

Building Brand Ambassadors Through the Business Development Process

Wikipedia defines a brand ambassador as “a person who is hired by an organization or company to represent a brand in a positive light and by doing so they help to increase brand awareness and sales. The brand ambassador is meant to embody the corporate identity in appearance, demeanor, values and ethics.”



Jaffe Staff

Often, startups and online companies hire their best customers and fans as brand ambassadors, outfitting them with swag when they attend industry events and encouraging them with clever discounts and freebies to blog and post on social media in adoring fashion. These “third-party endorsements” often carry way more clout than company-based marketing and advertising initiatives, because they’re genuine (or at least appear to be), and because, in today’s hopelessly info-cluttered world, we turn to our friends and trusted sources more than ever.

Athletic companies and luxury brands have long used third-party endorsements to build their brands. We are all aware that Nike’s best sales force is not LeBron James or Michael Jordan but rather the *customers* who wear apparel with the Nike logo prominently displayed. When we see the cool kid in gym class playing like a baller during recess while wearing a “Just do it” tee, that counts way more to us than watching an NBA celeb knowingly hawk Nike products on a TV commercial. The real-person endorsement is subtler. We know Nike pays the NBA celeb big bucks for the TV spots; we also know the cool kid in gym class endorses Nike by buying the shirt!

To that whole point, let’s not forget the first question asked on the red carpet at celebrity events like the Academy Awards. It’s not *Who do you think will win?* It’s *Who are you wearing?*

Many law firms successfully use client testimonials and [PR coverage](#) as third-party endorsements to highlight their core attributes and differentiators. These activities, however, are just the first steps in building brand ambassadors for your law firm. It’s now time to push [building brand awareness](#) full force into your business development activities. That’s right: You can encourage and enable brand ambassadors *at your firm*.

Here’s how.

Obviously, you may not have attorneys who are willing to wear the firm’s logoed swag or brand colors to a networking event or sales meeting, but that does not mean that your people cannot be potent brand ambassadors. Branding, after all, is about much more than just logos. It’s about telling a story and controlling the message of the firm. You need to put out a consistent message about the firm’s attributes and differentiators. All of your people can be equipped and trained to do this work!

As you plan your business development activities and training, deploy these tips and strategies:

- **Make sure everyone at your firm knows and understands your law firm brand.** What are the firm's core values? What is its mission and reason for being? What's the origin story? Answers to these questions should be second nature.
- **Encourage people to tell the firm's story and talk about their experiences.** How has the firm lived its values and fulfilled its purpose? How has it "given back" to employees, clients and others touched by its work? Share these messages at internal firm meetings. Ask everyone to contribute, not just to "propagandize" but also to call out instances in which the firm has deviated from its purpose or values, so you can course-correct. Get everyone to contribute: the firm's managing partner, marketing partner, marketing director, administrator, etc.
- **Purchase swag and give it away freely.** Give firm t-shirts, water bottles, mouse pads, etc., to attorneys and staff as well as clients and potential clients.
- **Institute a brand ambassador initiative** as part of each employee orientation program, and make sure all participants understand the importance of building brand awareness and loyalty.
- **Make building brand awareness a part of the firm's business development training.** Each attorney should have his or her own elevator speech memorized and also be conversant with the firm's elevator speech. Rehearsing these speeches may seem "forced" or awkward at first, but if you don't practice, not only will you be ineffective as an ambassador, but you also won't be able to patrol to make sure the firm *does* live up to its promises to employees, clients and community.
- **Reward your brand ambassadors.** Offer coupons for free lunches, attendance at local events, etc. But don't rely only on extrinsic rewards like this to spread awareness. Live your purpose and values – that should be its own sufficient reward.
- **Work with your firm's mentors to ensure they share the firm's brand values** with each new attorney, so the message perpetuates naturally.
- **On your firm's blog and in its social media channels, share your core attributes** and how adhering to those values enables you to serve clients better.
- **Tell the firm's story on your website** and in law firm advertising campaigns, so your target audiences really understand the value of working with you and your firm.

At Jaffe, one of our best brand ambassadors is [Alan Singles](#), our director of marketing and graphic services. Alan can often be found at Legal Marketing Association (LMA) conferences wearing a purple-and-lime-green (Jaffe's colors) shirt and tie ensemble, discussing Jaffe's brand position and differentiators and how they enable our firm to better serve the legal market.

If you attend the [LMA Annual Conference in Austin](#) next month, stop by the Jaffe booth and speak with Alan or one of Jaffe's other consultants about how you can build brand ambassadors at your law firm.

For more information about Jaffe and how we can help you with [business development training and coaching](#), contact Terry M. Isner at tisner@jaffepr.com.

