



# HOW TO DISCOVER YOUR LAW FIRM'S BRAND

Among the top professional concerns facing lawyers today is a saturated market.

According to [opinion surveys](#), lawyers believe there are too many law firms competing for the same piece of pie.

Among the top concerns facing advertisers and marketers today is a saturated attention economy.

Our connected society is so glutted with messaging and advertising that most consumers are overwhelmed and their default setting is “ignore everything.” People don’t even see the pie that marketer’s are trying to sell.

In order to beat the competition and generate revenue, lawyers must create a reason to stand out in the minds of potential clients looking for representation.

So the clarion calls of **“discovering your law firm’s brand”** from marketing professionals within the legal community make sense, but the concept of branding itself has become senseless.

Branding is often co-opted in aspirational business literature to mean everything, and in a way, stating that branding is everything about your business is both correct and incorrect.

Therefore, most advice on branding is either very “eagle-eye,” or too chicken to provide the nuts and bolts guidance on what a brand discovery strategy entails. Well, we are cage free here at Consultwebs, so here comes advice on how to discover your law firm’s brand.

First, we’ll define and dispel some myths about branding, and then learn how 3 S’s (Storylines, Sensemaking and Strategy) combine to provide you with a cohesive and marketable means to define your brand, and then use it to expand your book of business.



# WHAT IS A “BRAND” ANYWAY?

According to Business Dictionary, the definition of brand is as follows:

***“Unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors. Over time, this image becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality, and satisfaction in the consumer’s mind. Thus brands help harried consumers in crowded and complex marketplace, by standing for certain benefits and value.”***

That’s all well and good, but here’s a deeper question:  
Why have a brand in the first place?

When strategically designed, implemented, and widely recognized, the goal of your brand is to create mental shortcuts, so your law firm can exist within the minds of your target audience at the moment they are seeking to make a decision on lawyers.

In the crowded legal services marketplace, it’s not the lawyer with the best quality of work who gets the most calls. It’s the lawyer who has earned a place inside the heads of the populace and is the [Top of Mind](#) choice when potential clients pick up the phone.

If you think “just doing good work” is the key to standing out, research from the [National Association of Law Placement](#) shows that just after five years in private practice, over 60% of lawyers leave the legal profession. In addition, the quality of lawyering is almost never the issue [when law firms fail](#), so let the “high quality, experienced, legal advocacy is enough to distinguish my practice from others” myth, be [thoroughly dispelled](#).

While we’re at it, let’s dispel some myths about branding.



### MYTH 1 You define your brand!

You ultimately make all the decisions and decide what the brand will be, but lawyers don't define their law firm's brand, their client experience does.

Your brand is not about what you do, what you think, or what is in your mind.

It's not your dog, the colors of your college team, or a fancypants tagline.

Your brand is what your clients think about your law firm, what's in their heads, how they experience your service, and then how you encapsulate this experience into your brand.

### MYTH 2 Your brand assets are just colors, a logo and slogans - nothing more.

Once you accept that your law firm's brand is based on client experience, the brand becomes a strategic asset in evaluating directions for your business development.

If your brand is aggressive and sales driven, then the advertising landscape and options may look different from a law firm brand that's aiming for stable but assured growth.

Branding can be a strategic asset, but it's also about packaging perception.

Your brand is based on the experience your clients have, but conversely, a strong brand can also influence the way the client experiences your law firm. Your brand, just by being there, creates a reliable and repeatable experience for clients that, in turn, feeds into their experience of it.

Think of it this way: Branding is experience and experience is branding.

