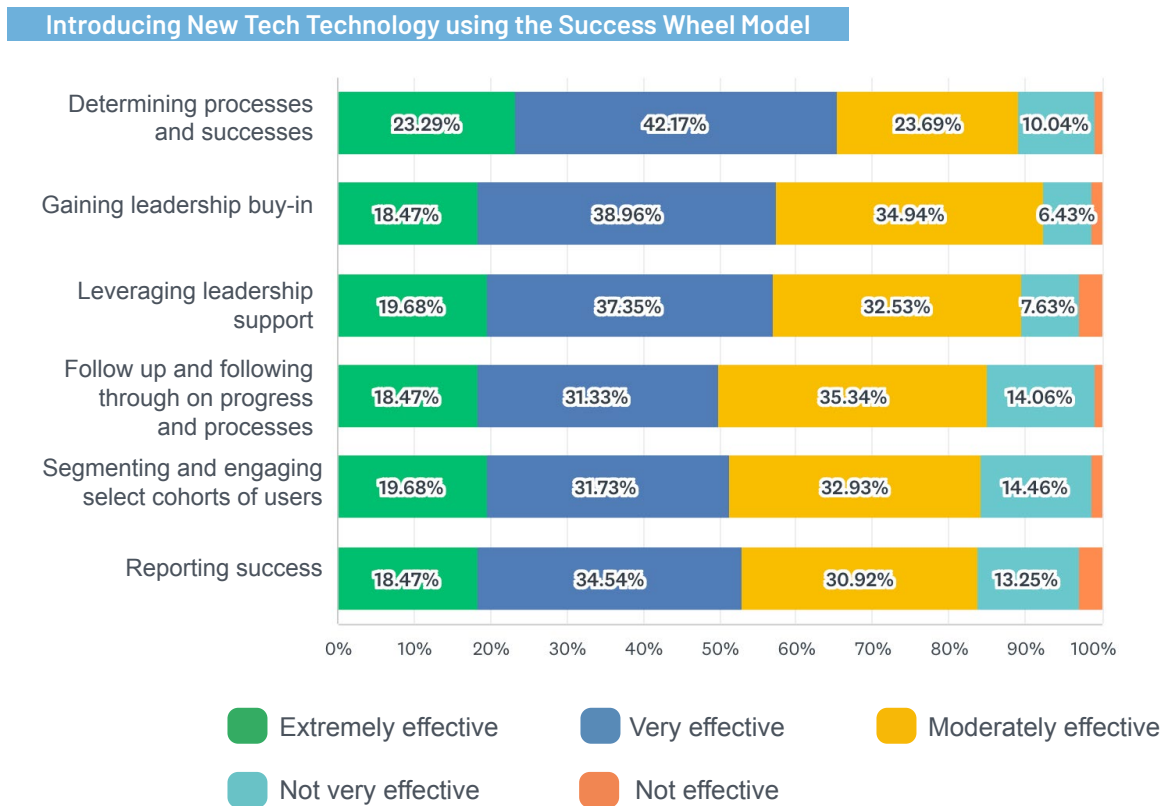
PIPELINEPLUS Success Wheel Model



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We asked respondents to rate how effective their firms are at each of the critical prongs of the Success Wheel, rating from not effective at all to extremely effective. On average, 55% of our respondents rate themselves very effective or extremely effective at all the critical steps.

Nearly two-thirds (74%) say they are very or extremely effective at determining processes and successes, which is crucial in any successful technology implementation. Fewest rate themselves as very or highly effective in following-up and following-through on progress and processes - yet still 49%.



