

Law Firm Business Development: Branding and Brochures Are Not The Answer

By [LawVision](#) on September 26, 2013

Law firms have a great opportunity to differentiate themselves from the competition. However, I am struck by how few law firms have changed their approach to business development in the last decade, yet seem to expect materially different results. After all these years, the primary focus continues to be on branding and brochures. If a firm is banking their business development success solely on developing a differentiated firm brand or on fancy brochures, firm leadership is going to be very disappointed with the outcome. From what we've seen, however, that disappointment hasn't resulted in a change in direction. I continue to hear from prospective clients that they need to "establish their brand." The fact is that their brand has long been established. Their brand is based upon decades of actions and behaviors of everyone associated with the firm; it's not a tagline, or an advertisement, or even clever marketing words on a glossy brochure. Want to change your brand? Start ten years ago. Or, if you're going to start today, be prepared to be patient as internal and external behavior becomes aligned with the new brand and it becomes the fabric of your new culture. This takes time and is easier said than done, of course.

As it relates to brochures, I continue to be surprised at how much attention marketing collateral gets from law firm leadership. I have been told time and again that these materials very quickly find their way to the prospective clients' circular file, which is a real shame, because this collateral doesn't come cheap. The "12-panel firm, 8-panel industry group, 4 panel practice group, and slip sheets for every service offering and office" costs a lot of money to produce and maintain. Having been a buyer of services myself for many years, I will admit that vendors' brochures, irrespective of how nice they were, did not find an ultimate home on my desk. If they were great pieces of work, they were sent to my Creative Team to share best practices, but the copy within these works of art were never consumed as intended. It seems that the emphasis on, and investment in, branding and related collateral development many times outweighs the investment in teaching lawyers how to develop relationships, provide best-in-class client service to their clients, and think like a business partner. This is a real shame, because the latter is the true opportunity to differentiate in this industry.

If firms want to have a material impact on their top line, my recommendation to leadership is to spend fewer dollars on branding and brochures and double-down on teaching the lawyers how to think like a business advisor. Doing so will set them apart from the competition.