



Creating a Brand That Drives



You're focused on practicing law, helping your clients, and maintaining a book of business.

It's difficult to add another item to your plate, but are you cognizant of how your firm's brand can affect your ability to generate new business? While branding may not play a critical role in every new matter, it can hinder prospective clients as they evaluate your firm. A consistent brand drives new revenue.

Before you can find ways to improve or build your brand, it's crucial to understand what a brand is—especially for lawyers. The easy answer is that your brand is anything public-facing concerning your firm, your work, or your

attorneys. It can be a daunting task to keep up with everything that represents your firm or practice but it's important to know how the community views you or your firm.

I hope that by reading this book, you can gain a few pieces of information that will help elevate your firm—leading to new matters and more clients. Every business is in a different place when it comes to branding, so this guide will help you whether you're starting from scratch or just hoping to refine and improve your current branding.



Why Does My Brand Matter?

Your brand is a critical aspect of your business development process. Oftentimes, your brand, or lack thereof, acts as a first impression for potential clients. It can give them the impression that you are well organized, consistent, and know who you are as a business. It also can lead them to the conclusion that you're confused about your offerings and lack direction and organization.

If you think of some of the iconic brands throughout the world, they all leave a powerful impression on their potential clients or customers. For example, Apple's branding and product offering resonate with people in such a way that they've created an almost cult-like following for their products. Think about your favorite brands and how they portray themselves on their website, through their products or services, and in their advertising. You'll start noticing themes that define their brand.

If you don't already have a brand, as you start thinking about your company, make a list of characteristics, values, and messaging that you want potential clients to know

about you. Creating your brand around principles you want to portray as a company allows you to more easily share those core values with the world. Branding is an opportunity to showcase your firm, your attorneys, and your accolades on a broad scale.

One of the key reasons that branding is so important for lawyers is that potential clients may not know when they will need an attorney. Firms with a cohesive brand are the ones that are remembered first as prospective clients look for representation. It may be a catchy slogan or jingle, or it may be the messaging on your website or social media, but the most important thing is that they remember your firm when they need you.

There may not be a direct, immediately measurable return on investment from your branding efforts. It can be hard to track the successes and failures, unlike digital marketing efforts. However, branding plays a pivotal role in every piece of marketing and business development—sometimes you just don't know it.

Where Do I Start?

A great place to start, whether you're a new firm or a well-established business, is with an audit on your current branding. You want to understand where you're starting from and what's being said about you. We've created a

branding scorecard to help you answer a few questions about your firm. These questions help you think critically about your firm's reputation and how it could be affecting your business.



How Does My Legal Brand Score?

There are so many factors that can help or hinder your business development efforts for your law firm. To help you gain new leads and more qualified clients, we've created this online law firm branding scorecard.

Go through each of these questions and answer how your firm is doing. Once you've completed the survey, we will provide some information to help you make improvements if needed.

1

Are you familiar with how your employees describe your firm? Having a pulse on employee morale can play a significant role in branding and business development efforts. How do your employees describe your firm overall?

1 Very Poor

2 Poor

3 Okay

4 Good

5 Great

2

How do former clients describe their experience with you? Understanding client satisfaction is important to your brand.

1 Very Poor

2 Poor

3 Okay

4 Good

5 Great

3

What's the initial response when someone in the community finds out where you work? If people have not heard of your firm, you should answer this question as a 0.

1 Very Poor

2 Poor

3 Okay

4 Good

5 Great

4

Do you have a set of brand standards to help guide your firm's brand?

1 No

5 Yes

5

How often is your logo being used consistently throughout all platforms?

1 Never

2 Rarely

3 Sometimes

4 Often

5 Always

6

Do you know what information about your firm is available on the internet?

1 No

5 Yes

7

If so, how often is the information about your firm presented in a positive light?

1 Never

2 Rarely

3 Sometimes

4 Often

5 Always

8

Are you actively doing anything to manage your firm's reputation online?

