

Are You Missing This Crucial Element in Your Marketing?

Read this special report to find out.



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Are you losing potential clients because you're missing this essential element in your marketing message?

Pretend that you are a potential client looking for a lawyer in your area of practice. What would you look for, and why? It has been proven that consumers (including consumers of legal services) will buy solely on *price* if there's no other distinguishing feature in the products or services that they are purchasing.

Do you want clients choosing you solely based upon the fees you charge for your services? Do you want clients and potential clients to view your services as a mere 'commodity,' as opposed to a valuable service? If you do, read no further. But most experienced attorneys know that the clients that hire them solely on price are usually the most difficult clients, the clients for whom they work the hardest for the least compensation, and the clients they could usually do without.

In order to continue to attract clients, particularly the best clients, it is essential that you set yourself apart from other firms.

Take a look at your business card. Compare it with the business card of your biggest competitor. What sets your business card apart from your competitor's? Could a potential client tell the difference between your firm and theirs?

Now look at your website. Does the site tell you what a potential client needs to know? Can you substitute your competitor's name for yours on your website and would everything that your website describes still be true? Does the same hold true for your other marketing materials?

If you can't tell the difference between your competitor's firm and your firm, how can you expect your clients to tell the difference?

Most law firm marketing materials are essentially the same. If you don't believe me, start looking at law firm websites and brochures. The vast majority promise quality, responsive service at a fair price. So what? What client would want to work with a firm that didn't provide that?

Merely parroting that you provide 'quality' service or that your firm is 'responsive' doesn't tell the client anything, even if it's true. Every other firm out there is making the same claims, and telling a client that it's *really* true for you isn't going to get you anywhere. You've got to provide details that the client can relate to, and that truly set you apart. Marketing materials that don't reflect the firm's personality and culture are ineffective and give little guidance to potential clients. Your law firm isn't the same as the one down the street, so why are your marketing materials?

In order to be able to get and keep clients, you've got to offer them something they can't get *anywhere* else. You've got to market your practice based on what's different about your firm. And that means thinking differently about your marketing.

But beware. Don't make the mistake of thinking that your message is all about YOU. The problem with so many law firms' marketing materials is that they focus on themselves, their accomplishments and their skills, rather than focusing on their clients.

In order to capture and keep a potential client's interest, your message must focus on **the clients** – on what their problems are, and what the benefits are to **them** of working with you. Your accomplishments and skills are only important to the client if you can tell them **why** they make a difference to **them**.

Who are your clients? In order to differentiate yourself from your competition and capture your target market, you need to first know who your target market is. Be as specific as you possibly can. Rather than saying you work with 'businesses,' you should focus on what type of businesses – small businesses? Manufacturing? Retail? Service businesses? Businesses with a particular problem?

Think about psychographics as well as demographics when doing this exercise. Consider size of the company, geographic location, gender, age, education, income level. But don't forget things like character, personality, and issues that are important to your target market. For example, your target market may consist of small businesses that are

concerned about the environment. The more specific you are about your target market, the better.

Once you've sufficiently identified your target market, you can begin focusing on what their problems are, and what unique solution you provide. You can tell them how using your firm to represent them provides them with an advantage for **their** business.

In order to attract the clients you want, you've got to focus on what sets your firm apart. Once you've identified your target market and their problems, it's time to focus on how your firm can solve those problems – and how your solution is different. It's a key element in your marketing. Some call it your USP (Unique Selling Proposition).

What sets you apart could be particular skills or expertise that other law firms don't have. It could be that you focus on a very narrow niche or practice area. Perhaps you handle client matters in a special or unique way. Do you offer some additional or different service than your competition does?

Your USP can be anything from the way you provide your service (you have a live person answering the telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week), the speed with which you respond (all phone calls are returned within 2 hours), the unique solution you provide to your clients (you only handle mediated cases, and if the case can't be mediated it goes to another lawyer for trial, or you offer only trial services with the best and most experienced trial lawyers). It could be a distinctive way of billing your clients. It can include just about anything.

