

Maximize Your Branding

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Ideally, law firm branding is like a backdrop against which lawyers engage in business development activities. Done effectively, brand messaging preconditions the marketplace's awareness and understanding of the firm and its strengths. However, many firms squander the investment they make in branding by failing to integrate their brand-awareness efforts and their lawyers' one-on-one marketing. Here are five ideas to help you maximize the value of your branding investments.

- **Brand internally.** In developing your brand platform and applications, host internal "brand fairs" for all lawyers and staff to build awareness and understanding of your key messages and to foster enthusiasm among those who must embody the brand messaging.
- **Be distinctive.** Clients complain that law firms present themselves fungibly. Create a differentiated message by which the marketplace can know you—and make sure it communicates your firm's value proposition.
- **Build consensus.** Involve your lawyers and staff in the development of your brand platform and messages. If your professionals believe they have a vested interest in your firm's brand solutions, they will support and use it as the foundation of their various marketing activities.
- **Apply your brand messages consistently.** Your brand platform is not just for advertising, press releases, your Web site or other communication vehicles. It should also inform the way in which your lawyers and other business professionals describe themselves and the firm. If they treat the brand as something extraneous to their individual marketing, they give the lie to the brand's appropriateness for your firm.
- **Don't make gut decisions about your firm's future.** Use research, such as focus groups, to test your key clients' reactions to the brand in advance of launching a major external communications campaign. If your clients respond positively to your key messages, make sure that all marketing

initiatives—your Web site, advertising, media relations, public speaking, publications, beauty contests and so forth—echo the “story” of your brand.