1 No

5 Yes

9

Is your firm's contact information easy to find online?

1 No

5 Yes

10

Is your website easy to navigate and to understand?

1 Not at All

2 Barely

3 It's Okay

4 Pretty Much

5 Of Course

11

Do you have a clear description of your firm's capabilities and are all stakeholders informed on what you do?

1 No

5 Yes

YOUR SCORE

TOTAL SCORE

50↑: A great place to be. Keep up the good work.

40s: No need for concern, but don't let your brand slip away.

30s: A little bit of effort will go a long way. Make sure you stay focused.

20s: It's time to focus a bit more on your branding efforts to amp up marketing efforts.

10↓: You need to dedicate serious time to getting your brand aligned before its too late.

Once you've figured out where you are and how you're doing with your current branding, you're ready to start making some improvements in any areas that need attention.

If you're a relatively new firm or you don't have any branding ready, these ten questions will serve as a solid starting point. Focus on getting these ten factors in place.

Let's break down these main categories and how they play an integral role in your brand.

Employee Referrals

Your employees, both current and former, are brand ambassadors for your company, whether they know it or not. The way they interact with potential and current clients is paramount to the overall success of the firm. One other way that your employees play a big part in your company's branding is conversations after they leave the office.

Every single one of your employees goes home to their friends and family and talks about their experiences at work. If the day-to-day stories are positive, this can boost word-of-mouth referrals from their network. However,

if they're unhappy at work or have to deal with stressful situations regularly, those stories may weave themselves throughout the community creating an unpleasant reputation.

How do you manage employee referrals and outside work conversations? It's difficult. The best advice is to understand the lows and highs of the job for every position and actively work to make things better when needed. You can't make everyone happy and work can be stressful at times, but you can do small things to boost morale overall.

Think of your employees having a conversation like this:

Let's assume they're eating lunch at a busy restaurant near your office, and people can overhear them talking about your firm.

"Wow, your job sounds really stressful. Why do you like working there?"

"I don't really like working there. It just seems like too much work to find a new job and they pay me well—probably because it is so hard."

How do you think that response resonates with the people they're talking with? Or the people sitting around them that can overhear the conversation? Now think about that same scenario with a different response.

"Wow, your job sounds really stressful. Why do you like working there?"

"It can be stressful but I really like my boss and the people I work with care about me. They make sure that I leave work feeling good—regardless of how stressful it is."

You can easily see the difference between the two. In the first scenario, subconsciously, people are probably thinking that if your firm treats employees poorly, how will they treat clients? It's these types of conversations that help build—or destroy—your brand.

"I Work at XYZ Firm."

It's an old-fashioned way to approach branding and reputation management. However, a person's initial reaction when you tell them your employer for the first time can speak volumes about your firm's reputation. As you go through your day-to-day, mentally keep track of how people react when hearing about your firm. If things are positive for the most part, it's a good sign that your firm is in good standing in the community. However, if after every interaction, the person knows something negative about the firm, it's time to do some damage control.

Another red flag, especially if you're at an event where people know law firms, is when someone says they have never heard of your firm before. This is an indication that your firm needs to spend more time on brand recognition and brand equity in the community to build a rapport.

The way the community views your brand is critical to your success. Regardless of how a potential client finds your firm, whether online, from word of mouth, or another way, they will most likely look for reviews or a friend's recommendation before hiring you.

Brand Standards

A consistent brand is a good brand. One of the best ways to stay consistent, across all platforms and departments, is to create a set of brand guidelines. Depending on your firm's size, location, and needs, your brand standards will vary. However, these brand standards are a foundational piece to your business that answers simple, yet vital questions employees may have. It also helps get new employees up to speed quickly on the standards of the firm and it creates consistency for your clients.

Brand standards can include a lot of different variables, but here are just a few.