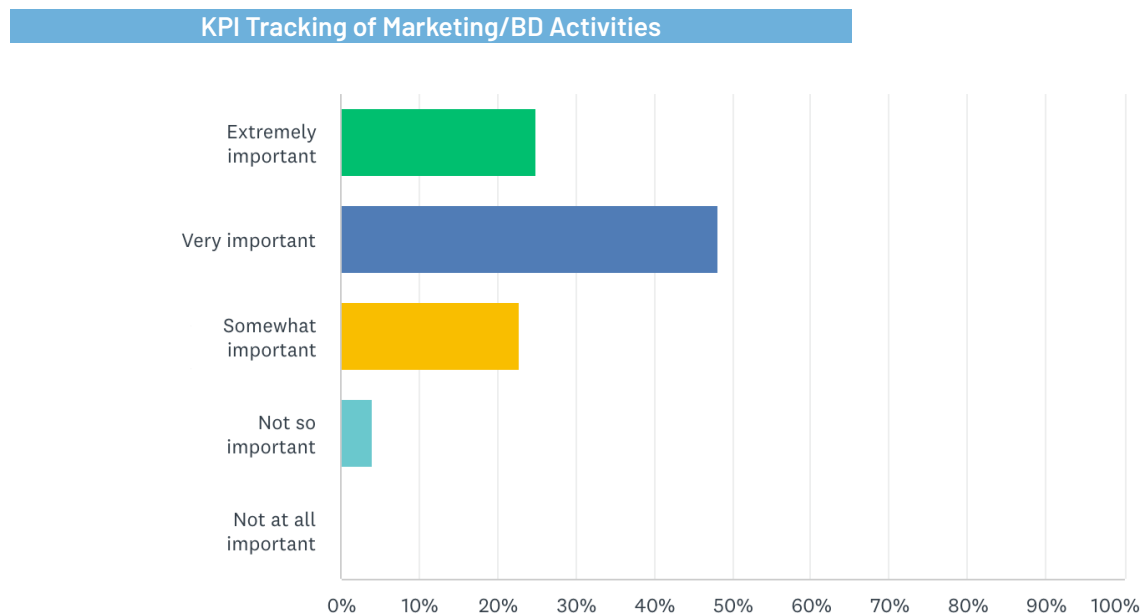
Most respondents rate themselves highly in all six areas that comprise a successful technology implementation program, yet few claim technology alone is the most effective way they support seller-doers in their business development efforts. There may be an explanation for this in the findings in our study, [“2021 State of CRM in Professional Services Firms”](#) industry report.

While very few marketers and business developers report they are not effective at all at any of the critical activities for successful technology adoption, it’s interesting to look at the areas where the greatest percentage of respondents rank themselves as not very effective. A nearly equal percentage of respondents report their teams are not very effective at reporting success (16%), segmenting and engaging a select cohort of users (16%) and following up and following through on progress and processes (15%).

Our many years of working with professional services firms have proven that technology initiatives rarely endure without a combination of all six critical steps and that the effectiveness of even the best technology cannot be realized without achieving them.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KPI TRACKING OF MARKETING/BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

It is essential to be able to report the success of your technology initiatives and all your team's marketing and business development initiatives. Only then can you continually make the adjustments necessary to optimize your outcomes. We asked respondents how important it is for their departments to have real-time KPI tracking for their marketing and business development efforts. Nearly three-quarters of respondents report that it's either very or extremely important. None of our respondents said KPI tracking was not at all important. We agree! So how many firms have it?



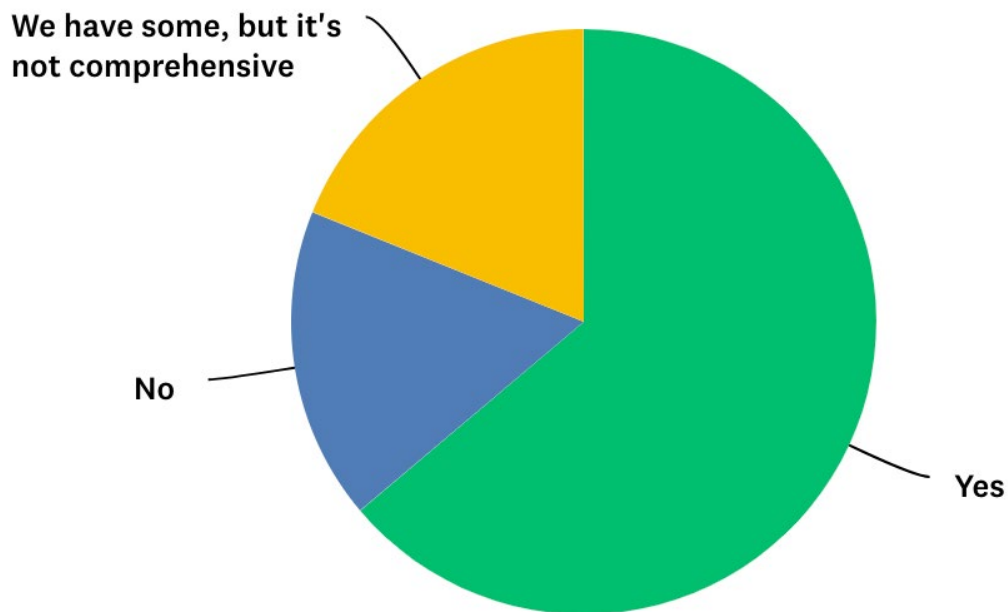
Nearly three-quarters of respondents report that real-time KPI tracking is either very or extremely important.

