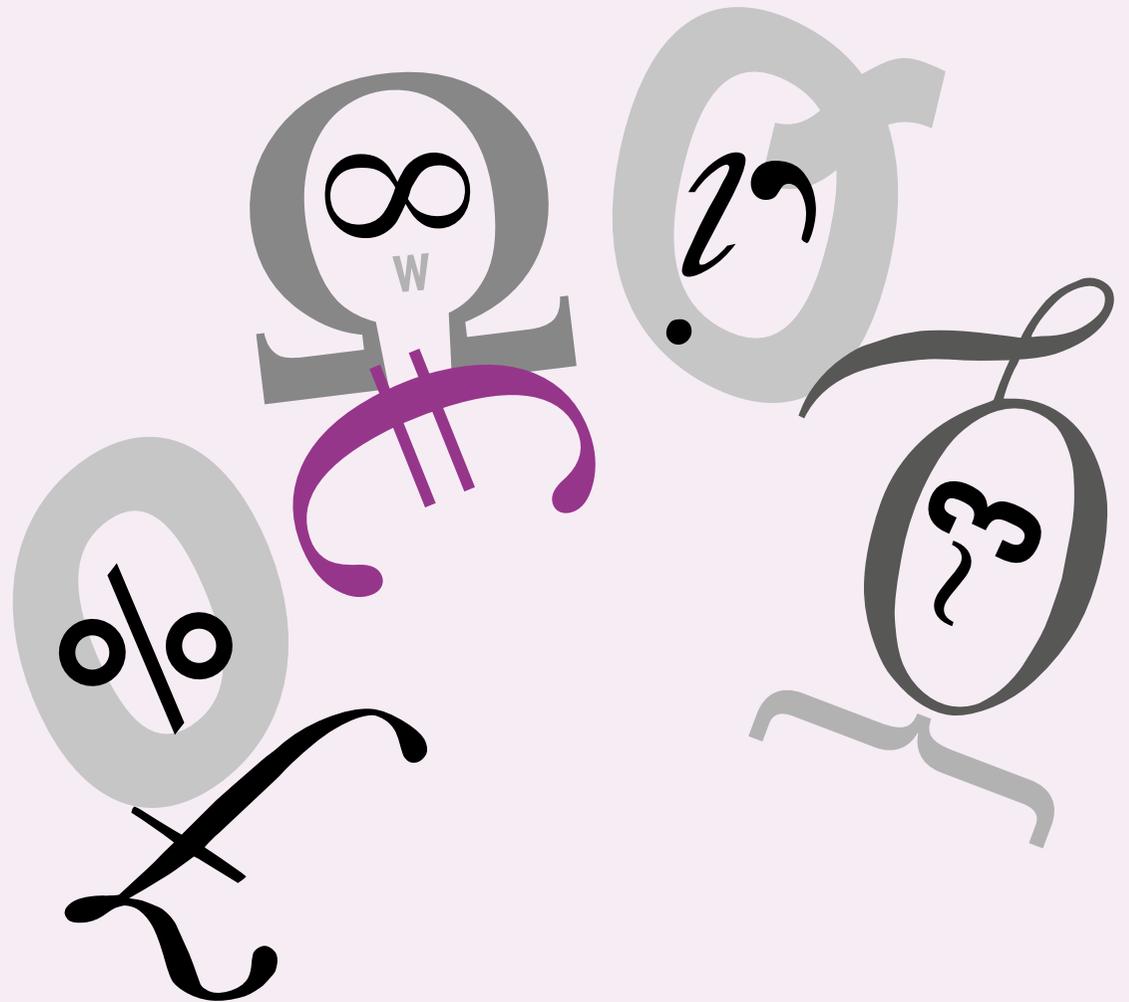

Keep your brand, and your firm, ahead.

The 7 new laws for building a winning legal brand.

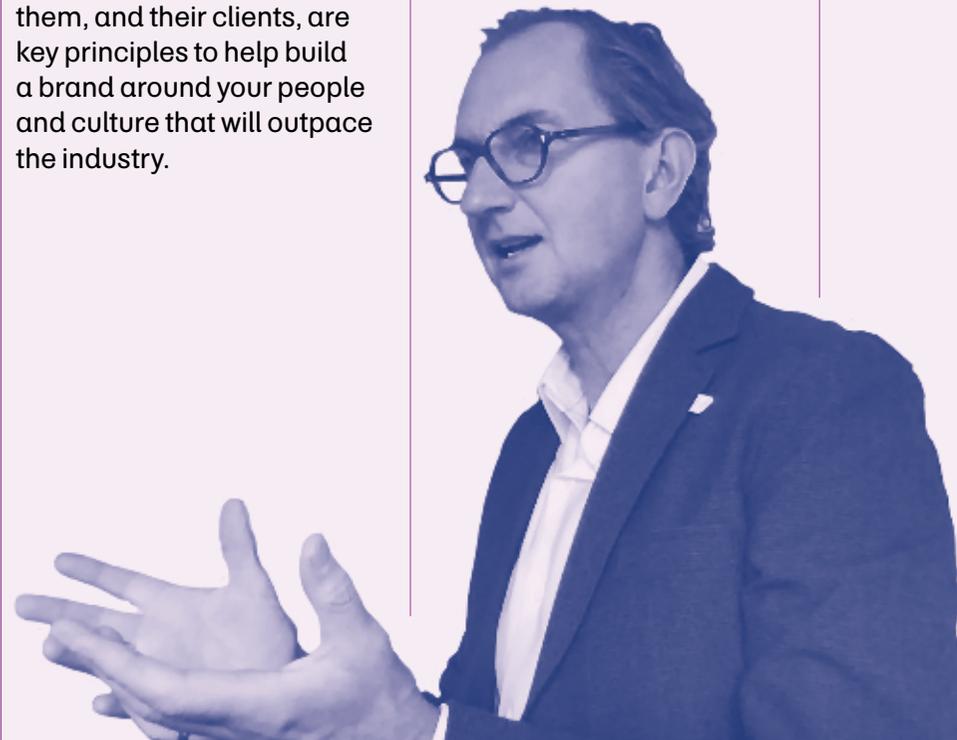


Nicolas Mamier

Co-founder / Appetite Consultants.

