

Discovering Your Remarkable Law Firm Brand

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We talk a lot about content being king, your website being mobile friendly and social media as the new advertising, but without a brand, these are simply wasted efforts and dollars with no ROI. These tools are designed to promote the brand and share with the brand's followers. So, before you invest in these strategies, I suggest you look at your firm's brand and make sure it clearly represents the firm and resonates with its audience. And because the legal industry is busy, crowded and noisy, you have to have your brand stand out. How does your law firm brand standout? By being remarkable.

Remarkable Marketing

Remarkable marketing and branding starts with a unique promise and relationship that organically grows out of your company culture. It is then shared with stakeholders through the delivery of services and information worth noticing and the creation of experiences worth remembering. After all, in a crowded marketplace like the legal industry, not standing out is the same as being invisible. If your audience fails to remember you, then you have failed to be remarkable.

When it comes to law firm branding, there is a need for marketers and lawyers to move away from tradition. For too long, a law firm brand exercise has been driven specifically for logo development. In truth, though, a brand is the entirety of a law firm identity—from its values to its voice and look, to the client experience and, most importantly, their trust in the brand.

The Promise Behind the Brand

At its core, a brand is a genuine promise that is made to those working at the firm, those associated with the firm and those who employ the firm. The promise, the brand and its core values must be authentic. To ensure the promise is authentic, you must conduct a discovery exercise to help assess your firm's unique qualities and differentiators so you can do better at expressing them to your audiences.

To get to the heart of your brand, you will have to do some true soul-searching to find out what those core values are that have kept your firm in business and your clients' trust in you. Your research should include members of your firm, including representatives from all generations of attorneys as well as staff, but most importantly, it *must* include your clients.

Go back and review the firm's history, looking for characteristics that are still in place and that your clients value today. Look at the firm's strategy plans and goals to find the common elements that consistently propel the firm forward. When doing your brand discovery exercise, ask the following questions.

What is the firm's purpose? Why does your firm exist? What were the intentions of its founding partners? Has this purpose changed? If so, how? What is the promise that your firm makes to its clients, to its employees and to the community?

What are the firm's business goals? What is your firm striving for? Is it based solely on revenues and profits, or do you also consider socioeconomic factors, such as reducing your carbon footprint or aiding the local community? Are there intentions to expand into new industries, practice areas or geographies?

What are the firm's core values? What do you stand for? What overarching principles guide your firm, the services you provide and the people you hire?

What is the firm's culture? How do your core values manifest themselves within the firm? How does management establish the cultural tone of the firm, and what is that cultural identity? How would you describe the culture of the firm to a potential new hire?

What is the firm's personality? How do you express your culture and values externally? Are you more serious and conservative? Or do you incorporate a sense of humor? Do you take an authoritative tone or one that reflects a cooperative partnership?

What are the firm's unique differentiators? What separates you from the pack? Go beyond the typical. It's not about being the best or having the best attorneys; it's about understanding *why* your firm and your attorneys are the best. Maybe you are more cost-effective. Maybe you focus on a specific niche. Whatever it is, do some critical introspection to understand your unique selling points.

Who is/are the firm's audience/s? Who makes the decisions to hire you? At what types of industries and companies do these individuals work? What other audiences might you consider, such as law school graduates, potential lateral hires and the community at large?

Maintaining a brand is a shared responsibility of each and every employee and partner. Everyone needs to be educated about the brand and how best to articulate it. Managing your brand is a daily exercise in believing in and living it; listening; being consistent, authentic and relevant; and telling unique stories that differentiate your firm from the others.

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