

Marketing Your “YOU”

Jim Ray

Do you follow anyone in particular? Do you seek out articles or posts by an individual because you value his/her opinions on certain topics? I’m willing to bet you don’t do this because of the company logo or the office location.

You do it because you’ve “connected” with something that provides value, inspires you, motivates you and helps you. That’s the power of a brand. You’ve found a reason to value that person. You might even be willing to tell others about him/her. That person has found a way to stand out in your mind. That’s the essence of marketing (and it’s much different from advertising). It’s why the title of this article is about marketing your “You.”

In a recent presentation to the LBA’s Leadership Academy, I spent considerable time discussing various aspects of personal branding. The core insight is that the market attributes value to a brand—your “personal brand.” While the market actually defines your brand, your goal is to influence your brand perception.

The sooner you begin to recognize this, the more time you’ll have to reap the benefits.

Rainmakers, junior partners and associates each have the opportunity to differentiate themselves in the court of public opinion. It’s about optimizing the many touch points you have with your current and prospective client base in:

- Your personal interactions with new or existing clients
- Your staff’s interactions on the phone or in the office
- Your peer-to-peer interactions outside of the office

The objective is to engage your target audience/market in a way that is recognized, perceived as valuable and actively sought out among your competitors. One way to do this is to develop “your story.”

Indulge me for a minute while I give you some insight in to my story. I spent several years managing regional distributors. I had to forecast financial objectives, manage and develop employees, deal with vendors, and grow our operations in highly competitive environments. I learned how to read and interpret our financial statements, and was evaluated based on them.

I later transitioned into a role with a legal marketing company. As I met with attorneys and office managers, I sometimes recognized various business inefficiencies and things my clients could have altered to become more effective and more profitable. I even had face-to-face discussions with our corporate leaders about how we could provide assistance. The challenge was that my job was focused on one area of their business—marketing.

So, I enrolled in an MBA program. I was eventually hired by two of my clients as a director of their new law firm. This gave me the opportunity to tap into my broader business skills. I eventually launched my own business consulting firm which now enables me to engage with a client in multiple areas of overall business performance. Helping small firms and business owners; that’s where I thrive.

Now, does that story appeal to everyone? No—but it doesn’t have to. More and more however, it resonates with attorneys in my target audience.

Looking at your career, not just your current practice, what’s YOUR STORY?

It’s integral to your personal brand. If you haven’t really given consideration to it, let me suggest a few steps to help you influence your personal brand:

- Refine it — take time to consider how you got here and where you’re going
- Incorporate it — include it in your attorney profiles so people can learn about it
- Communicate it — blog, upload videos, write articles to support it
- Help others to understand how it benefits them

People instinctively want to connect with other people. When you provide information relevant to them through your blogs, videos and articles, you enable them to begin to understand WHAT it is you do, WHY you do it and HOW it helps them. You’re actively influencing your brand value.

Give your target audience a reason and a path to connect with you. The first quarter of 2016 is done. The good news is that you still have the better part of a year to put various assets into place to help.

Your target audience doesn’t want to simply hire an attorney. Your audience wants to hire the *right* attorney. One of the most important steps you can take during the next month is to begin marketing your “You.” People are actively looking for it, right now.

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