

## Why Your Associates (And Partners) Need Help Branding

### *How to Help*

By Anne E. Collier

Since the changes in the legal economy in 2008, distinguishing oneself from other lawyers is critical to getting a job, work from colleagues, and more clients. This is true for both partners and associates. It's not enough to be smart and hardworking. A lawyer must be known for what he or she does, and must be able to sell him or herself.

Junior partners and associates often have difficulty selling their services. They got A's in law school, they had no trouble passing the bar, and they work at prestigious firms. They tell themselves, "That should be enough, right?" Wrong. They are competing with literally thousands of lawyers who did just as well and who now are in the same boat. To help these lawyers develop business, you need to help them get comfortable talking about themselves and their services. If a lawyer cannot comfortably talk about what he or she does, colleagues, the community, and current and prospective clients won't necessarily understand which problems a particular lawyer is able to solve.

To successfully sell his or her services, a lawyer needs a personal brand — and this is not a hokey marketing gimmick. Rather, a powerful personal brand will deliver remarkable results by providing a compelling and unambiguous ren-

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dition of the lawyer's strengths, inspiring confidence and drawing the best opportunities to the lawyer. A meaningful brand articulates why, how, and what the lawyer does, distinguishes the lawyer from his or her peers, and succinctly describes the value that the lawyer contributes given the opportunity.

A personal brand attracts opportunities that will propel the lawyer's career forward. Successful lawyers know this and therefore carefully create their brands. Deliberately creating one's brand, elevator pitch, mission statement, and messaging upon which to draw is essential to being able to talk about one's work in an empowering manner.

So how do you help your junior partners and associates create their personal brand? You walk them through the five-step process to create their own Messaging Pyramid. The steps are:

- Step 1: Establish a Powerful Mindset;
- Step 2: Identify "Why";
- Step 3: Define the Lawyer's Mission;
- Step 4: Choose the Lawyer's Vocabulary; and
- Step 5: Build the Lawyer's Brand Description.

### **THE MESSAGING PYRAMID**

A lawyer's Messaging Pyramid incorporates Why, How, and What the lawyer does. Putting these three elements in a Messaging Pyramid helps the lawyer talk about him or herself more effectively and in a way that encourages interest rather than boredom. It prevents the lawyer from tripping over his or her own tongue when answering questions about his or her services. Perhaps most importantly, the Messaging Pyramid gives the lawyer confidence when talking about his or her services because, quite simply, the lawyer knows what to say.

#### ***Establish a Powerful Mindset***

Establishing a powerful mindset is essential for many reasons. Projecting confidence is a necessary

tool in every lawyer's tool belt. Part of what clients (and colleagues) pay for is confidence — that is, well-placed confidence in the lawyer's strengths, thoroughness, and judgment. Creating a powerful mindset requires you to first help your colleague identify what holds him or her back from confidently talking about his or her services; and second to substitute an empowering statement for what holds him or her back. The substitute statement will incorporate the lawyer's strengths, skills, and expertise.

You will likely hear that your more junior colleagues are worried about being considered braggarts, that they are putting down others, and won't live up to expectations. Lawyers often wrestle with selling themselves because they have a hard time justifying why them and not someone else. Your goal is to help them replace their fears with an empowering and true statement about themselves, their skills, or their character that is the key to dealing with the fear. The following may help.

#### ***1. Replace Fears with the Empowering Truth***

To facilitate a mindset shift, have the lawyer focus on his or her strengths, skills, and expertise. We often think work that is easy or enjoyable for us is easy for everyone and not the product of a strength, and therefore not to be valued. Remind the lawyer that the key to success and fulfillment is to leverage one's own strengths — to do the work the lawyer finds interesting, fulfilling, fun and yes, (relatively) easy. Know that what some find easy, others often find difficult, boring, tedious and draining. Adam Smith had it right when he shared his ideas on division of labor over 200 years ago.

