

BUILD STRONG MARKETING ARGUMENTS WITH DISTINCT COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES; "ONLY" KEY TO ESTABLISHING UNIQUENESS

by Trey Ryder

One critical function of marketing is to emphasize how you differ from other lawyers. And if you want a substantial marketing advantage, identify your unique characteristics.

Really, this isn't hard. After all, no two attorneys are exactly the same. No other attorney in the world has exactly the same education as you. No other lawyer has served the same clients - or handled the same cases -- as you. No other lawyer has taken the same continuing education classes as you. As a result, no other lawyer will make decisions exactly the way you do.

Whether this makes you liberal or conservative, aggressive or passive, the point is this: Every bit of knowledge and experience that you absorb affects how you provide advice and services to your clients. Your advice and services are not like those provided by any other lawyer. This uniqueness is one of your major competitive advantages.

Important: Competitive advantages and disadvantages are determined only by what is important to your prospects and clients.

For example, if you've been in practice 20 years, you could conclude that time in practice is a considerable competitive advantage. But if your prospects don't care whether you have practiced for 20 years or 5 years, it's no advantage at all, at least not to that group of prospects. So when you identify a competitive strength, make sure you look at that advantage through your prospects' eyes because theirs are the only perceptions that matter.

Your marketing materials and presentations should clearly state how you differ from all other lawyers and all other law firms. The best exercise is to write "only" statements because they identify how you are unique. Write as many "only" statements as you can, relating to key subjects that are important to your prospects:

QUALIFICATIONS:

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who has earned (specific academic honors).

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who practices in (area of law) and who is a former superior court judge.

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who has practiced for at least 15 years in (whatever area of law).

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who practices in (area of law) and is a professor at (law school).

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that the state attorney general uses for outside legal counsel.

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that handles legal matters for (Fortune 500 Corporation) in (state).

Ours is the only tax department in (city or state) that has a former state revenue director as a partner.

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that has three former supreme court justices as partners.

EXPERIENCE AND SUCCESS:

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who has won five medical malpractice cases, each with verdicts over \$10 million.

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who has won a judgment over \$100 million.

I am the only lawyer in (city or state) who has won four judgments over \$50 million.

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that has never lost a case involving (subject).

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) whose partners write ongoing columns for the (state bar or other publication).

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that has won four employment law cases before the U.S. Supreme Court.

HOW YOU SERVE CLIENTS:

Ours was the only law firm in (city or state) to receive the state bar's award for excellence in client service.

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that offers legal services in (two key practice areas).

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that has 15 certified specialists in (an important area of law).

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that has offices downtown and in all of the major suburbs.

Ours is the only law firm in (city or state) that offers clients a money-back guarantee.

Summary: The positive ways you differ from other lawyers are your competitive advantages. When you bolster those advantages by adding the word "only," you elevate your marketing to a higher plane because you identify unique competitive advantages that no other lawyer can match.

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