The main ways to establish a USP (adapted from Dan Kennedy's five ways to differentiate) are:

1. **Practice area.** Do you practice in a very specialized area of the law that no one (or almost no one) else is well-versed in? This can only be your USP if your practice area is extremely narrow or if you service a very specific target market.
2. **Personality.** Is there something exceptional about the culture of your firm, or about you, if you're a solo practitioner? Some high-

profile trial attorneys may come to mind here – there’s only one Gerry Spence, for example.

3. **Process.** Does your firm ‘bundle’ its services differently than other firms in your area of expertise? Is your solution or the way you deliver it different than that offered by any other firm?
4. **Service.** Does your firm provide an exceptional or extraordinary service that no other firm does? Again, just saying that the client can expect phone calls returned and questions answered isn’t enough. Perhaps you’re the lawyer who makes house calls.
5. **Marketing.** Your marketing can be all, or part of, your USP. Part of a marketing USP would be the branding, logo, or ‘look’ of your firm’s communications. It can be the way you market your services, including the places you meet your clients, the publications in which you advertise or write articles, the seminars you give, a unique aspect of your newsletter, website or blog. Generally, your marketing strategy should be only an element of your USP, rather than the only thing that differentiates you from the competition.

What does your firm offer that no other law firm can duplicate?

The more specific you are, the better off you’ll be, and the more perceived value your services will have.

Consider why your firm deserves business from these clients.

What is it that entitles you to be retained by the clients that you are targeting? Perhaps your firm has accomplished something noteworthy in your practice area. Maybe you’ve gotten some great results for your clients.

What new value do you bring to the market? What makes your practice stand out from the others? Show the client how hiring your firm is a benefit to the client. What will the client gain by choosing you over your competition.

Think about what you want to do in your practice that’s different.

If you can’t see any current differences between your practice and your competition’s practice, invent something that can be your unique selling

proposition. Decide on a way that you're going to provide your clients with a different service. But remember that you must be committed to delivering it.

Why would clients work with you over your competition? You've got to be able to answer this question, or potential clients will have no reason to choose you over your competition. One of the ways to do this is to give your clients some assurances about the level of service they will receive from your firm.

Again, you must be specific with this message.

What do you aspire to provide for your clients? Describe the quality or kind of experience you'd like your clients to have with your firm. Then figure out how you can deliver it, and craft your marketing message around it. Asking yourself this question may help you look at your firm from the perspective of your clients.

Still not sure what's unique about you? Ask your clients! If you're having trouble identifying your USP, or can't seem to get out of the rut of thinking about your practice only from your point of view, consider asking your clients or those individuals whom you identify as being part of your target audience.

If you're already doing client satisfaction surveys, you can easily add in some questions that will help you identify your USP. Ask your clients what they like best about working with you and with your firm. Ask them why they chose you over other law firms that practice in your area. Speak with individuals that fall within your target market but who aren't clients (yet) about what they would like to see from a lawyer that practices in this area of the law. You might be surprised by the answers.

Very often, we lose sight of what we do best, or where we make the most impact on our clients, because it's second nature to us – we're 'blind' to those things that we do best because they come so easily to us. We may not even recognize that they are our best strengths, and the qualities that make the most difference to our clients.

Make sure you can commit. When you think you've got your USP 'down,' give careful consideration to whether it's realistic. Your USP needs to set you apart from other firms that practice in the same area of law, but it also needs to be something you can commit to, and live up to. Identifying your USP to clients and potential clients, you're guaranteeing that this is something they can count on from your firm.

Consider your packaging. Content may be king, but packaging is important, too. Find ways to separate yourself from the pack by creating a specific and consistent 'look' to your marketing materials, from your letterhead to business cards to websites and other materials. It doesn't have to be fancy, but it can be a powerful way of setting you apart.

Test your new 'differentiated' message. Ask yourself these questions:

What promises do your marketing materials make?

What do they say about your firm?

Does your website sound just like your competitor's site?

Does your business card look like everyone else's?

Does your brochure make you stand out from the competition?

Does your message identify and speak to your target audience?

What unique benefits does your firm offer to its clients?

Does your marketing message convey something truly distinctive about your firm's practice area(s), personality, process, service or marketing?

In order to be effective, your unique selling proposition must accomplish the following:

- ✓ Identify the client explicitly
- ✓ Focus on the benefit to the client

- ✓ Convey an aspect of your practice which is distinct from the competition
- ✓ Provide assurance of something the client can count on, or a particular level of performance

If your new message meets the above criteria, you're on your way to attracting the clients you want.

