

# Differentiate Your Law Firm And Escape The Commodity Trap

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In today's cluttered and competitive legal marketplace, many attorneys are finding it challenging to differentiate themselves from their competitors and escape the commodity trap.

To gain a substantial advantage, you must be able to differentiate yourself, stand out from your competitors, and be different in a way that matters to today's savvy consumer. What you think makes you different, and unique may be keeping you in the trap that you work so hard to avoid.

Today's savvy legal consumers are confused, and they don't know how to tell one law firm from the next. Your legal services appear the same as all of the others in your practice area, and you're being viewed as a commodity.

The differentiators that many law firms and attorneys use make them look and sound like everyone else. They attempt to differentiate themselves by making the same declarations that countless other attorneys make. In other words, they water down their value proposition.

**Warning:** The following statements are not differentiators. These value propositions are inherently valueless. Continued use of this language or any other variation will secure your spot in the commodity trap.

- Our firm has more than 30+ years of experience and can save you lots of money and heartache
- We appreciate our clients and take the time to listen to their needs
- We have the skill and compassion necessary to fight on your behalf
- We are proactive and dedicated to the best possible outcome
- We pride ourselves on our ability to be responsive and cost-effective
- Our job is to handle the details of your case and relieve your worry and stress
- We offer compassionate guidance and genuinely care about you and your goals
- My firm has won some of the largest cases and settlements in history
- We bring passion and commitment when we represent you
- We provide one-on-one attention to all of our clients
- We are committed to walking you through every step of the process

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I bet that all firms at some point have laid claim to at least one of the these bullet points that you now assert as a differentiator for your firm. There is not even a hint of differentiation or a whiff of uniqueness in these statements because every other attorney in town is rattling off the same list. Prospective clients don't take these statements seriously because every one of them is a baseline expectation.

You will soon discover that this once-dependable method of distinction will backfire if you rely on this type of language to differentiate yourself from your competition.

Take the movie section of the local newspaper. You read the same generic, overused, and common quotes from same critics. Two thumbs up. The best movie this year. Laugh-out-loud funny. Terrific performance. A must-see. An Oscar contender. Brilliant! Five out of five stars. These statements mean nothing and don't sway people to rush to the theater.

The same goes for you. When you fail to truly differentiate yourself, you fail to prove your value. Who defines value? The receiver, not the giver. The burden of proof is on you. You must contribute value to your prospective client's definition of value, not yours. You may think that people care about your ability to listen, your care and compassion, or your cost-effective solutions, but what they really care about is how those things relate to them. They care about themselves.

Developing a unique message is not easy, but it is necessary. To effectively market your law firm and sell your legal services, you need to get out of the legal box and craft a message that will not only set you apart but will also become recognizable and synonymous with your services and your brand. This is your only way out of the commodity trap.

You cannot differentiate yourself if you don't undertake the journey of finding out what makes you unique.

Ask yourself these questions as you go through the process:

- What is my unique offering to the marketplace? What is that one thing that I do that I know my competition does not?
- What are my distinct characteristics, skills, and attributes? Do I have a specialty or added expertise that my competition does not?
- What do I do differently in my client consultations to stand out? Do I have a unique opening and use different language to engage prospective clients? (This one is a game-changer.)
- How can I integrate that uniqueness so that prospects see me as unique? Are these qualities posted on my website, and do I use them in my marketing materials?
- Once defined, how can I make my uniqueness recognizable in a consistent and sustainable way? Do I freely and easily integrate this message into all of my marketing materials, consultations, and services?

Many attorneys are realizing that within the first seven to ten seconds of meeting someone is the ideal place to create a strong and powerful first impression. They are making a conscious choice to begin their consultations with conversation about the client rather than talking about the weather, traffic, parking, or another current event the way that so many other attorneys do. Superficial chit-chat does nothing to differentiate them and make an impact on the prospective client.

You can tip the scales in your favor when you get creative. Do something that makes clients feel important and cared for. Conceive a personal and memorable initial consultation experience for your

clients. Prospective clients will feel and know in their gut that you are distinct and that you are the best choice for someone to represent them.

The more that your messaging caters to what's in it for the prospect, the more successful you will be at gaining their attention and winning their business. Your language should be all about the prospective client, not about you. You differentiate you by making it about them.

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