

Why does a law firm logo matter?

Date : February 24, 2015



Legal marketing is tricky in ways that marketing for a business like a restaurant or clothing manufacturer is not. People are always going to need to buy clothes and most want to eat out every now and then. But any given individual may not need legal services for years or decades at a time. This challenge exposes the need for firms to create a distinct and memorable identity. Developing a logo is an important piece of the process.

No, a new logo will not automatically cause a deluge of clients to flood your door. But a poorly designed identity — one that portrays your firm as unfocused or unprofessional — can be a hinderance. A logo can't say everything about your firm, but it can make a memorable statement about who you are. And that statement is important.

The true story of stock: Research for a recent project led to a search for the term “sun logo.” The results ran the gamut from predictable to truly creative, with a lot of variety in between. One interesting result of this search, however, were these three images:



These are examples of stock logos. Three different industries, the same logo. This is one of the biggest problems with stock designs: anyone can use them. And they are by definition not developed with attention to the history and personality of the individual business.

Why take time to design a logo?

1. Consistency. Without some basic style guidelines, the face a firm presents to the public can become muddled or blurred. Having a logo and with it a set of instructions about the proper use of colors, fonts and placement gives stability to an identity over time. For example, one agency may create a television [ad](#) for your firm, another a business card, and yet another company may design a website — and all of this may not be done simultaneously, but over a period of years. The result can be a confusing collection of disparate messages, or, with planning, it can be a solid statement about your firm told with continuity over time.

If people are exposed to a different look and feel on print materials, videos, a website and social profiles, the [impression](#) will not be memorable. People seeing your marketing materials may not even realize they all belong to the same firm. A consistent identity is key to reinforcing a notable and enduring relationship with potential clients.

2. Recognition. Many law firms use the same naming conventions and standard visual elements when establishing an identity. While appreciation for the role of brand development and marketing is growing in the legal community, some lawyers are still not shy about professing their disdain for the whole process. Attorneys also face restrictions on their advertising activities for ethical reasons that professionals in other industries do not have to contend with.

But many state bars are starting to loosen restrictions on law firm naming, leaving the door open for creative options that do not have to contain a partner's name. This presents the opportunity to create a logo and name that are completely unique. (This does not mean that a well established firm should immediately change its name, but anyone should be open to the possibility.)

Humans are visual animals; people generally remember images more readily than text or other forms of communication. Firms that develop a logo without using standard legal [imagery](#) will instantly stand apart from competitors. This, of course, is easier said than done. Logo creation is hard. The final product should be simple, but the process should not be. A finished logo is the result of a lot of thought and research into a firm, its target clientele and how best to speak to the needs of its audience.

The result, when done well, will be a recognizable mark that can be used in any application. A mark that will become naturally associated with your firm. This type of easy recognition is why big brands pay large

sums for a custom logo. Your firm may never be Nike, but it can be distinct, known and recognized by the majority of people in your [market](#). When they do need you, they will remember you.

3. Brand story development. A logo is a key visual element of a firm's [overall brand](#). A brand is not any one item. It is the fusion of everything a firm does — from client communication to office environment to billboards to [social network](#) activity. Your firm's brand should explain how you want others to perceive you, and it should express a promise about the type of experience clients can expect to have with your firm.

All professional activities should support the goals of your brand. To accomplish this, your story must be well developed. A well-developed story includes:

- **A brand voice** – How do you want your brand to speak? Are you conversational or formal? Identify actual personality traits like friendly, serious, clever, flexible, rustic, scholarly and so on, and then develop a voice that reflects those traits.
- **A mission statement**
- **A tagline**
- **Key messaging elements** – What are the critical points you want everyone to know about your firm?
- **Desired audience perception** – How do you want people to feel about you?
- **Unique benefits** – What benefits does your firm offer that others cannot claim? Think beyond experience and professionalism; most clients expect that as a minimum. What words can you use to describe your firm that your competitors cannot?
- **Style guidelines** – Prepare a document containing a list of colors, color schemes, logo guidelines (placement, size, acceptable variations), fonts and image guidelines. This document is a template for how your brand should be marketed.

Creating a logo is a key step in the process of developing a consistent brand identity. A logo is an easily recognizable visual asset that can (and should) be placed on all marketing materials. It is in many cases an introduction; potential clients will likely come into contact with some type of marketing before contacting your firm.

A logo can't speak accurately for your firm in a vacuum. It must be developed within the context of a brand. The logo design process presents an opportunity for your firm to think through important questions about how you want to be perceived and the experience you want clients to have.

By [Kristen Friend](#) - Kristen is a 1999 graduate of Indiana University, with Bachelors Degrees in both journalism and religious studies. In 2003, she graduated from the International Academy of Design. She is a contributor to the Bigger Law Firm magazine, and is the Art Director for Adviatech (Custom Legal Marketing's parent company). When she isn't making law firms look their best, Kristen can be found hiking up Mt. Tamalpais or inventing gluten free baking recipes.

Share:

•