To learn more about how you can get your firm off of the treadmill and start making progress toward your ideal practice, contact me at Allison@LegalEaseConsulting.com or visit me at www.LawyerMeltdown.com, where you'll get more great articles and information about your practice, and visit my blog straight from the website. **And if you haven't already, don't forget to subscribe to the Lawyer Meltdown Newsletter, which provides timely information and resources about your practice directly to your email in-box!**

Keep reading to find out more about me and about Legal Ease Consulting, Inc. and the services I provide.

Is Your Law Practice Sucking You Dry?



I help lawyers and law firm managers that are struggling with the daily demands of practicing law, running an efficient practice, AND attracting the kinds of clients they want. My goal is to help lawyers avoid burnout and dissatisfaction with the practice of law before it's too late.

- **Do you feel overwhelmed by the demands of managing an office and marketing your firm while serving your clients and handling the day to day practice of law?**
- Do you have inadequate systems that you haven't had time to address?
- **Are you having trouble attracting the types of clients and matters you want?**
- Are tasks performed inconsistently within your practice?
- **Do you find yourself without a backup plan for your office, your information, and yourself in case of emergency?**
- Would you like to have written procedures to help new employees learn, quickly and easily, the way your firm accomplishes its day to day tasks?
- **Are you too busy handling client matters to deal with difficult management issues?**
- Do you put off making decisions about organization or systems used in your practice?

If you answered, "YES" to any of these questions, these issues are slowly draining you and your law firm of valuable resources: time, energy, and money, inspiration, motivation, and employee and client loyalty.

Most lawyers address these problems by working longer hours, dealing only with 'emergencies,' and cutting out personal and marketing time so they can adequately serve their existing clients.

The problem with this approach is that it leads to more stress, burnout and depression and ultimately, doesn't help your clients either.

There is a way out. Visit www.LawyerMeltdown.com for information, resources, products and services that help lawyers work more effectively and bring energy and satisfaction back to their practices.

To learn more about me and the origins of Legal Ease Consulting, keep reading!

About Allison Shields and Legal Ease Consulting, Inc.



The way most lawyers practice law is killing them.

The current state of the legal profession – the billable hour model, pressure to work ever longer and harder and increased competition - all work against not only the best interests of lawyers themselves, but also against the best interests of their clients.

I started Legal Ease Consulting, Inc. to prevent the defection of good lawyers from the profession and to help lawyers rediscover their reasons for going into law in the first place. Just because law is a serious profession doesn't mean lawyers can't enjoy

themselves in the process.

I've been a victim of lawyer meltdown myself. As a practicing lawyer and law firm manager, I've experienced that feeling of complete overwhelm, of not knowing where to start or how to 'dig out.'

I like lawyers, and I hate to see so many good lawyers either leaving the profession or suffering every day and being miserable as lawyers.

I was a practicing lawyer for 15 years. I have experience working in both small and mid-sized law firms. I know the unique challenges faced by lawyers in managing and marketing their practices, and the restrictions they face, which aren't present in other businesses.

As the Administrative Partner of a mid-sized law firm, I dealt with personnel issues, billing, fees, morale, performance evaluations, cash flow, accounts receivable, and profitability issues, among others. I'm sensitive to the demands of running a practice while practicing law. I've spearheaded marketing efforts and contended with the issues involved in marketing a practice and struggled with differentiating a firm in what appeared to be a sea of similar practices in my area.

As an entrepreneur, I'm aware of the burdens involved in dealing with the 'three headed monster' of the competing demands of administrative, marketing, and client tasks that require attention. I know all too well the difficulties involved and the feeling of overwhelm when you feel as if you're the only one that can accomplish particular tasks.

Eventually I realized that what I really wanted to do was to help lawyers prevent or overcome what I call "lawyer meltdown." Now my clients get the benefit of all of that reading, of my experience walking a mile in their shoes and the shoes of clients just like them, both as a lawyer and as a law firm manager.

Come join me on this journey to improve the profession and the practice of law. I invite you to visit me at www.LawyerMeltdown.com to see what other free resources are available for attorneys with busy practices.