

Commissioning Manager

Job purpose: To develop a coherent list of high quality titles aimed at legal practitioners, in line with a strategic publishing framework, meeting agreed minimum revenue, profitability and delivery targets, and managing a team of commissioning editors.

Key Accountabilities:

- New product development:
 - Develop a coherent publishing strategy which exploits the strengths of the Law Society brand
 - Conduct market research into the commercial feasibility of new products – initiate and follow up new leads
 - Present proposals for validation to the Publications and Marketing teams (including full product P&Ls), and liaise with relevant colleagues to incorporate their input into the proposal
 - Meet personal commissioning targets based on validated 12-month revenue forecasts (individually commissioning approximately 10 new titles per year and ensuring the commissioning team deliver at least 20 titles per year or equivalent revenue)
 - Work closely with the Editorial and Production Manager and the Production Editor to ensure a smooth and efficient publishing process and with other colleagues as relevant
 - Ensure agreed delivery targets for annual publishing programme are met
 - Exploit existing base of authors for potential new products, while also identifying brand new authors to expand the publishing list
- Backlist management:
 - Manage backlist publications to ensure that new editions are commissioned as appropriate, titles remain in stock in appropriate quantities, and are put out of print at the appropriate time
- Market research and competitor awareness:

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- Maintain accurate information and awareness of competitor activity and report on activity to the team
 - Develop and maintain a high level of knowledge of current and general issues within the legal profession and apply this knowledge to the development of new products and publishing strategies
- Develop and maintain an awareness and understanding of current and new publishing media, including digital formats
- Author care:
 - Work with authors to produce fully developed new product proposals
 - Agree contract terms with authors – including manuscript delivery dates and royalty agreements
 - Liaise with authors on a regular basis to ensure content is written to contract terms (to schedule and to agreed length), and is delivered with all material correct and complete, and presented in line with editorial guidelines and quality expectations
 - Ensure key authors are kept aware of recent sales activity and marketing initiatives
- Team management:
 - Line management responsibility for up to two Commissioning Editors
 - Hold regular one-to-ones with team members and complete a formal mid-year review and end of year PDR meeting with each direct report
 - Work with the Publishing Manager to assess performance, ensure targets are met, and manage workloads
 - Ensure the commissioning team meets its joint commissioning and revenue targets each financial year

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Knowledge, skills and experience

Essential

- Educated to degree level, or equivalent
- Extensive experience of commissioning and new product development
- Previous experience in line management with proven ability to lead a team to meet targets
- Strong project management, organisational, and negotiating skills
- Commercial awareness and an ability to identify opportunities
- Ability to communicate effectively with people at all levels, internal and external to the organisation
- Excellent time management skills: ability to plan, multi-task and prioritise work to ensure that all activities are completed within deadlines
- IT literacy, including all Microsoft Office packages
- Ability to cope well under pressure
- A self starter who works well alone and as part of a team

Desirable

- Experience with developing new publishing lists and expanding product offering by identifying gaps in the market
- Knowledge of current and general issues within the legal profession
- Knowledge of eBook production and digital publishing processes

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Planning & Organising

The job holder will be expected to develop a network of contacts amongst practising solicitors and barristers, legal consultants, or academic lawyers to form a pool of potential authors and act as a sounding board for ideas and peer-reviewing new proposals. They will research and evaluate ideas based on the needs of particular segments of the market, and source appropriate authors and contributors.

Negotiations with authors will occur on a regular basis and will revolve around issues such as persuading potential authors to write, concluding appropriate contractual terms with authors and persuading authors (all of whom will have full-time jobs) to submit material on time. The job holder will occasionally need to address any areas where the author has deviated from his or her original brief, e.g. the materials may be too long or too short or key issues or learning outcomes may not have been dealt with in the text.

The post holder must maintain a high level of knowledge of current and general issues within the legal profession and have the intellectual capacity to grasp the key issues within a particular subject area and discuss these with potential authors.

The job holder will also need to effectively plan the publishing list with the commissioning team to ensure an even spread of publications are delivered throughout the financial year to meet monthly publishing and revenue targets.



Dimensions

Ensuring the delivery of a programme of approximately 20-30 new or updated books each year within the Publications team as a whole and individual responsibility for developing and commissioning 10 of those takes a high degree of organisational skill.

The job holder will need to propose the economic parameters of new projects, i.e. forecasting costs and sales numbers for each new book. As above, they will also need to meet commissioning targets based on validated 12-month revenue forecasts.

The job holder must be comfortable setting deadlines and ensuring delivery dates with authors. When developing products the job holder must be comfortable in using their own best judgement when dealing with any problems or issues that arise.

By evaluating processes used in the development and planning of all courses, and making changes where needed, the jobholder ensures that the Law Society's primary stated strategic aims are achieved.

Location London

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