HOW MANY FIRMS HAVE COMPREHENSIVE DATA VISUALIZATION?

Respondents at nearly two-thirds of firms (64%) have comprehensive data visualization capabilities. Another 19% have some data visualization, but it's not comprehensive.

Effectively leveraging it is a surefire way to ensure success and demonstrate to leadership your and your team's value to the firm.

Comprehensive Data Visualization



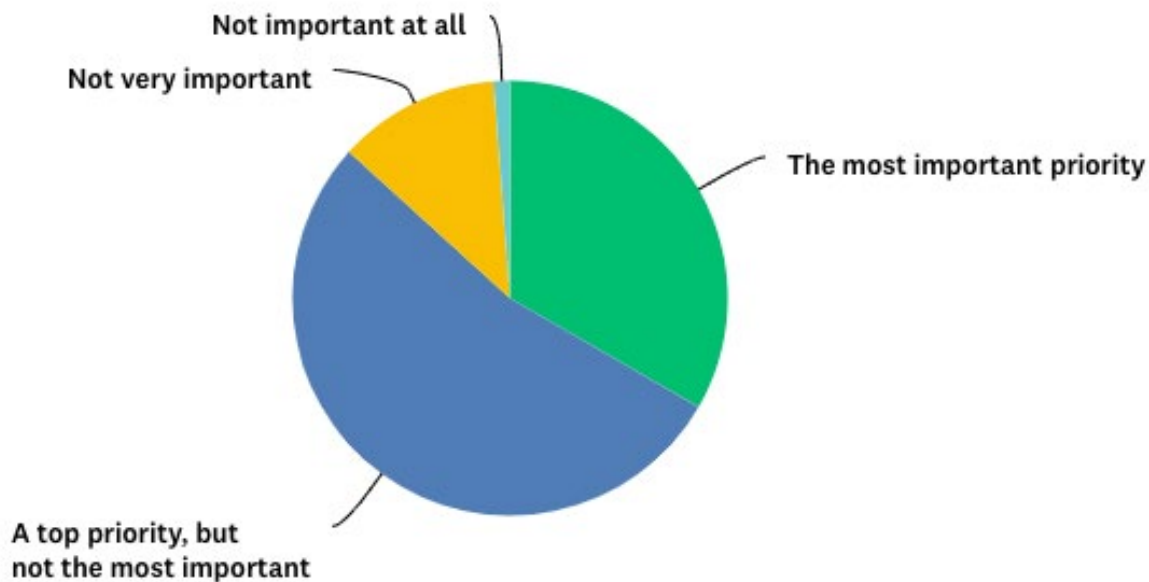
THE GREAT RESIGNATION

THE IMPACT OF THE GREAT RESIGNATION ON FIRMS

Over the past year or more, it was rare to go a day without reading or hearing about the Great Resignation, and there are no apparent signs of it slowing down soon. We wanted to know to what extent it was affecting professional services firms.

We asked respondents how important – on a scale of not important at all to the most important priority – it is for their firm to defend against the Great Resignation. Clearly, the media is not overinflating the prevalence of the problem, as nearly nine out of 10 respondents (87%) report that it's either a top priority or the most important priority.

