

How to Conduct a Complete Branding Audit for Your Law Firm

Every law firm wants to stand out from the crowd. To do that, you have to understand how potential clients perceive your brand. What differentiates your firm from the competition?

People often confuse a firm's logo or visual elements as branding, but actually, **your brand** is the emotional and experiential qualities that form the total perception of your law firm. This includes qualities such as who you are and what you stand for. A logo is part of the picture, but it's only the tip of the iceberg.

Consistent branding creates an impact – a complete mental, emotional and reputational picture about your firm that stands out in the minds of potential clients. The stronger the branding, the more easily people will remember you.

Strong branding starts with a total analysis of the firm's current marketing infrastructure and an understanding of the competition. Here's a step-by-step guide to analyzing your branding, finding weaknesses, compiling a report for stakeholders and starting to make changes that strengthen your brand.

Take Stock of Your Marketing Assets

To assess your firm's assets, use a brand audit to review how your law firm is being represented. Gather samples of all your law firm's marketing materials. Include digital assets, such as the all-important website, social media banners, profile avatars and videos, as well as physical assets such as brochures, gift items and stationery. Look at everything as a whole.

Evaluate consistency. **Look at fonts**, colors, **logo placement** and how they are used in all marketing platforms and collateral pieces. Is everything up to date and following the firm's style guide? Is everything working? If not, it might be time for a revamp.

These visual samples and notes should be included in your report and integrated with the rest of your audit findings.

Market Research

It's crucial to understand how your firm is perceived within the market. Gauge the effectiveness of your branding by conducting interviews externally and internally. That includes existing clients, potential new ones and samples of employees at every level of the firm, from new hires to staff to senior partners.



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A vendor should handle the interviews so people feel free to share their thoughts. Ask everyone the same questions to ensure consistency. Questions should allow for answers about experiences, thoughts and feelings about the firm. It's especially important to understand why clients selected your firm.

The size of your firm should dictate your interview sample size. Small firms of fewer than 50 people may interview 10 people, including four or five clients and the same number of employees. Larger firms with several hundred employees could interview 40 or more clients and employees.

Some attorneys may push back against the idea of interviewing clients. It's important to make attorneys comfortable by letting them select the clients invited to participate and to make participation totally optional. The lead attorney should reach out to the client and introduce the consultant doing the interview. To allow for honest answers, the client should understand that the results of the interview will be confidential.

Surveys are another option, but lack the personal touch of an interview or the potential for an interviewee to clarify answers. Phone surveys provide more feedback than online surveys. However, online surveys streamline the process. Services such as SurveyMonkey make analyzing results easy.

Analyze Your Competition

Understanding your law firm brand is only part of the picture. You need to know your competitors to differentiate yourself from them. What firms serve a similar practice area? Are they large or small? Are they local or national?

Once you have a list, review their websites and marketing materials. Read their taglines and mission statements. What sets them apart? Is their branding cohesive and effective? How do they use colors? Visuals? Fonts? Pull screen captures of home pages, bio pages and news pages to compare them.

How do the firms rank with online searches for their practice areas? Which firms rank the highest? Try to determine why certain firms might rise to the top of search rankings for different search terms.

Compile Your Law Firm's Brand Audit

With all the data at hand, you can compile your report. Condense the information into core takeaways. What were the key findings from interviews? Did any answers come up consistently?

You should be able to pull three to five differentiators from your research that will be the groundwork for developing a story and message to direct your branding. Include an analysis from your visual branding review, including any recommendations for adjustments to the style guide.

How to Use Your Findings

Share your report with major stakeholders. It may be wise to give them some time to digest the results before making any internal or external changes.

How you use this information can take many directions. Maybe your branding needs some tweaks to elevate your law firm. Maybe it needs more consistency, or maybe the results show you need a complete overhaul.

Regardless of the scope of needed changes, the process will be more like running a marathon than a sprint. Brand changes take time to become effective, but with a consistent message throughout your marketing channels, the results will speak for themselves.

Do you have any brand audit experiences you want to share? Comment below, or reach out to [Alan E. Singles](mailto:asingles@jaffepr.com) at asingles@jaffepr.com.