In developing a keen awareness of strengths, have the lawyer identify accomplishments, the challenges he or she has surmounted, and

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## Prof. Development

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types of problems that the lawyer is an expert at solving. Remind the lawyer of the work for which you and other colleagues praise him or her. Have the lawyer commit this to paper or whiteboard it. Then look for common themes. These might include ability to see the big picture, master the facts, or know a very specific and narrow area of the law, for example.

### 2. Identify 'Why'

The reason "Why" is critical is because "Why" focuses on why a client should hire the lawyer, which is also what drives the lawyer. I urge you to watch Simon Sinek's TED Talk "How Great Leaders Inspire Action," available on YouTube. The critical premise that Sinek focuses on is that leading with what one does is boring, tedious, and ineffective. Leading with *Why* one does what one does engages, excites, and puts what one does in context. This is because prospective clients do not buy services merely because a lawyer's services are a fit. Prospective clients buy services from lawyers who believe in, and are driven by, goals that resonate with the client. The key, therefore, is for the lawyer to be able to articulate why he or she does what he or she does — what drives him or her? Examples include: 1) I love to litigate and I love to win. 2) I deliver savings to companies while giving CEOs peace of mind. 3) I wrestle with complex problems. 4) I make compliance make business sense.

### 3. Define The Lawyer's Mission

The purpose of Step 3 is to clarify your mission and create a crisp and compelling articulation of Why you do the work you do. Your mission is what drives you. This requires you to help clarify How does the the lawyer accomplishes his or her goals? How does this reflects the

key to achieving his/her mission and how do clients benefit? This is the lawyer's unique selling proposition. Examples may include: This attorney looks at things differently; he or she partners with clients; he or she builds consensus; this attorney manages teams effectively; or he or she finds gaps in state tax laws, and knows the regulatory system.

A lawyer's mission statement will embody why, how, what the lawyer does, and for whom the lawyer does it. The basic format is:

"To ... [what the lawyer wants to achieve, do or become] ... [reasons why it is important] ... by ... [specific behaviors or actions used to get there]."

### 4. Choose the Lawyer's Vocabulary

No brand is complete without a unique vocabulary. The purpose of Step 4 is to identify a vocabulary that authentically reflects the lawyer and his or her services. In choosing words that are unique to the lawyer, it is helpful for you to ask what brands he or she uses, identifies with, and why. For example, does the lawyer drink Pellegrino, brush with Crest, shop at Nordstrom, get coffee at Starbucks, or drive a Lexus? The hardest part of helping a lawyer choose a unique vocabulary is getting him or her to be creative rather than trying to "get it right" on the first try. Self-editing on the first draft doesn't work. Thus, this step, and in fact all steps, is best accomplished by using a white board or flip chart to capture all the words that the lawyer associates from his or her favorite products or services. The words associated with Apple, for example may be "innovative, slick, fun, easy-to-use, cutting-edge, smart, effective, knows what you need before you need it, and integrated." A deliberate selection of the words associated with products the lawyer identifies with and words generated in Steps 1 and 2, yields

a robust, unique, and authentic vocabulary for talking about the lawyer's services.

### 5. Build the Lawyer's Brand Description

The purpose of Step 5 is to integrate the information developed in Steps 1 through 4, and flesh out the building blocks that complete the lawyer's Messaging Pyramid. The lawyer will utilize these elements in his or her "elevator pitch," online bio, LinkedIn and Facebook profiles, blog, and everywhere else.

You will also likely want to coach the lawyers you work with on delivering their brands, that is, talking about their skills and services. It is hard for some to talk about themselves and their strengths. This is one of the biggest hurdles in being recognized for contributions and expertise. Tell them they don't have to or even want to memorize their brand description. A delivery based on memorization sounds stilted and like a late-night TV ad.

Rather, practice it on friends, colleagues, anyone who will listen.

### CONCLUSION

The effective delivery of a brand requires enough practice that it sounds natural, ironically. Don't deliver the brand description in one breath. Coach them to start with "Why" and let others ask questions that allows the lawyer to divulge How and What. Don't forget to tell them to describe examples of What they do in short, compelling, sound bites. Remember, "all the gory details" is a turn-off. In this way, the lawyer knows that the prospective client or referral source is interested and getting the information he or she wants.



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