### MYTH 3 People recognize/think about your brand.

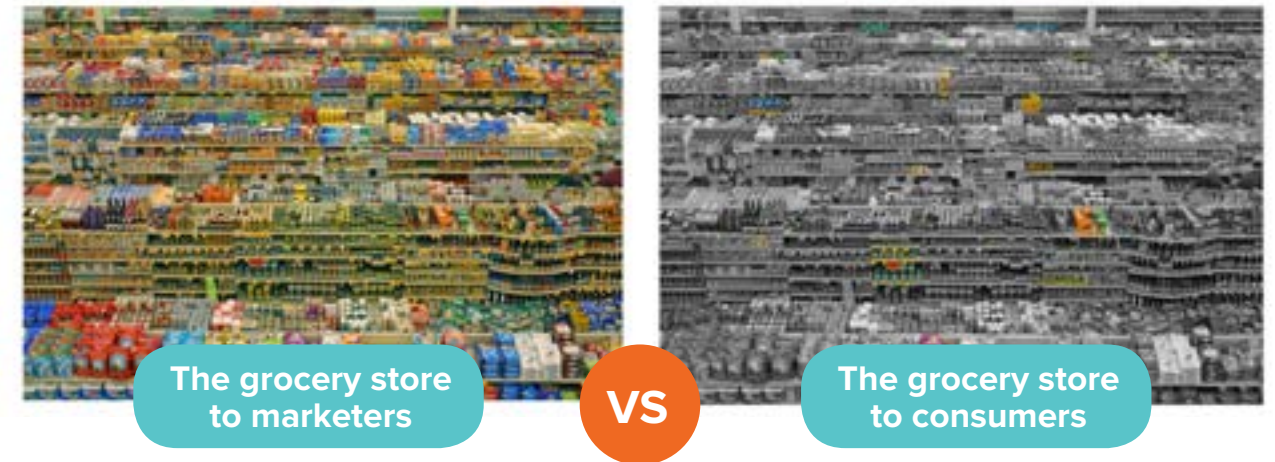
One of the best ways to create truly unique and distinct messaging is to wholly accept the fact that no one thinks about your brand.

Indeed, according to [years of behavioral research](#), consumers spend most of their lives actively ignoring marketing.

Human attention works on two different levels: consciously and subconsciously.

According to Marketing Sciences Professor Byron Sharp, author of the book [How Brands Grow](#), consumers living in our info-saturated worlds have their attentional shields up against the barrage of information, and they go through their lives passively subsuming most branded messaging to the subconscious.

Think about the way you walk down a grocery store aisle. You aren't taking in every label, every color, every brand's rational promise – you are looking for a small group of brands you recognize, maybe something on sale, and then you subliminally ignore the rest.



So in order to bypass the subconscious shield around the marketplace's fractured attention, memorable assets like colors, slogans and experiences are combined in messaging and widely distributed through communication channels to create a shortcut to consciousness that would be inaccessible without a distinct brand.

Get with it: [Nobody cares about your logo.](#)

Not because it isn't cool, or neat, or new, or perfect for you – it's because most marketers underinvest in advertising, and clients spend their lives ignoring everything but the most salient brands.

The brands that buyers do pay attention to are either the ones they frequently purchase and have experience with, or ones they recognize via prominent exposure through advertising or other promotional means.



Your colors, your logos, your taglines – the things you obsess over in marketing – they don't speak for themselves. You have to market, your marketing. You have to advertise, your advertisements. If you want to grow your brand and be seen, you have to be willing to put yourself out there.

Now let's find out how to discover your law firm's brand, and then we'll give some ideas on what you can do with it.