Defend Against the Great Resignation



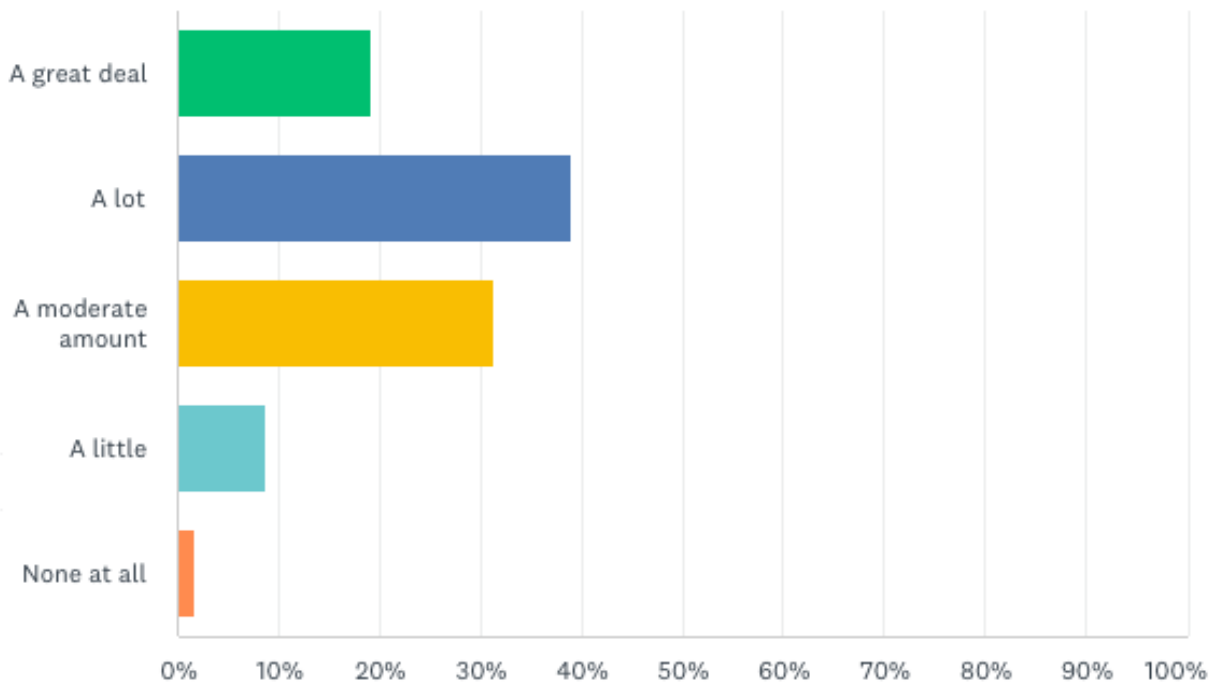
THE IMPACT OF THE GREAT RESIGNATION ON MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

While, at first blush, high employee turnover doesn't seem to be a concern of marketers and business developers, we were curious to know if any of the pressure was indeed trickling down to their teams.

We asked respondents how much responsibility their marketing and business development teams feel in helping to defend their firms against the Great Resignation. It turns out that a mere one percent of all teams are fortunate enough to escape the burden of guarding against this pandemic problem (pun intended).

Marketing and business development teams are feeling a lot of pressure at nearly four out of 10 firms, and almost one in five are feeling a great deal of responsibility.

Responsibility to Defend Against the Great Resignation



CONCLUSION

Marketing and business development teams across professional services firms, who typically already have a great deal of responsibility on their plates, need, more now than ever, effective resources to make their jobs easier.

The challenges they face and resulting pressure may be unprecedented. One respondent shared, "Seller-doers are too busy to engage in BD activities, which is a dangerous situation for marketing professionals."

Another wrote, "The amount of work and number of seller-doers continues to grow, and our team size is not keeping up."

And a third added, "The marketing team is the eyes and ears of the firm. We know it all, see it all, yet have very little authority to make change happen."


Successful business development requires seller-doers, who are already overwhelmed with billable client work, to master many skills for which they receive no training. And, according to our respondents, it's important for them to be adept at all of them in order to be successful in business development.

Because this is tall order, the onus is on marketing and business development teams to help seller-doers create business plans, help them stay on track with their plans, and offer other support to ensure their success.

As one respondent noted, "Seller-doers are currently busy, so less motivated to engage in BD. I'm worried that we'll have no pipeline when this work slows down, and yet it's really hard to keep them on task with their BD efforts, engage them in content creation, or even do basic LinkedIn posts."

Yet, as difficult as it may be, our research shows that teams are working diligently to help seller-doers develop business development plans and checking in with them regularly to make sure they stay on track. In addition, nearly six out of 10 provide internal coaching, 44% provide outsourced coaching, and a significant percentage provide technology, too.

Marketers and business developers find a combination of coaching, whether internal or external, and technology to be the most effective support they provide. And, while they



rate themselves generously on how effective they are at the critical steps to ensuring successful technology adoption and implementation, few (13%) report that technology alone is the most effective support for seller-doer business development. Given that 60% of firms report not having effective business development technology, the technology itself is likely the problem.

Marketing and business development professionals highly value having real-time KPI tracking for their efforts. And nearly one out of three teams don't have access to comprehensive data visualization.

