



**Neil Hewitt**  
Chartered Financial Planner

## Do solicitors really need to be concerned with referring clients to IFAs?

It seems today that we are all busier than ever, constantly chasing our tails to complete the work on our desks. We are focused on the actual work in front of us and that which our clients are paying us for, quite rightly. We also seem to be under increasing pressure to find new sources of work and hit ever increasing targets. All these issues apply to solicitors, as much as any other area, and indeed these pressures have been increasing more significantly recently, with the impact of the Legal Services Bill and the squeeze this will have put and be putting on solicitors' margins.

In addition to all of this noise you are quite likely faced with a stream of other professionals, keen to work closely with you and your clients, including independent financial advisers.

We, in particular, can list many good reasons for you working closely with an IFA, and referring your clients to us, some of which may include:

- Our professionalism
- Our high level of qualifications (Scrutton Bland have Chartered Financial Planners)
- Our long-term experience
- The positive reflection on you as the individual Introducer and your firm
- The cementing of your position of the client's trusted adviser
- The protection of your existing clients from being referred to another adviser/solicitor

In spite of all the above, you would not be alone if sometimes your thoughts would be "Yes, yes, yes, that's all very interesting, but it is not really measurable and I am far too busy to think about this."

Whilst all the above are very important and do in the long term have an impact on your business and your relationship with your clients, this is not the end of it and perhaps is not the real value to you. The challenge for any business today is not only to retain their existing clients, but more importantly to also win new work and discover new sources for that new work. With the introduction of the Legal Services Bill this, for solicitors, has never been more true than it is today.

Working more closely and pro-actively with a quality IFA can provide a very simple but effective solution to this problem, with almost no effort and cost upon your practice. This is clearly demonstrated by way of a recent case referred to me by a local firm of solicitors.

The solicitor was dealing with the probate of their late client, which resulted in them ultimately paying out a significant inheritance to one of the beneficiaries. It is often the case that it is easier to complete this piece of work and move on to the next piece on their desk, to write to the beneficiary with the cheque and close their file. However, in this instance the solicitor was much

more conscientious and motivated by nothing more than to provide a professional and considerate service to their client and to extend this to include the beneficiary. In completing the file they contacted the beneficiary and suggested that it would be sensible for them to seek independent financial advice in respect of their inheritance, and offered to introduce them to a suitably experienced and qualified IFA. The beneficiary, who was not a client of the firm of solicitors, was extremely grateful for this guidance and reassured that it has come from a professional firm and subsequently contacted Scrutton Bland for advice. The client proved to be an excellent new client for Scrutton Bland IFA Department, for whom we have been able to provide some extremely valuable investments and Inheritance Tax planning advice.

You may, at this point be thinking “Well, this is all very nice, but how has it benefited the firm of solicitors?”

In order for us to provide advice to a client, we must have a full understanding of their current financial position, needs and objectives. We therefore go through a fairly rigorous fact-gathering process. In this instance, during that process, we identified that this new client did not in fact have any Will in place for herself, or any Powers of Attorney. We strongly recommended that our client should look to arrange these as soon as possible and in fact that they should be

top of their financial planning needs. The client accepted these recommendations and we immediately referred the client back to the solicitors who had referred the client to ourselves. This resulted in the firm of solicitors completing two new pieces of work and all associated fees with that work but, more importantly, gaining a new client and future potential work from that client. All this, with almost no effort.

This is just a very simple example of how easy it can be to generate additional work for your firm, by making referrals to Scrutton Bland IFA Department. The additional work is not limited to Wills and Powers of Attorney, but is also extended to other areas such as simple Trusts and sometimes quite complex Trust arrangements and tax planning arrangements.

There is, without doubt, massive untapped potential within your existing client banks. If you wish to realise this potential, before others do, contact Scrutton Bland IFA Department and we can look at how we may be able to help you better realise this potential.

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**If you would like to discuss this further, please contact us:**

**Ipswich**

Neil Hewitt  
t: 01473 259201  
e: [neil.hewitt@scruttonbland.co.uk](mailto:neil.hewitt@scruttonbland.co.uk)

**Colchester**

Gary Riches or Grant Buchanan  
01206 838400  
[gary.riches@scruttonbland.co.uk](mailto:gary.riches@scruttonbland.co.uk)  
[grant.buchanan@scruttonbland.co.uk](mailto:grant.buchanan@scruttonbland.co.uk)