

Grow Your Practice and Career with a Consistent, Dynamic, Equality-Based Brand

By Katy Goshtasbi

A business brand raises awareness about your legal practice. It's felt and not seen.

A good business brand does not stand alone. No law firm exists without its lawyers, employees, and clients. No law firm brand exists without the personal brands of each employee and lawyer. An effective law firm business brand builds its foundation on the shoulders of effective personal brands for each lawyer representing the firm. If everyone at your firm looks the same — in terms of gender, race, age, sexual orientation, and so on — you're likely missing out on connections with potential clients. Lawyer branding and marketing your legal firm are instrumental to your success.

Each time you think of a law firm's brand, immediately connect the thought to a memory of an interaction with a person associated with that law firm. This memory should elicit an emotion. Emotions create that connection with the client. Brands raise awareness by directly appealing to emotions and attracting potential clients and opportunities to your firm.

I define personal brand as a process of:

1. Unearthing your unique and relevant attributes
2. Communicating these attributes consistently to your audience

3. Managing how your audience perceives this brand

Thus, for the business brand to function well and get results for the law firm, each lawyer should have a well-defined personal brand and an intentional branding plan in place. This plan is tailored to who they are as a person, not as a lawyer.

The challenge here for all of us smart, analytical, left-brained lawyers is that this definition of branding feels very “mushy,” like something we can't put a finger on this — and who can blame us? The journey to building a personal brand starts with three fundamentals: consistency, reinvention to create a dynamic brand, and value/equality.

Consistency

Consistency is everything in capturing and growing your audience and practice. Let's look at the top three reasons.

An ability to draw a diverse client base is great...if it's deliberate. A diverse client base doesn't always signal brand inconsistency. Often, though, diverse client bases form because you don't have a consistent brand. The general result is less impact on your client base and less impact with your legal talent.

Note that being consistent does *not* mean being predictable, boring, or going against who you are as a person. Consistency also does not mean catering to others and losing your ability to express oneself.

Why have a consistent brand?

1. **So clients can relate and find you easily.** If you're consistent, I know what to expect. I can trust you. If I trust you, I feel safe and show up more and more. I find my fellow clients as part of the process, and I connect with them. The experience is beautiful for your clients, which leads to natural referrals.
2. **So you grow as a professional and human even more.** Knowing who you are allows you to produce substantive work consistent with your ethos and purpose.
3. **So you can market joy.** Successfully marketing your brand is about emotions. Brands that win raise my vibe closer towards a state of joy. In my opinion, branding with joy is the best way to market and sell anything.

You can have a more consistent brand by figuring out who you are as a human and as a professional. The two should always

Law Practice Solutions is a regular feature brought to you by the Practice Management Resource Center (PMRC) of the State Bar of Michigan, featuring articles on practice, technology, and risk management for lawyers and their staff. For more resources offered by the PMRC, visit our website at <http://www.michbar.org/pmrc/content> or call our Helpline at (800) 341-9715 to speak with a practice management advisor.

You can have a more consistent brand by figuring out who you are as a human and as a professional.... You take your human side with you to work each day, and your clients love that side of you.

The first challenge of owning our value and feeling equal is the willingness to accept the changes that come with being valuable and equal.

be in sync, and neither is more important than the other. You take your human side with you to work each day, and your clients love that side of you.

Figuring out who you are is often a painful process. It can hurt. It can sting. But based on my own experience of unearthing the real me, it has huge rewards.

Reinvention

Reinvention shouldn't be hard or painful. In my opinion, reinvention can be fun only if you frame it that way for yourself. Otherwise, reinvention sucks the life out of me and doesn't work.

While I love change, I also love my "same old, same old" ways. I find there are times when we are more motivated to change. Here are three tips for reframing reinvention for yourself so you can get exactly what you want out of it.

1. **Don't rip the Band-Aid off all at once.** Reinvention need not happen fast. Go slow and take it in bite-sized bits. Otherwise, reinvention will be scary and won't feel good for you. Start off by looking at *one* goal you want out of reinvention. It could be about your career, finances, health and fitness, or other facet of your life.
2. **Go with your gut.** You can't overthink reinvention. Otherwise, it turns into a painful intellectual exercise you won't finish. Stop and listen to your gut: *Why* do you want to reinvent some part of yourself? Then go back and reassess the answer you gave for question no. 1.

3. **Have fun.** If it isn't fun, it isn't worth it. This is true for anything in life, but especially reinvention. We must reframe reinvention as something fun and exciting that will make our lives easier and more worthwhile. Take your answers to the first and second questions and envision the results in your mind's eye. What are you doing because of this reinvention? How much fun are you having? Who is hanging out with you? How is your practice growing?

It's important to *never* focus on the "how" to get to the answers above. The "how" will just stop you in your tracks and make you turn around and run away from your reinvention.

Equality

Ready for a true story?

It was 2002. I was practicing at a law firm in Washington, D.C. One day, I didn't get assigned work I thought I should have gotten. Instead, it went to one of my male counterparts. I ended up in my office, crying out of frustration and anger. I was embarrassed and confused.

"Who cries in their office?" I thought. "Me!"

When I was a practicing securities lawyer, I often thought about the imbalance between me and my male counterparts. Actually, I thought about this discrepancy *too much*. I used to wonder, was it me or was it them? Looking back — and knowing now that one of my core brand values is fairness — my fascination (some might say obsession) makes perfect sense.

The first challenge of owning our value and feeling equal is the willingness to ac-

cept the changes that come with being valuable and equal. Some weird thoughts enter my mind: "If I really own my value and see myself as equal to the superstars in my field, then I could be so much more in the public eye. What would happen to my daily life?"

Silly? Perhaps. A thought that limits me finding and owning my value and, thus, equality? Absolutely.

What does this mean for you? Stop and consider two questions. First, what are your random thoughts about your value? Second, do you show up daily with a brand that tells the world you are equally valuable as your colleagues, competitors, etc.? If not, why?

These questions may make you squirm and be uncomfortable to answer, they will eventually help you find the results you seek. I know — I've seen the positive results by asking myself these two questions every day.

The next steps

Once you have answered the questions above, you're off to a decent start. Congratulations! You are committed and ready for the next step. It requires support and accountability but is much easier and more fun than answering those questions; you get to dive in and develop the road map to achieving your personal brand.

The world is starting to reopen. This is the moment to hit the reset button and be perceived exactly as you want to be. ■

Katy Goshtasbi is offering a free, four-part video master class that teaches the fundamentals for developing a successful and influential online and in-person brand. Each video email includes an essential branding tool to help you get ahead and gain clarity with your online brand and career. The first video in the series comes out September 29. Sign up at <https://puriconsulting.com/ownit/>.

Goshtasbi is a securities lawyer, branding expert, coach, consultant, public speaker, and founder of Puris Consulting. She works with law firms, lawyers, and organizations on maximizing size and profits by mastering change and developing brands to effectively deliver their messages. Goshtasbi can be contacted at katy@puriconsulting.com.