

## **Episode 4: The Perfect Storm: Law Firm Marketing & Business Development Budgeting with Beth Cuzzone, Global Practice Leader of Intapp**

Article By:

The National Law Review

---

Welcome to Season 2, Episode 4 of Legal News Reach! National Law Review Managing Director [Jennifer Schaller](#) is joined by [Beth Cuzzone](#), Global Practice Leader of [Intapp](#). Together, they discuss the best budgeting strategies for legal marketing departments as firms emerge from the pandemic with a new set of priorities and perspectives.

We've included a transcript of the conversation below, transcribed by artificial intelligence. The transcript has been lightly edited for clarity and readability.

### **Jennifer Schaller**

This is Jennifer Schaller, and I'm the Managing Director of the National Law Review. We'll be speaking with Beth Cuzzone, who's the Global Practice Leader of Intapp. Beth, can you tell us a little bit about your background and what you do at Intapp?

### **Beth Cuzzone**

Thank you for asking, Jennifer. I think it's an important table-setting question. So I recently joined Intapp in 2022. It's a global technology firm, and it partners with investors and advisors to help them run their businesses. And it basically follows those companies through the lifecycle of their companies, whether it's intake or relationship management, or deal management, or billing or marketing or risk, and so many other operational functions. But my role Intapp sits in the marketing and business development corner of those companies. So as a Global Practice Leader, I'm responsible for working with a team of subject matter experts who help clients align their strategic priorities with our solutions. It's been an interesting and challenging shift, because I spent more than 30 years of my career in the very types of companies that Intapp now helps. So it's been an interesting and exciting and challenging change all at once. And I think it also gives me a unique lens into what we're going to be diving into today.

### **Jennifer Schaller**

---

Okay, wow, it sounds like a spot-on match here we have today. So let's dig into it. We're talking about law firm budgets. So for this upcoming budget cycle, for firms who are either almost done with it, or in the process, or close to wrapping it up. What's different this year than in previous years in law firm marketing and business development departments?

### **Beth Cuzzone**

In one word, everything. If we take a step back and look at the easy formula that law firms have used traditionally when creating their budgets, there hasn't been a lot of secret sauce. In its simplest form, and I am oversimplifying it for illustrative purposes, but in its simplest form, law firms for years and years and years, and year over year, would take into consideration their former budget number and give it an increase that aligned with the firm's increase in their revenue for that year. And then the real work would begin on saying, Okay, we're going to give ourselves a 2 or 3% increase, because we increased our revenue by 8%. So we're going to take some slice of that, and we're going to increase what we did last year, and then they would reallocate that number. And so if it was my budget was \$1,000 last year, and you know, now I'm going to increase it by 3%, it's going to be \$1,300. And now let me just play around with the line items and see where we want to spend a little more, where we want to spend a little less. Given the years that we've had coming up to the 2023 budget season, we had 2020, when the pandemic hit, we had 2021, where we were still experiencing the effects of that. And then in 2022 as people tried to move back into some normalcy of spend market, you know, marketing, outreach, awareness, credibility, relationships, going back into the office, that sort of thing, the budgets are a little bit all over the place. So to answer your question, why is this coming year's budget different? It's because you don't have last year's budget that you get to just reset.

The interesting thing is that I think it actually is going to provide opportunities to relook at the way you think of your budget and think a little bit about very specific line items. You know, I do think one of the places that people are going to spend a lot of time thinking about is digital marketing. And, you know, a question I had for you is, have you seen an uptick in the digital marketing spend from law firms, where we were pre-pandemic, to pandemic to where people are moving towards?

### **Jennifer Schaller**

That's kind of a multi-layered question. I mean, over the last five years, there's obviously been a switch to more digital. There's a couple of different things going on in the larger digital advertising industry. Advertising rates right now as a whole are pretty suppressed digitally. So that's impacting us a little bit, just because the baseline is down. But if you're in a specific niche, like the National Law Review, where you know, we very much have the traffic and the audience, there's always going to be a demand for it. What's going to be super interesting to see is when cookies go away. People keep talking about that, because that's going to make the content on the website far more relevant, as opposed to having retargeting ads and things like that. But the date keeps changing on that. So, you know, we'll let you know when we know. And related to publishing end of it, there's been a bit of a sea change on that. There always was sort of a pushback or a stigma somewhat attached to pay-for-play publishing. But a little bit of a difference with that is, over time, most marketing professionals, especially in legal, understand that there's costs involved in running a quality publication, if you want to have analytics, if you want to have a responsive staff who's around to make edits, that you have to pay for that, and that, you know, if you don't have money coming in from subscriptions, if you're a no login website, that there's going to be cost. So there's been a bit of a change there. There's more receptiveness to it. And I think maybe because law firms themselves understand what it takes to publish, they're a little more forgiving, and understanding that we have costs too, if that makes any sense.

