

Creating Authentic and Emotion-Driven Sales Pitches

"I'm a lawyer, and I promise to work hard for you."

"We have the most professionals of any firm in the area."

"We have the smartest CPAs with years of combined experience."

Sound familiar? It should, because it's the same messaging used to sell professional services for the past decade or so. And guess what? It's just as ineffective as ever.

Service professionals — like so many other services, products and specialists — are a dime a dozen. Most are good at what they do, most are equal to their peers and most are easily interchangeable. Crowded spaces need bright lights and loud noises to steal even a second of recognition. Yet, all too often, firms choose to sell based on *what* the firm has to offer: lawyers, accountants and specialists. It's an example of leading with the obvious, the least interesting and safe.

Here's where strategic and creative professional services marketers come in. Marketers know that **corporate culture matters** to all stakeholders, including clients, staff, colleagues, and new and prospective hires. They know culture matters in attracting clients and maintaining relationships. They know culture matters in mergers and firm expansions. They know culture matters to your firm's public reputation.

Marketers also know that *what* they are selling is not a major selling point. They know firm size doesn't matter, nor does longevity. They would never simply promote a lawyer based on his or her rankings or hang their hats on the fact that a lawyer has integrity. (Isn't that expected from all lawyers? Who wants to hire a lawyer who lacks integrity?)

Marketers know that differentiation is critical to setting the firm and its professionals apart. They also know that eliciting an emotional response is essential because sales only happen when there *is* an **emotional connection**. They know that to do this, firms have to convey the "why" and the "how" of what it is they do. The "why" speaks to purpose — why your firm exists. The "how" speaks to process — how your firm will fulfill its brand promises. Ultimately, they know that culture arises from the "why" and "how."

Why Define Your Corporate Culture?

Culture speaks to your firm's purpose and direction. It creates the structure and foundation for everything you do. It is an emotional investment, as well as the needle on the moral compass that points toward what you want your firm to stand for. Marketers know this, and they know how much it can affect your firm's bottom line.



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Organizational consultant and author Simon Sinek helped develop the idea that businesses have to stop trying to sell what it is they do and focus more on why they do it in the first place. As he once said, “Customers don’t buy *what* we’re selling until they buy *why* we’re selling. The ‘why’ comes from those who believe in the brand promise of your organization.”

That **brand promise** arises organically from your firm’s culture. The culture is established by the firm’s leaders, but it is often best identified and leveraged by your marketers. Marketers make the connection that values lead to culture and culture leads to branding, and that the glue that keeps everything together is emotion, not the fact that your lawyers or accountants won an award.

This emotion has to be authentic. You can’t contrive a corporate culture. You can’t force values on people. Your leadership has to truly believe that the values they set forth are the guiding principles of your organization, and your professionals have to genuinely buy into those values. For example, if your firm values being an asset to the community, your employees should all share that vision. You’d expect, then, that a firm that prioritizes community service would employ professionals who are active in their own communities.

A More-Earnest Approach to Messaging

Let’s revisit the pitches from the top of this post and recast them with these concepts in mind.

“I’m not just an IP lawyer. I protect inventors, innovators and scientists so they can continue to create. I might not be an engineer myself, but I want to protect those who have the technical skills to make our future a better place.”

“We love your product, and we think this is something that should be shared with the world. You’re a startup, so you need scalable and personalized service. We recognize that, so we want to develop a strategy designed for one thing: your success.”

“You’re a family-owned business, and you’re facing a big lawsuit. We know these are uncertain times, and you don’t want to lose your legacy — one you’ve put so much of yourself into. We’re here for you, and we’re going to get through this together, one step at a time.”

See the not-so-subtle difference? Do you see how values, purpose and emotional connections play an essential role in building trust between your firm and your prospects and clients? This is how professional services firms can stand out, as long as the sentiments are authentic. After all, marketers know that it’s not *what* we sell that matters; it’s the *why* and *how*. Right Marketers?

How has your firm incorporated values and emotion into its marketing strategy? If you need guidance, contact me, Terry M. Isner, at tisner@jaffepr.com.