- 1 What should the company logo look like in various sizes and formats?
- 2 Does the firm have a specific font for presentations and firm collateral?
- 3 What are the firm's colors?
- 4 Templates for letterhead, PowerPoint, etc.
- 5 Do we have a boilerplate description of the firm?

Client Reviews

The outcome of a case can have a large impact on a former client's overall happiness with the work of your firm. However, do you have any procedures in place to understand how your clients feel about their experience? Unless your firm has never lost a client to a competitor, there's always critical information that you could learn from former clients. One way to gain that insight is through an exit interview or a client satisfaction survey after each closed matter.

A client satisfaction survey is a simple way to gain feedback from clients—especially information you may not want on Google or other review sites. The heavy lifting takes place when you create the survey and set the expectations for

delivery. After that, the most important piece is to follow up with clients who expressed concerns. It's also not a bad idea to follow up with the clients who had great things to say, either.

Outside of the client satisfaction survey, you should also comment on reviews that are left on Google or other sites. You can use a template as a starting point, but it is always good to show that you understand their concern and appreciate their feedback by customizing your response for each review—especially if they leave something negative. If it is a positive review, show your appreciation for them.

Creating a Client Satisfaction Survey

A client satisfaction survey is a great way to get candid feedback from clients before they leave a review online for the public to see. Based on a client's responses to your survey, you can then encourage them to leave a more public-facing review.

What should you include in a client satisfaction survey? First off, use a variety of question types, such as multiple choice, open-ended, rating scales, etc

Some Questions To Ask:

- Overall, how was your experience with your attorney and our firm?
- How was the cadence of communication about the case?
- Would you recommend us to your friends & family?
- Was there anything during your experience that gave you pause about hiring our firm?

Here are some simple responses that you can use for both positive and negative feedback.

Negative: Thank you for your candid feedback. We appreciate it. We apologize that your experience with our firm did not meet your expectations. Our team is going to reach out to you and get more information so we can serve you better.

Positive: We appreciate your review and feedback. We're so happy that you had a great experience with our team and we look forward to working with you again.

If you want to stand out, you could also send them a quick note, firm swag, or a gift card to thank them for leaving a review—especially if it had some constructive criticism.



Google Yourself

If you haven't Googled yourself or your firm, you are missing out on information that's easy to obtain. You can likely find information from clients, employees, and members of the community about your firm. Get in the habit of Googling your firm, your attorneys, and your competitors consistently to keep a pulse on how you are doing.

When I start working with a new company or firm, I spend a few hours going through the Internet and seeing what people are saying about them. It's better to know about the bad review or unhappy client before someone else has to mention it to you.

Website

If you've been in practice a while, you'll remember when the phone book was the most important place to gain new clients. Nowadays, it takes a lot more effort to help prospects find you online—and if your website isn't performing well, you're missing out on a lot of leads.

What does performing well mean? There are a variety of things that affect the strength of your site, but at a high level, it needs to load quickly on mobile and desktop platforms, it should be developed so that search engines can identify keywords and locations, and when a potential lead lands on your page, they should easily be able to identify what you do.

If you don't know how your website is performing, our Online Presence Score can provide a detailed evaluation of which factors of your site are up to par and which could use work.

Clear Description

A concise summary of what your firm does is critical to the success of your business development efforts. If you are a solo practitioner, this may be a more streamlined exercise based on your specific practice areas. However, if you have a firm with multiple attorneys, you need to understand each practice area and the individual contributors to your firm.

Creating a well-written and clear statement of your firm's offerings helps you for several reasons. It allows potential clients to get to know you better and see if you are the right fit for their needs. It also serves as a way to eliminate leads that do not align with your areas of practice. The messaging on your website serves as a qualification process for new leads. A clear description can keep unqualified leads out of your pipeline.



Community Involvement

One area that is often overlooked as it relates to your firm's brand is your involvement in the community. I wouldn't suggest screaming from the rooftops about your charitable giving or your volunteering opportunities, however, there are subtle and effective ways to make sure that potential clients know you're giving back to the community.

