

To be or no to be a brand, that is the question

Business lawyers have been dealing for some years now with ever tougher economic and financial conditions. But only a few of them got that their heyday as experts was over and that economic hardships endured by any common business would affect them. Against this backdrop, marketing and communication tools have become critical for their development and even their survival. Business development has become mandatory, a challenge that partners need to take up in a time when profit drives are getting stronger in an increasingly tougher competitive market. Only a few French law firms got up to date, unlike multinational corporations and especially Anglo ones which got the upper hand at home and abroad, thanks to their investment in communication and marketing tools, way bigger than local firms'.

As International Business Law Corporations, those firms have the privilege of owning a brand bestowing them credit.

For clients, this means expertise, reliability and popularity.

Seen as a security, a brand slims down consequently any sense of recklessness clients may have. It also reassures decision-makers and other contacts, especially bankers and therefore becomes a pivotal criteria. For those firms, it means more market visibility to attract clients, prospects and future partners or associates. It also accounts for important fees and helps attracting new clients.

Does that mean that without a brand, there is no salvation?

If a brand happens to be critical in earning customer loyalty and getting new clients, a brandless firm is not doomed to fail: many schemes may help it to grow and enhance its visibility and its partners'. But for that, they will have to realize that their business development will depend on their organization and mindset.

Acts of Communication ...

First a communication strategy needs to be thought out. And from there implementation means will ensue. Actually, a firm's main challenge is to develop a personal relationship on the long run with its clients, watch their business' growth and manage to keep those clients.

The challenge? To create a communication based on a private relationship. The goal? To nurture, deepen and sustain a relationship in order to improve the quality service that competitors and newcomers may offer.

Breaking with mass marketing patterns, a communication based on a private relationship stems from a personal and regular interplay between lawyers and clients in order to bond and create this private relationship. In this regard, customized tools are critical, be it a qualified client database or at best a CRM designed to ping clients personally and to target prospects better. Those tools will need to be regularly updated. And associates will have to spare some time to explore them.

The relationship-based communication has to occur on several media platforms and in messages sent to clients or prospects. Customization is the way. Each client or prospect only receives a tailored information. These critical communication practices allow to partly address development strategies but they will be useless if they're not handled by the firm's lawyers themselves.

Lawyers are reputed for their oral skills and yet few know how to communicate.

Actually, how many lawyers communicate with their clients on a regular basis without being solicited by them?

How many lawyers keep it to supplying law services without bonding?

How many partners remain ignored by prospects out of a lack of knowledge of basic marketing techniques?

... Backed up by personal actions

In a market with ever more volatile clients, business lawyers need good communication skills. Soft skills such as charisma, empathy and listening allow bonding with clients or prospect.

Basic tenets help lawyers to guide partners in their commercial actions:

Taking care of one's human relationships, nurturing one's personal network, knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, trusting oneself.

And in order to improve in those areas, they may consider being accompanied by professional coaches.

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About Sachinka

Sachinka is a company specialized in Strategy, Human Resources and Communication dedicated to regulated professions, especially lawyers.

Anne Bassi has worked as a tax lawyer for nine years before creating Sachinka. She taught Tax Law at Pantheon-Assas University and Dauphine business school.

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