How to differentiate your firm from your competitors

By Meg Huwar

I was recently preparing to give a talk to a group of event planners. The topic was Creating a Successful Brand for Your Business, and as part of my presentation, I wanted to show examples of websites with clear messaging and a strong brand. I chose a few different types of businesses to highlight, including law firms. I got online to look for killer legal websites and I was reminded how little differentiation there is among law firms. The websites typically say the same thing … “We’re experienced attorneys … we’re aggressive … we fight for our clients … etc.” In addition, they all look the same… scales of justice, gavels, photos of courthouses, etc.

So think about your potential clients. If they are looking online for an attorney, why would they choose you? You have to give people a reason. The fact that you went to law school, have lots of experience and treat your clients well is not enough, especially if everyone else is saying the same thing. Instead you need to say something different so that you stand out from all the other law firms who do what you do.

How Can You Separate Your Firm From the Pack?

1. Focus on the Client, Not You

Take a look at the home page of your website. Does it talk about your attorneys and your firm or does it talk about the client? When a potential client is looking for legal help, it’s because they have a problem and they are looking for an attorney or law firm that can take care of it. So, when they land on the home page of your website, do you talk about the issues your potential clients have and how you help them or are you talking about where you went to school and how long you’ve been in business. I’m sorry to say it, but no one really cares about that. What they want to know is if you can solve their problem or fix their issue.

2. Find Your Differentiator

If you look and sound like every other law firm in town you will be viewed as a commodity. When that happens, people often buy based on price and you don’t want to be the lawyer or firm that is hired because you’re the least expensive. If you do, you’re in a race to the bottom. Instead, find something that makes your firm stand out. What do you do different, better or faster than other law firms? What do you stand for? What are you fighting against? Who do you serve? What do you specialize in? Whatever it is, find something.

This isn’t always easy to do, because sometimes a general practice is just a general practice with no clear differentiator. If that’s the case, then create something. Maybe you have a unique process that makes it super easy to work with you. Maybe it’s the speed at which you work (Are you the Amazon of divorce attorneys?) Maybe it’s the makeup of your staff…are you an all female firm working with women going through divorce? Find that thing that makes you different and allows you to form connections with clients and potential clients.

3. Have Clear Messaging

Once you determine what makes your firm unique and different, go out and tell the world. (No point in having a differentiator if you don’t tell anyone about it!!) Explain what you are doing in language that is simple to understand and is easy for people to explain to others…. That’s how you get referrals.

There’s a reason that Edgar Snyder’s been so successful. He understood that the biggest concern people have when hiring an attorney is the cost. He took that fear and addressed it head on. He didn’t use legalese, instead he addressed the fear by saying “There’s never a fee unless we get money for you.” It doesn’t get any clearer than that!!!

Moving Into 2020

The single biggest way to grow your firm in 2020 is to separate yourself from your competitors. This isn’t always an easy task and, in fact, can be quite difficult, but once people understand what you do and how you can help them, business will consistently flow into your firm.

Meg Huwar is an award winning Marketing & Brand Strategist and Founder of Brand Accelerator, an outsource marketing firm that works with service based businesses, including law firms. She works with companies who want to market their business but don’t have the time, experience or staff to do it themselves. Meg can be reached at mhuwar@thebrandaccelerator.com.