In an age of intense competition, a lacklustre brand, a lack of market differentiation and business-as-usual marketing can ring the death knell for law firms.

Over two decades, I have worked with organisations ranging from worldwide magic circle to leading international and regional independent firms, both in the UK and in Europe. What I have learned from talking to them, and their clients, are key principles to help build a brand around your people and culture that will outpace the industry.



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1.

Excellence matters but situational know-how is better.

Every law firm I have encountered has prided themselves on their level of knowledge and expertise. Yet, when speaking with their clients, it is clear that it is their advisor's efficient, applied expertise in specific situations that matters most. Similarly, long and detailed analysis on matters is out. Instead, clients value their legal partner's clear and pragmatic advice. This all adds up to an opportunity to showcase people-centred support, interventions and impacts that make a difference.

“
Do you know which clients' situations to focus on, and can you demonstrate how your people make an impact?
”

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2.

Humanise your services and sector expertise.



A lawyer is a human-being, not just a headshot with a CV of past achievements. You become your clients' trusted partners when you can respond to them as people as well as experts, building valued, lasting and often personal relationships in the process. Clients select their trusted advisors based on who they are, not just what they know.

That is why clients repeatedly say that the main factor in a successful relationship with a law firm lies in its people's ability to relate to them, their challenges and their ambitions. That's because human empathy is always necessary to forge valuable relationships.

“

**Can you humanise
your brand and
ensure that you
come across as
people who care,
not just experts?**

”

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3.

Ratings and rankings don't show the full picture.



You know the law. You are an expert in your field and trusted advisor. Naturally, you also seek and value the recognition and validation of this expertise. But are clients paying much attention to the legal Who's Who?

The reason directories and rankings are popular is because they are seen as an established, third-party assessment and endorsement of individuals' excellence. This has also the unintended consequence of creating a legal industry 'star system'.

However, the success of most law firms is dependent upon the strength and excellence of its collective, e.g. its ability to effectively harness talent for collaboration and entrepreneurship.

To understand how your whole firm can be more successful requires understanding what really matters to clients, directly. Winning firms hold regular, qualitative conversations with their key clients. This is not about

digital questionnaires and 'satisfaction surveys' and is best done via a highly skilled 3rd party interviewer who will hold in-depth conversations and probe for what clients value most, not simply who.



Should you wait anxiously for rankings or directories' verdict or find out directly what's in your clients' minds?



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4.

**You can tell
a lot about
people by
the company
they keep.**

It is a business truism that organisations are often judged by the people and businesses they work with.

Establishing credibility is paramount in the legal sector and is a foundation of trust. Yet, lawyers are also confidential advisors who are naturally reticent to play out their clients' challenges in the public eye. Also, they are fearful of revealing what clients could see as a conflict of interest when advising a key competitor for example.

However, through many conversations with clients, I have found this concern to often be over-estimated unless there is a clear conflict of interest on matters, deals, or the potential for the external sharing of strategic proprietary information.

In fact, they always value and are attracted by a firm that can demonstrate that they have their 'finger on the pulse of what is going on' in their world.



**Are you making
the most of your
clients' success
stories? And how
do you ensure that
others want to join
the club?**



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5.

Whisper
loudly

As trusted advisors, law firms are said to “have their clients’ ears” and “be working behind the scenes”. This implies that discretion and humility are valued qualities.

Yet, your brand also needs to be seen, heard and noticed.

Since you are the experts clients seek, delivering the advice that they need, any successful brand and marketing conversation should start from a position of absolute confidence. This also means that your brand and marketing communications should inspire that confidence.

So, while you can still speak in hushed tones, your brand should shine and resonate brightly.

“

**Are you confident
in your brand
expression or is it
holding back your
true voice?**

”

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6.

A story well told

As humans, we learn best when we hear stories, told in a personal way. However, telling stories often feels abstract to people more used to mounting a legal strategy or drafting a contract. Yet, successful brand and marketing communications is about capturing clients' hearts and minds and this is done best via storytelling. The winning firms are those who can master their own brand of storytelling and build a memorable narrative about the value they deliver. In time, this can become an attractive, even sometime irresistible, mythology.

“

What is your brand of storytelling and do you have a compelling brand narrative that offers compelling value to clients?

”

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7.

Culture trumps services



The law is the law. When clients consider a legal partner, it is near impossible for them to differentiate between firms who offer very similar services and expertise. So, they do what people naturally do and select the ones who feel like ‘the best fit’. This puts a spotlight on how you deliver your services which is directly influenced by your people’s shared culture. Clients perceive it through interactions, conversations and communications that act as a window into the experience. They are often unaware of a firm’s culture until prompted to describe and reflect on it. It then becomes clear that it is a primary factor in selection (acquisition), loyalty (retention) and referral (endorsement) – not just for clients, but also for talent.

Successful firms invest in setting, shaping and cultivating their culture. It is also essential to create a positioning that reflects it as this acts as a signpost to clients and talent.

“
**Can you confidently convey your culture to others in a way that adds value?
Can everyone in your firm?**
”

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Creating a People Brand that goes beyond services to leverage your people and culture commercially is a winning strategy. It makes your firm indispensable and irresistible, as you outpace and outperform your competitors for talent and clients.