Reputation Management

Depending on your area of practice, online reviews may play a bigger or smaller role in your efforts. However, getting client feedback is an important part of your business development efforts. It helps drive client satisfaction and it also helps drive new business when potential clients see that you listen to client feedback and make appropriate adjustments.

Managing your reputation can be simple when done consistently. If you have online reviews coming in, make sure you're reading them and responding to them. Making a visible effort to improve as needed or showing gratitude to your clients for hiring you.



What Should I Care About?

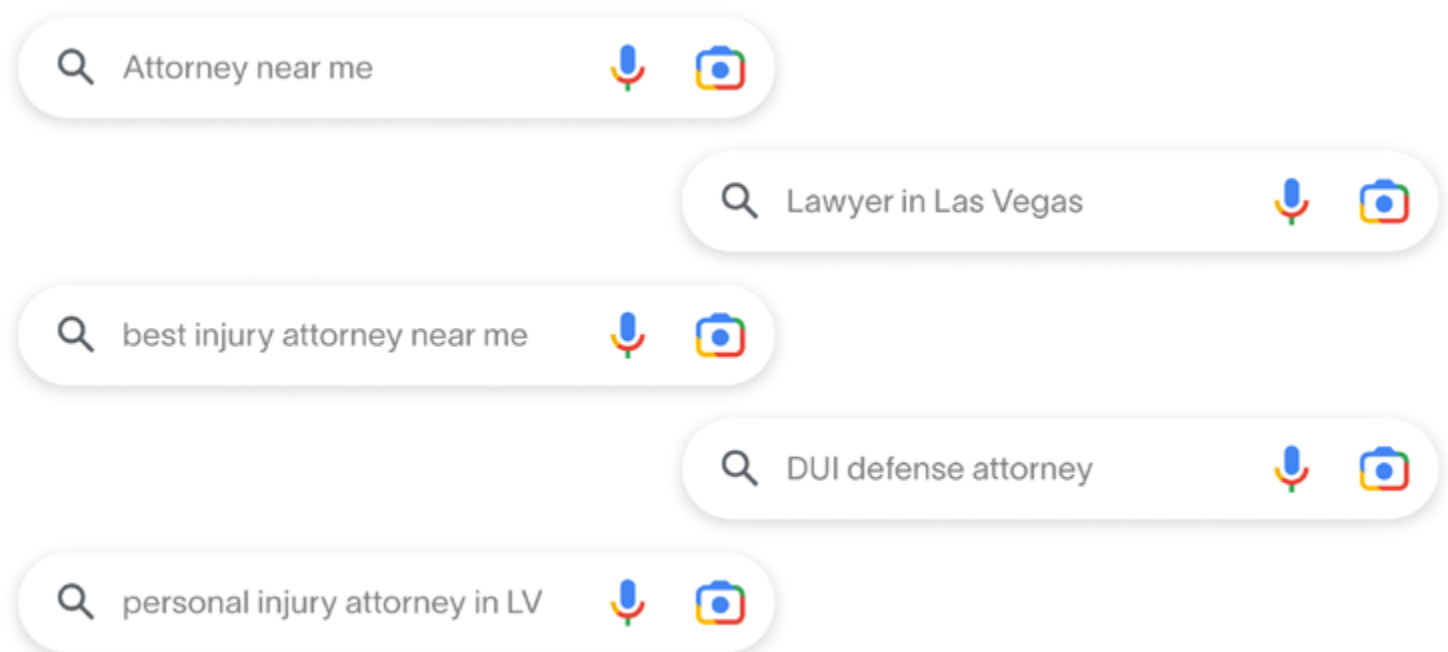
Now that we've talked a bit about what makes up your brand, you're probably thinking that this is too much for you to handle and you're wondering what's most important, right?

My advice: be as consistent as possible. If you're the only one handling these efforts, then consistency is up to you. However, if you have an administrative team or a business development person, make sure that you've put guidelines in place to keep everyone on the same page.