Turning to an industry-wide challenge, it was not terribly surprising to learn that the Great Resignation is either a top priority or the most important priority at almost nine of 10 firms. What was unexpected is that when asked how much responsibility marketing and business development teams feel they have in helping to defend against this pervasive problem, nearly nine of 10 respondents said a moderate amount, a lot, or a great deal of responsibility. One would expect such a reaction from the HR department, but this statistic reinforces the complex pressures marketing and BD teams face.

It seems professional service firm marketing and business development teams' plates are fuller than ever. This respondent sums up our research findings, "We are being pulled in so many directions that cross over into HR/firm culture, recruiting, technology, the list goes on. We are struggling with trying to help in all areas while doing our current jobs."

HOW WE CAN HELP

1. 36% of firms say a combination of coaching (internal or external) and technology are most effective for business development support.

[PIPELINEPLUS](#) supports firms in their implementation of internal coaching programs. It can integrate with Outlook Calendar and CRM to help seller-doers organize and prioritize their most valuable clients, prospects, and referral sources. Its library of e-learning micro-lessons provides skills and strategies for every step of the business development process. In addition, **PIPELINEPLUS** provides concrete AI-powered business development insights and recommendations, so seller-doers know exactly what steps to take and when to close deals. And the platform's comprehensive dashboards track critical data to empower BD departments.

Firms who want to outsource business development coaching use [PIPELINEPLUS Coaching](#). Our expert coaches are JDs, MBAs, and former BD executives. They help seller-doers strategize their plans and hold them accountable to its implementation. Our combination of live coaching and **PIPELINEPLUS** sales acceleration software consistently delivers ROI to our clients.

2. Nearly three-quarters of respondents report that real-time KPI tracking is important for tracking M/BD initiatives, yet 36% of firms report that their KPI tracking is non-existent or incomprehensive.

Our [KPI Dashboards](#) are built to your specifications so that all your marketing and business development data is in one place. We pull data from your various spreadsheets and platforms into an easy-to-read visual so you can make better strategic decisions and deliver more comprehensive reports.

3. 87% of firms report that the Great Resignation had a significant impact on their priorities.

We can help. Our tools and resources are designed to modernize the marketing and BD functions, so your firm's processes are more streamlined and the support you provide is more meaningful. To learn more, visit www.ackertinc.com or [contact us](#) with any questions.

[**Request Demo**](#)

**“The implementation of
PIPELINEPLUS Coaching and
sales processes resulted in over
\$5M in new annual revenue.”**

**Heidi Leach, Director Of Business Development,
Farmer Law PC**

AUTHORS



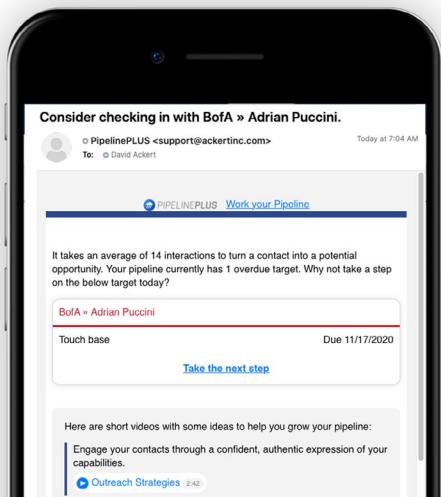
Donna Fulmer is Ackert’s Manager of Research and Content. Prior to joining Ackert, Donna served several technology companies as an independent marketing consultant, and was the market research and media communications manager for a leading cross-channel marketing platform.

David Ackert, M.A., is the President of Ackert Inc. and its subsidiaries, and business development mentor to thousands of high-achieving professionals in the legal, corporate, A/E/C, and accounting sectors.



Over the past two decades, David has developed and implemented revenue acceleration programs for hundreds of professional services firms around the globe. He is the founder of several technology platforms including the *PIPELINEPLUS* software suite. His programs are winners of “Your Honor Awards” in both the U.S. and Canada, are featured in NLJ’s “Technologies on the Rise,” and rank as the top-rated offerings in their G2Crowd category.

David regularly keynotes at partner retreats and serves as a guest lecturer at USC’s Marshall School of Business, Carnegie Mellon University, and at the UCLA School of Law. His work has been published and quoted in several business books and media, including the Los Angeles Times, the National Review, the Daily Journal, and more.



To learn more about *PIPELINEPLUS* and *PIPELINEPLUS* Coaching, visit www.ackertinc.com or [contact us](#) with any questions.

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