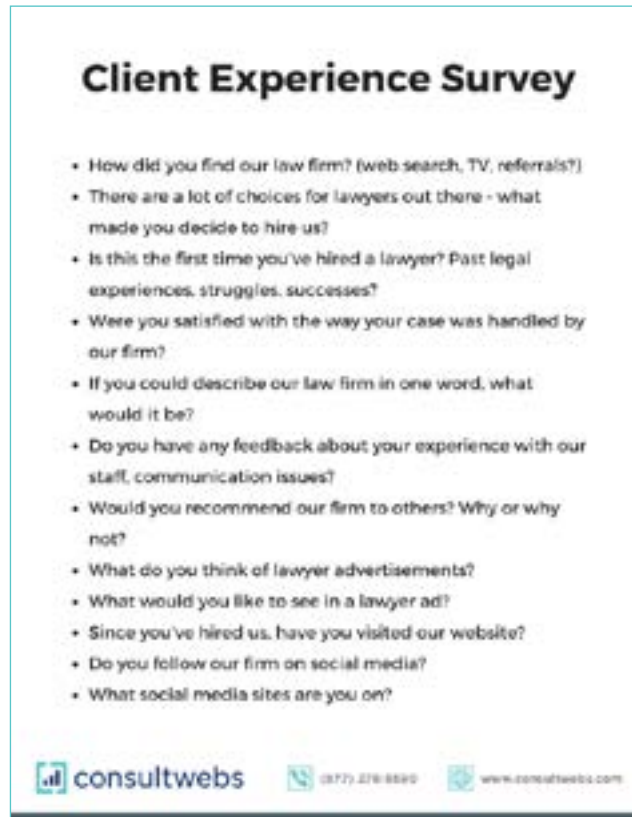
## STORYLINES

First point of business in discovering your law firm's brand is gathering the Storylines of your law firm experience. How do you do this?

Ask questions. Who do you ask?




[Clients](#), partners, staff, vendors – collect as many implicit and explicit responses as possible through [surveys](#). What are you asking?

Download this **FREE Client Experience Survey Template**



**Client Experience Survey**

- How did you find our law firm? (web search, TV, referrals?)
- There are a lot of choices for lawyers out there - what made you decide to hire us?
- Is this the first time you've hired a lawyer? Past legal experiences, struggles, successes?
- Were you satisfied with the way your case was handled by our firm?
- If you could describe our law firm in one word, what would it be?
- Do you have any feedback about your experience with our staff, communication issues?
- Would you recommend our firm to others? Why or why not?
- What do you think of lawyer advertisements?
- What would you like to see in a lawyer ad?
- Since you've hired us, have you visited our website?
- Do you follow our firm on social media?
- What social media sites are you on?

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Besides the questions in the survey above, your aim is to discover where the Storylines connect, intersect, shorten or lengthen or strain the relationship between your clients and your firm.

Small interviews can lead to big insights. The important step is to just ask questions and begin collecting the Storylines. Once you have a solid database of feedback, the next trick is to synthesize the information, which we discuss with the next "S," Sensemaking.

And a quick note on competitors – do they ask their clients for feedback? According to our informal poll; no.



No, they do not.

## SENSEMAKING

All of the research is great, Storylines, interviews and surveys – but the most important task to handle is Sensemaking. Finding a directly responsible person who can make sense of all the various bits of brand research and create a compelling brief, all to discover: What is this brand, and what makes it distinct, unique?

One way to make sense of large sets of text, like client feedback or survey results, is to throw all the responses into a [word cloud generator](#). You can set the parameters on the cloud generator so that it makes repeated words larger in the cloud, giving you a way to visualize the terms or words that are used most frequently in your surveys.



Below is a word cloud example from a Sensemaking exercise here at Consultwebs with our Content Development Team. We asked our clients a few questions about the experience, took all the text and threw it into a word cloud and got this;



At a glance, you can see the repetitive phrases that may help you begin to hammer out a unique point of value that you can incorporate into your brand. Here we interpreted the word cloud to suggest that the “production” of “informative” “content” was what made our content production services unique.

While a word cloud seems a simplistic way to gather data to guide your law firm’s brand, there are thousands of ways to tabulate and cross-examine information on branding. In the end, though, what you need to define your brand is a mixture that’s heavy on the empirical data you collect on the experience in your firm, and light on your own intuition. The brand has to come from the data of client experience or it won’t ring true.

Your competitors can beat you on price, they can spend more money in advertising, maybe they have more access to capital. But one thing your competitors cannot replicate in any way is the experience in your firm. Make experience essential to the brand commitment.

## In regards to colors and such

Is orange more converting than chartreuse? Is the Norse God you picked too esoteric? Can you put your dog on the homepage of your website?

Look, in the end, the colors, the taglines, the angles, the design, the creative – if you invest in creating a brand, you have to make these decisions yourself, ideally with expert advice from a trusted marketing professional.

These are concerns and questions that are all valid when discovering your law firm’s brand, but it is essential to remember that these brand decisions are meant to draw and attract your clients, not lawyers, your neighbors, the other shareholders, or your mentors.

Gather feedback from your target audience (aka your clients), solidify the data around the experiences in your firm, make sense of it and consolidate a few distinct and unique points, and then define the brand outwards to compete in a world where everyone ignores everything.

## STRATEGY

With a clearly defined brand, answering the perennial questions of growing your book of business and choosing tactics and practices will be much easier.

