

Branding yourself to success

“Be so good they can’t ignore you!”, writes Bernadette Baynie. The GC talks about how building a personal brand will enable lawyers to stand out from the rest.

As lawyers in today’s ever-changing and competitive world, we need to consistently evolve to stay relevant, both in our profession and the industries that we represent.

To personally succeed and enable your organisation to grow, you should consistently take time out of your busy practices and focus upon yourself, in particular the “personal brand” that you reflect to others. A personal brand can help you to connect better with your clients and colleagues and build important relationships with them.

We frequently mistake “personal branding” though as a form of self-promotion. It is in fact far more. It is your combined: (i) reputation (both personal and corporate), (ii) unique image, (iii) authentic voice and how they are projected to your organisation and clients.

Developing your own personal brand is a key gateway to building a true and quick connection with others and maintaining your relevance, in the fast-paced corporate world of today.

The reality is, that whether you know it or not and whether you like it or not, you already have a personal brand. Jeff Bezos from Amazon once said: *“Your brand is what people say about you when you are not in the room.”*

One of the main drivers of your success as a lawyer, is understanding, shaping and cultivating your personal brand. I call it developing your own “personal trademark” – one that can form an essential component of your personal value proposition to other.

As Sir Richard Brandson said:

“If you don’t give the market the story to talk about, they’ll define your brand’s story for you.”

1. THE VALUE OF A PERSONAL BRAND

A personal brand gives you a quick and highly effective way to broadcast who you are to your targeted market. It is what differentiates you from others.

Your personal brand is a valuable enabler that lets you instantly “connect” with your potential clients. In her book *“Talk Less and Say More”* Connie Dieken states that: *“Connecting is the ability to engage and manage people’s attention in today’s busy world.”* Your personal brand can be used to make people think of YOU when they need legal services.

When you create an authentic and compelling personal brand that people can trust and rely upon, you attract more clients to you who want to receive the promises that it conveys. It can also become your best protection against the business aspects of your practice that you cannot control.

2. DEVELOPING A GREAT PERSONAL BRAND

Successful lawyers are those which have the happiest and most satisfied clients. Such lawyers work hard to connect and captivate their clients with their own unique value brand proposition. They build long-standing client relationships from such efforts.

The understand that their success as a lawyer is dependent not just on the quality of the legal services that they provide their clients, but upon the holistic manner in which they are delivered. Clients will always provide you their loyalty and repeat business, if you consistently make them feel valued and appreciated.

Your personal brand should reflect your guarantee of the quality of your services to your clients and how you will make them feel when they are delivered.



Creating a “*unique value brand proposition*”, that incorporates such elements is a sure way to stand out from the crowd and project your credibility and reputation to a wider audience. The best approach is to focus on developing a unique brand that reflects who you truly are, as you cannot give others what you genuinely don’t have inside of yourself. It does not matter as to whether you are extroverted or introverted you can certainly cultivate your own individual brand that conveys a personal and emotional connection to others without having to “put yourself out there” so obviously.

The simplest way to do this is to work out your most exceptional qualities and competencies and what makes you stand out from other lawyers and executives in your industry. Make a list of them and

how they could impact positively upon your clients and colleagues. Consider the expressions that people might use to describe you. What positive experiences do others have when they are around you and how do you make them feel? Consider the audience that you wish to target and work out in some short sentences regarding what you stand for and how you would like to be perceived. Here are a few examples for you to consider:

- » completely loyal and trustworthy
- » always dependable, innovative and creative
- » a take-charge personality
- » keeps calm under pressure
- » creative problem-solver
- » always cheerful inspires the best in others
- » always behaves professionally
- » tireless worker with meticulous attention

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» willing to go beyond what is required.

Be sure to include such information in your client presentations, together with previous client testimonials, as they convey supportive messages of credibility and success within your area of expertise.

3. IT'S ABOUT HOW YOU PERCEIVE YOURSELF

The easiest way to develop your own personal brand is to see yourself as being responsible for selling one product – “your personal services” - into a competitive marketplace. See yourself, not just as a lawyer but as a successful self-employed CEO of your own company that delivers high quality legal services to your organisation, irrespective of the position that you hold, and the company that you work for.

The great thing is that when you do so, your client becomes seamlessly both your organization and its clients. You not only develop a strong capability of taking full personal responsibility and ownership of your lawyer role and its accountabilities in your employer organisation – you deliver far more consistent value to its clients. I call it “My Inc”. It is my personal trademark and commitment to both my organisation and my clients that I will always strive to deliver value and the highest quality services to them in the most timely manner.

4. IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR IMAGE

Focus on the impact of the “whole” of your image that you are seeking to reflect to others – physically, emotionally and digitally - as these form intricate components of your personal brand.

Your appearance - Your physical appearance and body language (including your personal wardrobe, posture and grooming) emotionally impact upon the way that your clients, colleagues and others see you, how they connect with you and how they treat you.

Your networking - Getting yourself “out there” is also an important part of cultivating your personal brand. Some lawyers find it easy to do so by speaking to large audiences and being a natural networker at major conferences and events. For others, who dread the thought of having to promote themselves in front of a large

crowd, then they might find it easier to connect with others and build meaningful relationships using smaller engagements such as 1:1 lunches or coffee catch ups and informal group social events. Some might feel at ease using a combination of the above.

Your social media - Take steps to ensure that your brand is highly visible across multiple social media channels. Do so with the objective of appealing to and connecting with potential clients and colleagues in your organization and industry, as they are likely to review your web profile to get to know the true you.

Consider establishing a professional website that is linked to your social media network. You could set out information on your website that is about you and your value proposition. You could include on the website a personal blog and articles which can help to professionally promote your brand. Always try evoke with your brand the highest and most positive feelings that you want your targeted audience to experience when they are in contact with you: either in person or through any form of media.

CONCLUSION

We live in an ever increasing digitised and technologically-advanced world, which we as lawyers, should cultivate and make the most of. Building and cultivating a well-crafted and credible personal brand for yourself, in such an environment, does take some time and strategic planning, but all valuable things are worth the effort in the long run!

It is always worth remembering though that: *“In a world where you can be anything, be yourself!”* – Etta Turne 📖



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