

Sell yourself

Rachel Brushfield explains how to apply marketing techniques to 'you' the brand



The world of law can be a rude awakening. With a trail of well-thumbed textbooks and debt behind you and a feeling that your office door should be adorned with a sign reading 'Head of

Photocopying', reality soon kicks in.

The mantra "It's not what you know, it's who you know" may start to seep into your consciousness when you observe the politics that govern which trainees get placed where. Not only that, but there's a dawning realisation that the contents of all those thick textbooks whirling around your mind might not be the sole answer to a successful career.

Welcome to marketing. It's a dirty word to some, but is actually a really useful way to help you be successful, now and in the future, in your career and in life generally, whether by helping you secure your next seat, or by winning new clients.

Marketing is a universally applicable way of thinking relevant to all professions. Modern marketing in this context means "anticipating and satisfying the needs of target audiences profitably, for the benefit of both parties" and covers a plethora of areas, including self-promotion, public relations, networking and you as a 'brand'.

Your objectives

It is important in life and work to focus on what you are trying to achieve. Ask your-

self: "What is my objective and how will I know that I have achieved it?" At this stage in your career, it might be to secure a seat in a particular department. Having a SMART goal helps, ie, a goal that is: specific; motivating; achievable; relevant; and timed.

Your target audience

At this stage, your target audience might be the partners in your current firm or in a firm that you'd like to work for. It is vital that you get to know and understand the needs and wants of your target audience. What motivates them, what are their priorities, what do they like and dislike, where do they go, what interests them, what are their problems and concerns? In future, your key target audience is likely to be your clients, but the same principles and skills apply. Practise your questioning and listening skills.

You as a 'brand'

You may not think of yourself as a brand, but you are. You are unique and different from your colleagues in many positive ways, however small. The key is to be really clear about this so that you can communicate it to your target audience. A unique selling proposition (USP) might make the difference between being hired quickly or being left on the shelf. You need to 'own' a distinctive and relevant territory in the minds of your target audience, so that they can place you easily and quickly. Are you the hardest-working, the quickest, the most proactive, the best-connected or do you focus on a law specialism that makes you highly prized?

Internal marketing

Internal marketing is self-promotion within your existing firm. You may think people notice your efforts, but often they don't, either because they are too busy, or are preoccupied with their own affairs.

Don't sing your own praises so often that people think you are arrogant. The

trick is to identify key players in your firm who will have the most influence over decisions that are important to you. Get to know these key players. It helps to have people to promote your cause, whether that is your supervisor or a senior partner. Make sure you nurture them and they will look after you. Having a mentor or coach can help you to promote your cause throughout your career. You need to learn to play political games in a way that feels comfortable for you. If this leaves you with dread, remind yourself of your bank statements and grit your teeth!

External marketing

External marketing is your profile outside your current firm. If your next career move is outside your current firm or even outside law, you need to start networking – a highly useful skill that will help attract clients to you in future, making you more marketable and highly prized for the picking. You need to know whom to court and where they go. Promotion in other forms will create awareness, whether it is attending industry events or writing articles for legal publications.

Measuring success

Always evaluate the results of your efforts and compare the results with your original objective, ie, your SMART goal, and change the approach if necessary. Remember a simple and great quote: "If what you're doing isn't working, try something else."

Marketing matters – ultimately it is about knowing who you are and what makes you great and being aware of those around you. Maybe marketing is not such a dirty word after all. Good luck!

● **Rachel Brushfield is a performance, career and life coach with a marketing and brand heritage.**

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