---

**Beth Cuzzone**

It makes complete sense. It makes complete sense. And again, there's no direct answer to some of these complicated questions that we're asking each other today about where people are spending and where it's going versus where it's been when we've had this pause on so many levels. And like you said, I also just think that the lens of the marketing and business development departments and law firms are really starting to appreciate that looking at digital assets as a way to create awareness and credibility is going to be a leader in their budget.

**Jennifer Schaller**

Well, yes, especially since events have changed and gone away. And a lot of sponsorships have changed. And given that pandemic ripple effect of live events versus sponsoring tables at events, which used to be a part of legal marketing department spends, what's becoming more the standard for law firm, legal marketing department and business development spend, is it changed? Is it reallocating? How is that working?

**Beth Cuzzone**

That's a great question. So typically--I heard somebody say once, law firms are like snowflakes, everyone is different. And I know that when I look at industry statistics that talks about the swing of spend, that has to do with you know, the percentage of revenue of law firms, that it goes anywhere from 2 or 3% to 18, 19, 20%. And the reason that they have that swing is because in some marketing and business development department budgets, they include personnel when others don't, okay, or in some marketing and business development, department budgets, it's all marketing, whether it's for the HR department, or legal recruiting, or the firm, and others. Those are each very separate departments and separate budgets. So there is this huge spread across the industry. But I think for most firms, we're going to find that there's that 3.5 or 4% to 8% budget target of revenue. And that's kind of where people settle in. There are outliers on both sides. And interestingly, there's often some surprises. I find that sometimes some of the smaller, mid-sized firms have larger percentage budgets. But I think that's because they can't enjoy the scales of economy that larger firms can. If you're looking at your budget, and we can talk about this in a little bit, you know, in 2020 when the pandemic started, all discretionary budget items were removed from law firms, whether it was in marketing and business development or not. So it was like, "Unless we're contractually obligated to pay something, we're taking it off the table." And so now firms are getting that opportunity to rebuild it. And again, that approach and that budgeting exercise is a real opportunity for these firms to say, "What haven't we been asking ourselves?" Or, "What haven't we done that we've wanted to? What's not in our budget? What should be or what are the opportunities out there in terms of places or people or technology or intersections that we've never tried before?" So I think there's some of those questions that are happening, too.

**Jennifer Schaller**

Yeah, I think if anything, this is just helpful to know, to have legal marketers or even law firm administrators, or management know how to ask questions about legal marketing budgets, that there is such a wide range, but the wide range prompts people to ask the question, "What's in that figure and what's not?" I've never really had it broken down that well before. So thank you for taking the time to spell that out. Because it's not spelled out a lot of different places. Many people will appreciate that.

---

When you're talking about law firm marketing budgets, what's the difference between acquisition marketing and retention marketing and preparing budgets? Should law firms dedicate more resources to one or the other? Or is it some sort of blend?

### **Beth Cuzzone**

That is a very forward-thinking question that you're laying out there. Because I think that law firms basically had two types of buckets, if you will: they thought of it as awareness and credibility building, or relationship building, it was one of the two. And so they had some things around awareness and credibility, we talked a little bit about it earlier, you know, it's that one to many, the website, you know, the content, the newsletters, the big events, that sort of thing. And then the relationships are kind of those one-on-ones. It's the spending time going out and sitting down with a prospective client to learn something, or having an entertainment budget or doing some small roundtables with thought leadership, or sitting down with different decision makers at a particular client site so that you're staying close to them. And it was a little bit all over the place. And the shift that I'm starting to see happen is that law firms are starting to break down their budgets into exactly what you said: acquisition marketing, which is, "How are we getting new clients?" versus retention marketing, which is, "how are we keeping and growing the clients that we have, or the brands that we have, or the relationships that we have?" And by doing that, they're also starting to do account-based marketing. And they're able to put their budgets together and say, "We're going to spend 70, or 60, or 80% of our budget on our existing relationships, because we know that it costs six to eight time more money, resources, people budgets to get a new client than it does to keep and grow an existing one. So when you look at the scale of acquisition versus retention, retention is going to get that bigger budget. And then the acquisition is going to have a smaller wallet share of the overall budget. But within that big budget, you're going to start that retention budget, you're going to start to see that being broken down a little bit by account-based marketing as therefore account based budgeting. Again, this is a little bit around the corner. And this is I think what firms are going to be dealing with over the next five years of exactly being able to measure their return on objectives or their return on investments and where their money is really being spent. Because they're going to be tying it down to very specific objectives and very specific strategies, if you will.

