

Evolving approaches to chambers marketing and business development

Recipients of Marketing Team of the Year at the Legal 500 Bar Awards 2025, **Hayley Duggan** and **Harry Nichol** at Wilberforce Chambers look to the hot topics facing marketers at the Bar in 2026.

Marketing and business development (BD) at the Bar has evolved more rapidly in the past decade than in the previous half-century. What was once an environment characterised by quiet reputation-building, word-of-mouth referrals, and decorum-driven distance from anything resembling ‘selling’, is now far more sophisticated and service focused. Law firm clients now expect chambers to operate with the same clarity of brand, availability of information and technological capability as any other professional services organisation.

Against this backdrop, modern marketing in chambers is no longer optional; it is vital strategic infrastructure. As many approach the end of the financial year, sets across the country are in the process of finalising marketing budget proposals for 2025–26 with a view to maximise visibility, maintain or enhance brand image and showcase innovation.

But how to do so amidst an increasingly competitive environment and ever-changing client pressures? Here, we examine the four pillars shaping effective contemporary marketing and BD for barristers’ chambers in 2026.

Embracing ESG and purpose

ESG considerations have become a central feature of how organisations select their lawyers. Where barristers’ chambers were once on the periphery of such assessments, they are often now evaluated with the same scrutiny as law firms. Clients increasingly expect transparency around environmental impact, social value and governance standards.

For chambers, articulating a clear ESG position is no longer a marketing add-on; it is a statement of identity, purpose and professionalism. Environmental initiatives, such as carbon-reduction efforts and paperless practices, can



by Hayley Duggan
Wilberforce Chambers



by Harry Nichol
Wilberforce Chambers

help signal alignment with client values. Equally, social impact – through pro bono activity, community engagement, mentoring schemes and diversity initiatives – provides tangible evidence of a chambers’ contribution to society.

Clear policies on inclusion, wellbeing, leadership structure and complaints handling exemplify a mature and modern set of chambers. For clients, such policies mitigate reputational and operational risks. For chambers, they reinforce credibility while supporting internal cohesion.

Ultimately, embracing ESG and purpose is about authenticity. Clients increasingly expect the legal professionals they instruct to reflect the ethical standards they themselves must uphold. Chambers should articulate their purpose clearly and demonstrate commitment in order to build trust.

Managing data

More than ever, data is indispensable to modern business development for creating more targeted, evidence-based marketing. A robust data strategy enables chambers to understand instructing trends, track client engagement, measure the success of events and other marketing initiatives, and monitor the growth of practice areas.

Client relationship management (CRM) systems are playing an increasingly important role in chambers’ strategic planning, allowing clerks and marketing professionals to share information and identify opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked. Longstanding CRM market players at the Bar are now up against new market entrants, such as BarBooks, who are looking to capitalise on an opportunity to innovate and enhance the way data is managed at barristers’ chambers.

Analytics play an equally important role. Website statistics help form views of client online behaviour patterns and social media insights offer a clear understanding of what content resonates.

The legal directories, too, have been branching out from rankings to surfacing more data for benchmarking purposes.

However, effective data management must be accompanied by strong governance. Chambers handle highly sensitive and confidential information and must therefore ensure data security is paramount. Clear protocols around access, storage and cyber-security are essential. These safeguards not only protect chambers from risk but also demonstrate professionalism, reliability and that they are a trusted place for clients to instruct. Unsurprisingly, as a result, many sets are now keen to advertise their cybersecurity credentials wherever appropriate.

Managing data well allows chambers to move from reactive marketing to proactive engagement. It ensures both strategic decisions, and implementation of marketing strategy, are grounded in insight rather than assumption, giving chambers a competitive edge while enabling deeper and more meaningful client relationships.

AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming how professional services organisations operate, and chambers are no exception. While the core work of advocacy and advice remains human-led, AI presents potential opportunities for improving efficiency, sharpening communications and enhancing strategic decision-making within chambers.

In marketing, AI tools can support the creation and optimisation of content, from drafting social media posts to analysing industry trends. Operationally, AI can assist with automating menial tasks.

However, adopting AI must be handled with care. Chambers operate within a regulatory

Marketing in chambers is no longer optional; it is vital strategic infrastructure.

environment that demands accuracy, confidentiality and integrity (we have all cringed at the cliché-and-emoji-filled LinkedIn updates generated by Chat GPT, which stand out for all the wrong reasons).

Those chambers that embrace AI thoughtfully – not simply as a trend, but as a strategic tool – will be better placed to meet client expectations and operate more efficiently in a digital landscape.

The right team

Even the most advanced tools and strategies depend on the people who use them. Marketing demands of the Bar have expanded significantly in recent years – as have the size of chambers' marketing teams. However, compared with law firms, marketing teams at the Bar are comparatively lean, therefore chambers increasingly require professionals with a broad range of expertise in branding, digital content, communications, events and BD.

A well-structured team brings capabilities that complement, rather than replace, clerks' industry insight. Successful chambers cultivate a collaborative culture, in which clerks and marketing professionals share information, plan strategy together and work towards common goals.

Leadership and culture are crucial. Chambers that invest in training, encourage and support barristers to carry out BD and empower marketing professionals at a strategic level create more cohesive and effective marketing operations. Once marketing is integrated into the decision-making processes of chambers – rather than existing on the periphery – it becomes much more impactful.

Long gone are the days in which barristers' chambers are defined by tradition. Successful sets are now businesses shaped by purpose, informed by data, powered by technology and include multidisciplinary marketing teams. Chambers that embrace ESG authentically, manage data intelligently, integrate AI responsibly, and invest in the right people will stand out in an increasingly competitive legal market. More importantly, they will be well positioned to build deeper trust with clients, anticipate their needs, and deliver professionalism and value that contemporary instructing parties expect. ■

Hayley Duggan is Head of BD & Marketing at Wilberforce Chambers, where she works closely with the practice management team on BD strategy as well as overseeing all of Chambers' marketing activities such as events, branding and internal/external communications.

Harry Nichol is Marketing Manager at Wilberforce Chambers. He organises and attends Chambers' busy annual agenda of conferences, seminars and various events, which take place both in the UK and internationally. Harry also manages digital communications which include the Wilberforce website and social media accounts.

ESG

DATA

AI

TEAM