

# SurreyLawyer

## What's in a name?

**What does your firm's name mean to your marketplace? What happens if you change the name, or change your logo? Do you think the name is sacrosanct or do you think people want the lawyer, not the corporate entity?**

There are two aspects to name recognition: Do people know your name? And if they do, what does it mean to them?

If you are serious about finding out, you need to ask the right people a few questions. This area of market research is perception research and it can incorporate an element of competitor analysis. It can be done in depth by face to face interviews (fewer, more expensive interviews) or by telephone. It is best to concentrate on one, key audience to get significant results, so that you can use the results to target marketing activity. Respondents will be random, from a target list, and their status as non-clients, former and current clients will be noted. Interviewing should be done by trained people, not lawyers.

The information you want is:

- How many people can name your firm unprompted? Which other firms can they name?
- If no to the above, have they heard of your firm when prompted? Who else have they heard of?
- How have they heard of you? (ie, current or past client, seeing your

office(s), from a promotion such as giving a talk, directory, general knowledge of legal market, discussing law firms with colleagues and competitors).

- If they have heard of you (and others) can they describe you (and others). Descriptors cover services, location, pricing levels, approachability, efficiency, speed of response, experience of marketing activity. This could be done as a tick box matrix with your firm benchmarked against specific competitors.

All answers would be anonymous.

Provided the research has interviewed sufficient people, you can now say how well known your firm is compared to your main competitors, in a key market. If the response isn't that good then you must embark on a campaign of name awareness, who we are, where we are, what we do.

You can then look into what you are known for, by those people who did know you.

This can be split into factual (where your offices are, what services you offer etc) and qualitative (expensive, efficient, stuffy, friendly). The latter is valid as hearsay as well as direct experience, as this all contributes to your name recognition.

So what do you do with the results? Firstly, compare them with your own values. Look at what you say about yourselves on your website and in your brochures. Partner-led service, understanding your business, clarity on fees? Does this chime with the feedback? If it doesn't then you must look at the fundamental ways you deal with clients.

Systems and training should be put in place. Work on the main positive factors and values.

Then look at how your competitors rated. Who got the highest ratings? Can you find out more (I don't mean industrial espionage!) about what they are doing? Should you be doing things in a similar way, or go one better?

Then look at the positives and exploit them. If you are well known and known for the right things then you can genuinely communicate them, in your marketing materials and in your face to face dealings. You can highlight the positive aspects of the research on your website (keep competitor info general rather than naming other firms). Or quote strong points in mailings and pitches.

I posed two other questions at the beginning. What happens if you change your name (such as in a merger) or change your logo? Communicate it well and boldly (this is one time advertising can work for lawyers) and retain the positive values of the former name(s), ironing out the negative.

And what about the individual's following versus the corporate body? A lawyer's reputation is a great asset but one lawyer doing his or her own thing doesn't maximise growth or profits overall. Individuals can leave, get sick, retire, or not handle instructions in the most efficient way. But they can also contribute to a vibrant, highly successful business whose name communicates the values and reputation that will attract clients. ■

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