

Professional life assurance

The brand (not an insurance policy) is our professional life assurance. Nevertheless, it is evident that we have to have insurance.

People and the brand are the most important assets of a law practice. Professional practices that manage these assets with rigour and consistency are still in the minority.

Managing a brand calls for an effort to explain who we are, how we help our clients, what our values are and how they translate into benefits for the client, what makes us unique on the market; in a few words, our personality and our style. When all is said and done, it is an effort to be transparent. Transparency creates confidence.

Retreating into our day-to-day setting is an easy ploy to avoid having to engage in self-analysis, and to bring out - for some people, once and for all - the best in ourselves. This lack of self-analysis and action for improvement is mirrored by some law practices: improvable time management, deficient customer service, personnel recruitment lacking in professional criterion, absence of efficient organisation and processes, remuneration systems to be defined, web sites that jeopardise rather than reinforce the practice's image, lack of training in sales skills, failure to present estimates to the client, office design without taking the client into consideration, absence of business strategy, lack of skills to manage relationships and national or international contacts, etc.

All impressions are important in a business or personal relationship, but first impressions are transcendental. Perhaps you do not like this, and think that it is unfair. It is not unfair, it is just the way things are: people tend to pigeonhole and prejudge things. We simplify "reality" for our own peace of mind.

Let me give you an example: A few weeks ago a journalist from the economy sector asked us to provide him with a couple of law practices to be featured in an article on law firms. We gave both of them equally good references. The journalist had to choose one. He told us later that he chose the practice whose web site looked best and whose messages appeared to be most elaborate.

Is the legal quality of the practice eventually chosen by the journalist superior to the one he ruled out? It is anyone's guess. What we do know is that people take decisions on the basis of values, emotions and perceptions, and we tend to subsequently justify them "rationally", with "logic". You may or may not accept this, but what we will not be able to change is they way that people make choices, as this process is innate in human psychology.

Brand management is about adapting what we are and what we offer to our target client. Therefore, someone that does not do brand management might wonder, for example, how come we fail to attract the type of clients that we want to even though we are prepared? The answers are normally within us.

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