

## MARKETING YOURSELF

### Most lawyers squirm at the thought of marketing themselves...

...perhaps because they think they're being asked to act like the kind of rampant self-promoter who presses their business card immediately into the hands of everyone they meet and then bores them with endless talk of their abilities and achievements. But that's not what marketing yourself is about at all; not, at least, if you hope for your efforts to be effective.

Instead, as a lawyer, marketing is the sum total of your expertise and experience as well as your ability to draw on your network of friends, colleagues, associates and acquaintances.

It's how you conduct yourself, how you relate to clients and colleagues and how you project yourself to the world. In short, it's pretty much everything you do.

### A battle on several fronts

To make the most of your career as a lawyer you will need to market yourself to several different groups simultaneously: your colleagues, your clients, the profession and even potential employers. Each of these groups is likely to expect different things from you.

For instance, your employer will want to know that you have sound technical skills, that you can lead, that you're an effective team member and that you have what it takes to develop strong client relationships.

Meanwhile, your clients will want to know that you can give them advice they can act on and that you can relate to them on a personal level. As legal marketing expert Ray Hartley puts it:

Now while your professional colleagues are great judges of your legal knowledge and skills, these are not the things that impress clients the most. It's you as a human being that matters to clients.

Then, of course, there's the need to connect with a much broader audience in order to pick up potential new clients (and potential new employers).

So how do you market yourself to these different audiences?

### You're the product, so what's your brand?

The first thing you need to think of is what it is you're marketing, or your personal brand.

A lot of people think of a brand as a product's advertising or logo. But when advertisers develop a product's brand they ask themselves "what are the characteristics that differentiate it from competitors, what is its unique value proposition?"

There are so many lawyers in the market place. So if you think of yourself as the product to be marketed, you should start by asking yourself what it is that sets you apart from other lawyers.

For instance, is it your commercial acumen? Is it the breadth of your knowledge of the law or your knowledge of a specialized area? Is it your ability to relate to clients? Are you still trying to find out?

### Different audiences, different approaches

Once you have worked out what truly sets you apart from other lawyers – or what you would like to set you apart from other lawyers – the next step to think about is how to convey this to the rest of the world. And that depends on who you're trying to reach.

## **The workplace**

Marketing yourself to your peers and superiors begins with being competent at your job. But it also means showing that you're engaged, proactive and capable of leading. For instance, when you sit in a team meeting, do you speak up? And when you do, is it to offer something insightful? Do you volunteer for extra assignments? Or do you wait for the work to come to you? Do you lead CPD and contribute to the knowledge of your firm or your practice group? And just as importantly, how do you treat your colleagues? All of these things will help people form a view of who you are.

Beyond that, there is so much you can do to get yourself known for all the right reasons, as Business Management expert Tom Peters puts it in his article for [fastcompany.com](http://fastcompany.com):

There's literally no limit to the ways you can go about enhancing your profile. Try moonlighting! Sign up for an extra project inside your organization, just to introduce yourself to new colleagues and showcase your skills -- or work on new ones. Or, if you can carve out the time, take on a freelance project that gets you in touch with a totally novel group of people. If you can get them singing your praises, they'll help spread the word about what a remarkable contributor you are.

## **Current clients**

Clients pay you good money and in return they want you to make their lives easy. That doesn't necessarily mean being on call 24/7 (although some clients might expect this). However, it does mean anticipating their needs and taking a strategic and serviced-based approach to dealing with them.

Do you anticipate your clients' needs and forward articles you think they might find useful? When you write an advice do you keep it as simple as possible, easy-to-understand and give practical options that they can act on? After all, it's one thing to have an in-depth knowledge of the law, it's another to be able to translate that knowledge into language that a non-lawyer can understand.

## **Future clients and employers**

Ray Hartley says that when it comes to marketing yourself to future clients there's still no substitute for the word of mouth that comes from giving your existing clients a great experience.

Your clients will refer others to you IF they have had a great experience with you - so you need to make the experience of your clients great, all through the process.

However, there are other forms of marketing that can often be equally as important - both in attracting future clients and potential employers. For instance, if you want to hold yourself out to be a specialist in a particular area, are you publishing articles regularly and/or speaking at events? Are you an active participant in relevant industry groups? Are the deals or cases you're working on being reported in the legal press? Make sure you speak to your firm or company's media department about coming up with a media strategy for publicising your 'wins' if they don't already have one.

## **Your online life**

Finally, it's likely that the first thing a prospective client or employer will do is Google you before they approach you. What will they find? (If you don't know, Google yourself right now.) Hopefully, it will show some of the professional contributions you've made as well, potentially, as some of the positive activities you're involved in outside of the workplace. (Clients do want to know you're a person, remember!).

Then of course, there's social media. Remember that anything you tweet or post on Facebook could potentially be seen by a wide audience. (Adjust your Facebook privacy settings now if that's the case.) You should, of course, also make sure that your Linked In profile is up-to-date and engaging. For more advice read our article, "Tweeting to the top".