### **Jennifer Schaller**

Okay, so what would be some of the areas that there would be an overlap, like between acquisition and retention marketing, would that fall in the digital area? Or where would that be?

### **Beth Cuzzone**

That's a perfect example, please look at what we're talking about like a Venn diagram, right, you've got your acquisition, you've got your retention and then there's the place where they overlay. Digital assets are a perfect example that fall into both. It's helping you in the marketplace. And it's helping you find your next big relationships and clients and referral sources. And those are the same assets that you can use to add value and stay close to some of your existing relationships, places where they start to separate a little bit, again, is really by account or by client, client-based marketing versus account-based marketing. And so you might have a firm where you say, we're going to spend a lot of our travel and entertainment budget on going to each one of their offices and doing junior executive training. So that we're aligning ourselves with the next generation of decision makers, and that's how we want to spend our money and our time and our budget and our resources and our people on that particular client this year, sort of thing. So it all depends, again, on the strategy. And it also depends a little bit on the firm.

---

**Jennifer Schaller**

Yeah, would it vary by practice group, or just like, if you had a firm that was, you know, just intellectual property law based, would there be differences in the ratio or the mix or network?

**Beth Cuzzone**

That's a great question. So there are some firms and also practice areas where there's annuity streams, if you will, right. There's just an ongoing, "We represent this particular finance institution on all of these sorts of loans. And, you know, we do 5, 10, 15 a year for them." Think about if you were actually a litigator, and you were representing financial institutions where you didn't know how many you were going to have in a year or whether you were not going to have any for two years and how they think of you and they call us when it's about the company or they don't call us when it's about the company so you have to again, look at the firm, its strategy, the cadence of those open matters, the cadence of when they're being asked to help clients and then try to align your budget and the activities in your budget around those very objectives. Does that make sense?

**Jennifer Schaller**

Yeah, it does. A lot of what you're breaking down is really helpful because people throw numbers out there, but they don't go into the details of what moves the numbers up or down, like your example of depending on if the law firm is including the expenses for HR, or including the salaries of the marketing department in there, that should make a big difference. And nobody really spells that out. So that was very helpful.

**Beth Cuzzone**

What kinds of trends are you seeing...there's this nuance that's happening now Jennifer, where there was a period of time "back in the day" where all law firms took out one-page ads in some of the biggest business-to-business publications and journals, or like yours, very, very niche, industry-specific news-related channels. And it was "we want to be top of mind" with whoever the reader is, whether it's our peers, whether it's our competition, whether it's a referral source, whether it's a potential client, whether it's somebody on the other side of the table, and over time, that awareness campaign started to move into that content campaign. And I'd really be interested to see how are law firms maintaining that mindshare in the marketplace? What are you seeing?

**Jennifer Schaller**

Some big change from print, and what's really changed--COVID was sort of terrible for the world, but in a lot of ways good for law firms and legal publishing. Because there were so many rapid developments of a legal or administrative or regulatory nature going on, there was just a lot of content to be written on and a lot of people looking for that content. So there was inherently a lot of traffic just being driven by COVID and all the related changes to it. Now that that's leveled out a little bit, what we're seeing from law firms is when they do their informative writing, meeting, talking about cases that happened and why that's important to a particular industry, or new regulations that are on the horizon, what's a little bit different is they're starting to impart--not impose, but impart--their personality a little bit more. We're seeing more content come in where it talks about people's journey in the legal profession, how they balance working from home or transitioning out of working from home in a little bit more with the content. So before there was very little of that. I mean, there was some. It's pretty prevalent now where we'll see many law firms just have entire blogs and podcasts

---

and a whole kind of vertical dedicated to life balance, people's career paths, and things like that, which is a bit different than what we've seen before. I think it provides a good opportunity for law firms to tease out their competitive differences just by letting people know who they are, because ultimately, with law firms, they're buying the person and their knowledge and their background. And this is kind of a more forward way of doing it than what's been done in the past.