Understanding how your brand will affect the business development process is the most important place to focus. You want to make sure that people remember your firm's name, your logo, and your areas of practice.

Can Prospects Find You?

One of the most important aspects of branding is making sure that people can find you when they search for you online. Think about different search terms they may use to find your firm and then make sure that you are showing up online and offline in those areas.



If you are a personal injury lawyer in Las Vegas, but your firm name is difficult to remember, you want to make sure that your firm is visible in search rankings. If you are using an outdated logo offline and a new logo on your website, try to make them consistent across the board so that someone doesn't get to your site and think that it's the wrong place.

What Do They Learn about You?

Once someone has landed on your website, what do they understand about you and your practice areas?

When thinking about website content, you should be talking about three main things.

1

Firm: You should include information on your website about your firm, showcasing your breadth of expertise, your accolades and accomplishments, and the values on which your firm practices. This type of information helps people validate you and understand your expertise as a firm overall. However, at the end of the day, they're hiring an attorney or group of attorneys for their case. The firm's expertise is just the cherry on top.

2

Practice Areas: The practice area content is an important way to educate your potential clients on the areas of law that you practice. In most cases, it is best to assume that your clients do not know much about practice areas or the type of lawyer they may need. Practice area pages are where you define that for them.

3

Individual Attorneys: Attorney biographies can seem self-serving or overdone, but they play a critical role in the business development process of every attorney. It's important to understand what people want to learn about attorneys and their practice. If you think of it from a client perspective, they want to know that you're smart, competent, and that you'll get the job done for them. Those are the easy parts—they also want to understand your personality and the way they'll interact with you. Depending on the type of case, you could be spending a lot of time together.

Writing an Attorney Bio

Attorney biographies are a critical part of your marketing and business development strategy. They give you the opportunity to introduce yourself to potential clients and demonstrate your expertise, your personality, and show them why you're the best attorney for their matter.

When writing your attorney bio, here are some things you should avoid:

- An overwhelming list of your accomplishments.
- Verbiage that doesn't resonate with your target clients.

Here are some things you should include:

- Showcase your personality
- Your community service or pro bono work
- Top 5–10 matters in each practice area

How Do They Contact You?

While you're building your website or evaluating how it's performing, one of the essential things to include is a way for website visitors to contact you easily. If they can't find your contact information or a "contact us" form quickly, they'll likely go somewhere else.

A contact form is the most convenient way of gaining leads directly from your website—however, you need a process to ensure that each contact form is being followed up with properly. Create a system that sets expectations on who responds and how quickly. You can't follow up with a lead that was sent weeks prior—they've already gone to your competition by then.

How Do I Maintain My Brand?

You don't need to worry about your brand every day, but it's a good idea to get in the habit of checking in on it every so often. If your firm gets a lot of online reviews, it is good to respond to them in a timely fashion.

To maintain your brand, create and implement a plan that allows you to periodically check on how things are going. That plan may be as simple as a calendar reminder that repeats every 1–3 months and reminds you to check on a few things.

The traditional phone number is a great way to connect, however, it's limited to business hours. It is important to give visitors multiple ways to contact you, especially at odd hours of the day. Try using all the tools you can and track the effectiveness of each. Contact forms, phone numbers, chats, etc. all offer different ways for clients to interact with you however is most convenient for them.

If you're the one managing your online presence, you should be receiving notifications from Google and other platforms when you receive a review. Make sure you read and respond to it so they don't start piling up and go unanswered.

The key to branding success is to be cognizant of it as much as you can and to make small improvements as needed to help strengthen your reputation in the community.

About the Author



Andrew Adams helps law firms understand the intricacies of marketing their practice. He has extensive experience working in-house at law firms handling marketing and business development initiatives, as well as helping start-up companies launch their marketing efforts. He has an MBA from Westminster College in Salt Lake City and a bachelor's in journalism from Oklahoma Baptist University.

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