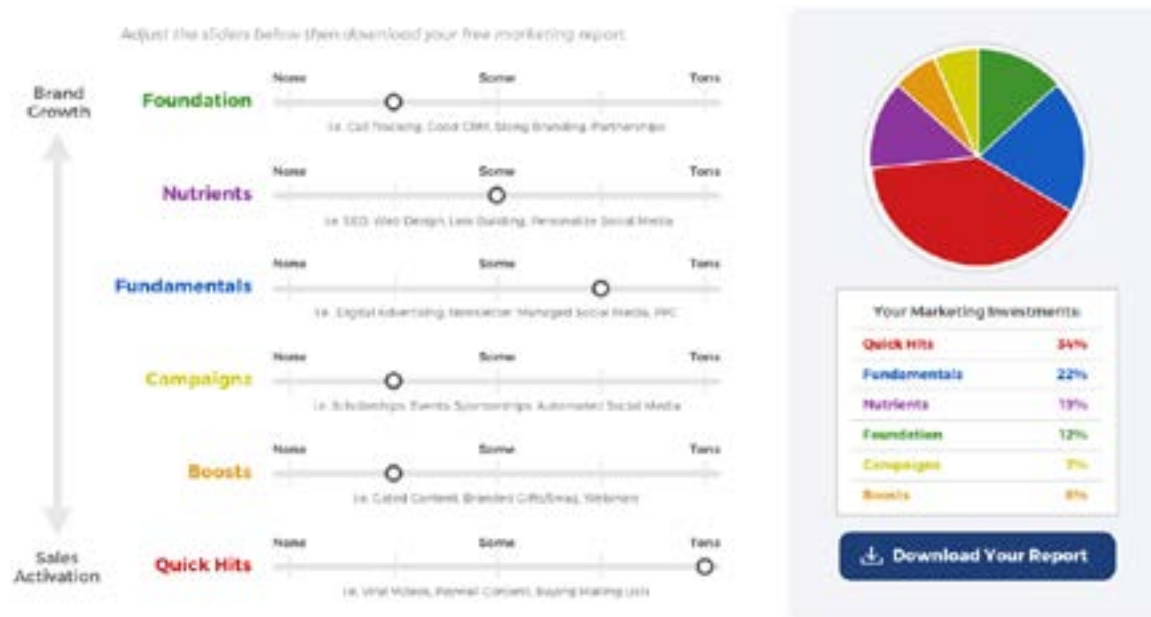
How does your brand play the long game? How does your law firm get the brand in front of as many people as possible, as fast as possible? What does a strategy that balances growth and sales even look like for a law firm?



Luckily, we've provided lawyers a way to visualize their legal marketing strategy with the [Legal Marketing Nutrition Guide](#).



### What Percentage of Your Marketing Investments are Dedicated to:



Branding isn't just good because it helps focus your law firm development potential.

A strong brand can also instill confidence in the investments you put toward this goal.

Without a brand to guide strategic initiatives, your support of revenue-generating practices like sales coaching, associate development, client experience and advertising won't be cohesive or properly distributed.

With a brand identity in place for your law firm, you can get on with the business of properly securing your place in the legal marketplace.

Rather than wondering what the reaction will be from your latest campaign, your brand's goal will be to aim for reactions.

Rather than walking into a party wondering if everyone is looking at you, your brand should walk into the room and give everyone a reason to look.

## IN CONCLUSION

If you can take these three S's, apply them at your firm to discover your client experience and then define what makes up your brand, you have traveled further down the path of true distinction than a vast majority of your competition.

Without branded assets that are engineered and advertised to maintain a distinct place in the minds of your intended audience, your law firm isn't just ignoring a good opportunity, but your potential clients haven't been given a reason not to ignore you.



Lawyers, like most small business owners, face small business problems, and branding is viewed as such a complex issue to resolve that defining the brand for the firm becomes an ancillary concern to keeping the lights on. However, the lights will shut out forever in the business that neglects to define its brand.

We hope this has been helpful, and if you ever would like to discuss branding or creating a legal marketing plan for your firm, create your own [Legal Marketing Nutrition Report](#), or [get in touch with us](#).