### **Beth Cuzzone**

You know, it's so interesting to hear you say that. I don't think I really put such a fine point on it until you just mentioned it. All law firms do the same thing. For the most part, a general practice firm does the same thing as the next general practice, you know, an IP boutique does the same thing as the next IP. But how you do it, who you do it with and the culture is what your differentiator is. And you're right, as I'm thinking a little bit about the sorts of information that I'm seeing, either the types of information or the personality in which people are writing, it really is giving firms a way to showcase their culture and who they are and their differentiator as opposed to all sounding like really smart law firms.

### **Jennifer Schaller**

It's that and I think it's a little bit recruiting as well. I mean, the whole world has experienced quite a bit of turnover. Law firms have always had more turnover than other industries. So we'd have some stuff coming in where folks are interviewing their summer associates. And they're doing that on a couple different levels. I think it plays to people who may be interested to know how a person got a summer associate position at an Am law firm, but also, you know, it's a big hug to that person, and it shows in a recruiting sense that that law firm really cares about folks at all levels of the organization. We wouldn't have seen that 10 years ago, so that's just really different.

Okay, so let's get into the fun part: budgeting tips! You've been doing budgets for years, you work with an organization that helps law firms kind of balance competing things for their attention and help tease out what's probably the best bet for the firm. Do you have a few tips to share with our readers, or our readers and our listeners today, concerning law firm budgets, what to include what to not get pushed back on?

### **Beth Cuzzone**

Yes, I think that there are a few best practices out there that law firm marketing and business development departments want to be thinking about as they're either negotiating their budgets with firm management, or if they're actually putting it together. We talked a little bit about the fact that historically firms have used the previous year and that budget number is a benchmark. Ironically, in 2022 law firm marketing and business development budgets increased by more than 100%. And again, it's because in 2020, and 2021, they were decimated, it was the place where there was the most discretion in the budget, there were things like they weren't going to be doing sponsorships, they weren't going to be holding webinars, they weren't going to be traveling to see clients or things--like take it all out. So then when we started to move towards this normalcy of, "let's get back to business in 2022", with a kinder, gentler, more softer approach, they had to increase their budgets by more than 100%. So the first thing I would say is, do not prepare your 2023 budget based on your 2022 budget, because you're going to show that there's already been 100% increase, and there will probably be very little wiggle room. I would also scrap 2020 and 2021. So I think one of my tips or best practices is, use 2019 as your benchmark, not 2021 or 22. For the reasons we've just talked about.

---

The other thing, you just mentioned this in the way you asked the question, is that there is a very complex ecosystem in law firms, and the marketing and business development budget is one of many competing priorities. And I think understanding that budgeting is a long-term game, not one you win every year. And so what I'm trying to say is, take a panoramic view of where the firm is, what they're trying to accomplish, what some of their major goals are for the next year or two, look left and look right at what other operating department budgets are going to be impacted by that, and prepare your budget within the context of what's happening. So don't ask for the greatest budget increase among every operations department, every year. There becomes a fatigue, where it's like, "Nope, just give them the 2%, we're not going to listen to why they deserve more every year, year over year than every other department." So I think walking in and being able to communicate, "We understand that lateral growth is one of our top strategic priorities, and that you're going to be spending a lot of our budget on legal recruiting. So this year, I've put in some particular items and activities that will support legal recruiting, and I've moved my budget request from a 6% increase to a 2% increase." And again, you can negotiate two or three years in advance, then say, "I just ask that when we're looking at my budget in two years, or in three years that we appreciate that I'm asking for a smaller increase this year, given where we are, what we're doing." You know, it also goes a long way when there's been a down year.

So, so far we've said, use 2019 as your benchmark, don't ask for the greatest budget increase among every operations department every year, try to negotiate for two or three years in advance at your firm, but also negotiate two or three years in advance with your partners or vendors, depending on what you call them. You know, to be able to say, "Listen, we want to do this. And we can't be all-in this year because our budget isn't going to allow us, but can we negotiate an 18-month relationship with you and spread it over a 24-month period?" Negotiate a little bit! These are companies that want to partner with you. I also think it never hurts to ask and get comfortable with, again, just partnering with your vendors. That's why I always call them partners and not vendors. Be comfortable with partnering with them and saying, "Look here are two or three things I'm trying to accomplish. And I only see one of those things in the proposal that you sent to me. Are there some things that you can put in here that are revenue neutral? Or are there ways that you can reallocate our spend and help me hit these other budget objectives?" They'll work with you. So negotiate with management and then partner with your vendors.

