

The Power of branding – Live it, own it

Branding is a big part of any business, and a law firm is no exception. For a business to succeed, it has to promote all that you have to offer. Your firm may have a team of exceptional attorneys, but their skills will not be noticed if no one knows who your firm is or what your firm represents.

Most people think that a logo is the brand, but branding goes well beyond your logo – it is part of a larger marketing strategy. And when that strategy is executed well, it can pay off over time.

To clarify, your logo is your visual identity – the first thing put in front of everyone who comes across your firm. Not only is your identity tied to the design of your logo and the typeface used in it, but color plays a major factor as well. As part of your brand, it builds trust and a sense of confidence. Over time, it allows you to expand reach of your business with existing and new clients.

Building a powerful law firm brand involves more than a good logo design. Your brand has to convey a message about who you are and what you stand for. It has the power to influence purchasing behavior by positioning you as a leader in your market area. Your message stands for something in people's minds. When you have an established position, you can own the market.

But this does not happen overnight. A number of steps must take place, both internally and externally, to build a powerful brand.

Understanding your law firm

Your branding effort has to start with the firm's leadership, along with the cooperation of the administrative staff, by conducting market research. This research is critical to finding out where you stand in the legal marketplace. You also have to conduct [interviews with internal and external people](#) at all levels; this will give you insight about how your staff and clients differentiate you from other firms in similar size and region. The results will guide you in developing your brand, message and story, and help you decide whether you need to start developing a brand from scratch or fine-tune what you already have.

In addition, you should take an assessment of your [marketing assets](#), including printed materials, digital assets (social media, website and video), stationery and gift items. Do you use your logo and colors/fonts consistently? Do you have a brand style guide?

Consider shortening your firm name

It is not uncommon for a law firm to have four names (or more) strung together, representing the lead or founding partners. Consider [shortening to one or two names](#) (the



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more unique, the better), or at least using a shorter version for your legal marketing purposes. If you ask some of your clients, they most likely are referring to your firm by the first and/or second names, not the full list you may have on your letterhead. While this is always the biggest challenge of a rebranding initiative, the results are worth it, allowing you to develop a strong visual identity that can be unique to set you on the path for better recognition.

Incorporate your law firm's characteristics into your brand

Are you "forward-thinking"? Do you "think outside the box"? Do you put "clients first"? What makes you stand out from the other law firms? Do you **value people** and have a diverse workforce? Do you foster personal growth and have good employee retention? Conveying what makes your firm unique allows you to use that for attracting not only clients, but quality staff as well. Your **firm culture** can be another element of your overall brand.

Practice what you preach

Even if you have a great brand, if your clients have a poor **customer experience (CX)**, they will go elsewhere. Keeping clients' business requires meeting their expectations and delivering the promise of your brand. Gaining insights into CX can help strengthen client loyalty and address gaps in the client experience process.

Getting the message out

The right message is key to staking out your place in the minds of your clients and potential prospects. Make sure you are communicating your brand through social media, blogs, podcasts, legal alerts and external articles. Not every platform will fit your brand; choose the best options based on your research and goals. What you say is just as important as where you say it.

It takes a village

Every person in your firm is part of the brand. Client work travels across multiple touch points beyond the primary attorney in the journey at your firm. If not all staff are on the same page about your brand, it gives a mixed message and can cause brand confusion. Make sure you have a brand guideline available to the entire firm and share it so everyone knows the messages you are trying to convey about the firm.

Finally, don't attempt to build your brand alone. **Hire professionals** who work in your industry and know how to bring every aspect of branding to life for your firm. Every detail must be taken care of. Branding is not just a logo, slogan and letterhead, but everything that leaves your firm, from email signatures to electronic newsletters, advertising, collateral and much more – including **social media**. No detail can be overlooked or your brand starts to fall apart.

Need help assessing your firm's visual brand and marketing? Reach out to me, Alan E. Singles, at asingles@jaffepr.com.