

5 Principles of Consumer Marketing that Apply to Law Firms

By way of introduction, I worked in client service at Jaffe for many years and recently returned after serving as the CEO of a niche public relations agency whose clients were exclusively pet product and veterinary companies and services. You might think that this blend of consumer and B2B PR experience would be a far cry from the foundations of legal marketing, but I see parallels that I think can be helpful as law firms shape up their 2018 marketing goals.

1. Know Your Audience

One of the first questions I ask clients – no matter what the industry – is, “Who is your audience?” Sometimes, an executive from a pet treat, service or product company would enthusiastically respond, “Everyone in the world who has a pet!” “Hmmm,” I would think, “that really can’t be possible.” I’d begin by explaining how that is a very wide net to cast, and that not every pet owner wants or needs their product or service, sorry to say. Consumers have many options now, and competition for their attention is fierce, whether we are looking at pet products, legal services, cosmetics, food or even the neighborhood restaurant. Everyone needs to know – and serve – their particular audience.

How do you **break down who your audience really is**? For consumer products or professional services, you have to define the purchaser of the product and come up with a profile that you can use as a foundation for legal marketing planning.

Think of it this way: If you are an M&A lawyer, is every single business out there a potential client? Probably not. You’re likely to have a sweet spot of prospects that fits with your experience and interests. Try to focus in on that particular audience and understand their potential to be your next group of new clients. You may want to consider geography, years in business or who is the actual decision-maker.

Bringing it back to pet products, the ideal audience for a product may be a woman in her 30s who makes purchasing decisions for the family, treats the pet as an integral part of the family, and considers a lot of factors (organic, made in the U.S.A., philanthropic, etc.) before making a choice to buy. Your prospects should be defined as well so when you do a law firm marketing campaign, you are certain about reaching the right audience.

2. Have a Great Website

Have you ever been to a product’s website, ready to make a purchase, but can’t find the “Buy” button? Or have you looked for ingredients for a pet treat, but can’t easily find that web page?



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Did you know that the website attention span of the average consumer is just a few seconds? With that in mind, you must have [a website that suits your visitors' needs](#). For instance, when a pet owner comes to a website to find a product or book a veterinary appointment, they can't be expected to spend 10 minutes looking for information. That quest only leads to frustration and a quick click to close that website and search for something else that is easier to use.

For law firms, the premise is similar. A prospect will want to see solid practice group descriptions and biographies that are easy to find and provide clear information to help make a buying decision.

3. Know What Sets You Apart

If you own a pet, you have certainly stood in the treats aisle of a pet store, with dozens of options at your fingertips. What makes you pick one product over another?

The answer is messaging. Through publicity, social media and branding, the pet product companies work hard to place certain messages – not only on their packaging, but in your conscience as well. These companies, like law firms, are looking for positive customer reviews, high marks on published rankings (yes, there are rankings in the pet world, too), and client satisfaction through testimonials, all of which can lead to referrals.

But how do these businesses come up with their messaging? Every pet product company worth its salt must go through a [SWOT analysis](#) (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) to identify strengths that the company can use for messages and branding. Each company has to appreciate what sets its product apart from similar products. They have to understand that not only their strengths, but their internal weaknesses, external opportunities and threats that must be acknowledged. This base of knowledge is imperative to developing solid marketing campaigns.

Law firms, too, can benefit greatly from SWOT workshops and analysis. At least once a year, do a SWOT, and consider what has to happen with marketing to achieve positive outcomes for visibility and branding. It may be difficult to articulate what sets your firm, practice or self individually apart from similar law firms, but it's an exercise that can yield important results.

4. Become the Trusted Name

Just as a pet brand enjoys the trust of its consumers, so too should a law firm become the trusted name for its clients. A pet product company probably has several lines of products, all of which have to be sold to the pet parent. If the pet's owner will buy a branded toy, for example, it's probable that she will buy treats made by the same brand.

In today's market, it is important to have the ability to cross-sell, and in most law firms, the ideal is when a client uses the experience of several practice groups for various matters. Lawyers should always be listening for their clients' needs, anticipating their business challenges for them and advising them to potentially work with additional practices within the firm.

5. Be Social

Pet brands tend to perform very well on social media, using carefully developed tones and styles. While your law firm won't publicize contests and giveaways like a pet brand might, you can still think about what your audience wants from social media conversations. One idea centers on whether your firm supports philanthropic causes, since you can use [social media as a communications avenue](#) to draw in like-minded people who will then gain familiarity with the firm's branding and messaging.

In conclusion, having a broad outlook on how B2B and B2C companies conduct their marketing campaigns can provide businesses with new perspectives. While "the whole world" may not need either a pet product or legal services, a segment of that population certainly will.

Need help defining your audience? Contact me, [Liz Lindley](#), at llindley@jaffepr.com.