I've been talking with a lot of firms. And another thing that I'm seeing firms really start to do is ask themselves, "Where is the lowest risk and the highest return?" and vice versa, and making sure that your budget is representing that like, "Boy, this is the lowest risk and a really good return. So we're going to do more of this. And this is a really high risk, very questionable return. We're going to do less of this." And by the way, having those conversations with your management committee or your managing partners or your executive committee about the ways that you're looking at risk versus return, or contextually where you are in the firm's operational churn, if you will, those sorts of things will help you in the long run.

## **Jennifer Schaller**

It's really great that you point out the need to let your vendors know what your goals are. It's very challenging sometimes when people are like, "What's the price? You know, what, what, what is your best price?" What is important to you? It's not really a negotiating technique, we want to know where to focus to best meet your needs. And if we have no concept of what your goals are, or what you're trying to highlight, it makes it infinitely more challenging.

This year, or any historically, are there budget items that you would suggest CMOs pay more

---

attention to this year than in previous years or anything that's unique about this year that they might want to highlight other than the points that you made about using 2019 as a base point versus the previous two years? Which were just weird. Is there anything else different?

**Beth Cuzzone**

You know, I think this is the time everybody is peeking over the horizon wondering, "Is there a downturn? Is there a recession? Is there a down year coming? What do we do?" You know, you've got, you're asking yourself all of those questions. I think this is also a year, when you're looking at your budget, to look at things that are driving efficiencies, scalability, revenue generation, right? There's a difference between cost and investment. Make sure that your budget has a nice healthy mix of, "These are things where we want to spend money to get more money. And then these are places where we want to spend money so that we can meet an objective," and I call them return on objectives, and return on investments. "We want to be known in this new market. We want to open up an office in Texas. And so we're going to be spending a lot of time and money and energy and budget on really getting the word out creating some top of mind awareness in Texas." That's an objective, right? If it is that we really want to get a little closer to the bottom quartile of our clients in terms of revenue and say, "How can we help them with more problems than we do now? How do we take them and really try to grow the wallet share that they spend on outside counsel?" That's a return on investment. So you know, have that healthy mix on return on investment, and return on objective.

**Jennifer Schaller**

Fair enough. So briefly, your firm Intapp? How do they help law firms with their budgeting process? Are there specific things that they're set up to do to help?

**Beth Cuzzone**

Thank you for asking me that and for being so gracious. Because yes, I think the answer is yes. So Intapp can help law firms create insights to find revenue, find where there's work that's more profitable, find where, you know, there's whitespace, and opportunities, or be able to basically measure things, and have this one source of truth in your law firm, where you've got all of these technologies that help all of these different operating departments that all connect, that's why it's called Intapp, there's an integration to this, and they all integrate and talk to each other. And those kinds of insights can inform law firms about the kind of money that they're spending and the kind of return that they're getting. And it can be as simple as looking at your marketing campaign open rate for your last email, all the way to looking at some very strategic insights of "here are some spaces or places in our firm where we could be working closer with clients, or an industry where we haven't saturated as much as we could." So it can go from tactical to strategic, and that's what Intapp does. That's why it's such an amazing company.

**Jennifer Schaller**

So is Intapp more process or technology based or kind of marrying the both of them when they work with law firms?

**Beth Cuzzone**

That's another great question. So it's a technology company. And I think the thing I've been most surprised with is the brainpower that sits in Intapp and all of the people that are there to help clients



successfully deploy, or change management professionals that help you get more engagement at your firm, or help you with use cases of smarter ways to use the technology.

So Intapp sells technology that has professionals that help you with the people in the process as well. It's a little competitive secret.

### **Jennifer Schaller**

Sounds like a good match. As always, we appreciate Beth's time sharing her thoughts with us and her experience and kind of the trends that she's seeing and marrying it with the experience that she's had over the years. Thank you very much.

### **Beth Cuzzone**

It was so great to see you, Jennifer. So great to see you. Thank you for inviting me and be well. True North.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for listening to the National Law Review's Legal News Reach podcast. Be sure to follow us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts for more episodes. For the latest legal news, or if you're interested in publishing and advertising with us, visit [www.natlawreview.com](http://www.natlawreview.com). We'll be back soon with our next episode.

Copyright ©2025 National Law Forum, LLC

---

National Law Review, Volume XII, Number 245

Source URL:<https://natlawreview.com/article/episode-4-perfect-storm-law-firm-marketing-business-development-budgeting-beth>