



**WILL
MARKETING
& ADVERTISING
CHEAPEN MY
LAW FIRM?**

“Will marketing and advertising cheapen my law firm?”

It’s a question that mostly goes unasked, but not unrecognized, by lawyers and law firms entering into marketing or advertising partnerships.



That’s not the only unasked question in legal marketing ...

“Will this advertising concept fail?”

“Will we look desperate, cheap, or like those TV lawyers?”

“I mean, why would a high-quality legal advocate really need all this marketing mumbo-jumbo, or to be on every local TV channel or billboard and advertise themselves as an arm, a hammer, or a gorilla?”



Because these branded ads make the phone ring for these lawyers and do exactly what effective legal marketing is supposed to do.

EFFECTIVE LAW FIRM ADVERTISING NEEDS TO DO THREE THINGS

1 – Get Noticed

2 – Build Memorability

3 – Drive Action/Outcome

Take the hammers, eagles, and pirates or leave them, the main point stands: Consistent advertising and branded marketing does not cheapen a law firm. It enriches and expands a firm’s book of business.

These lawyers are confident in these branded choices and have committed their advertising strategies to be inclusive of memorable concepts at every marketable opportunity.

They believe in the characters, not because they are the most accurate representation of lawyers, but because they represent a solid advertising strategy that the advertisers have confidence in.

However, according to the numbers, confidence in advertising is not very high with lawyers.



WHAT DO LAWYERS REALLY THINK OF ADVERTISEMENTS?

When our legal marketing podcast, [LAWsome](#), asked lawyers on Twitter if they thought marketing or advertising cheapens a law firm, we got a fairly balanced response.



But when asked in a professional setting, it seems lawyers have different and more strident views on lawyer advertising.

74% of the lawyers polled in the [2017 Florida Bar Association Membership Survey](#) do not advertise their firms.

18. Does your firm or legal office advertise?

| Category | Percent |
|----------|---------|
| Yes | 26 |
| No | 74 |

An even larger and growing number of lawyers believe that attorney advertising damages the public perception of the legal profession.

15A. Comparison of 2009 thru 2017 Membership Opinion Surveys – Do you believe that lawyer advertising affects the public’s view of lawyers and the legal profession?

| Category | 2009 Survey Percent | 2011 Survey Percent | 2013 Survey Percent | 2015 Survey Percent | 2017 Survey Percent |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Yes, in a negative way | 80 | 80 | 85 | 84 | 85 |
| Yes, in a favorable way | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| No | 14 | 15 | 11 | 12 | 11 |

- Since 2009, the percentage of respondents who believe that lawyer advertising negatively affects the public’s view of lawyers and the legal profession has ranged between 80 and 85 percent.

What form of lawyer advertising (Internet, TV, radio, etc.) do lawyers consider most harmful to the public perception of the legal profession? Phrased differently, which communication channel has the most impact on public perception?

16. Which form of lawyer advertising do you believe affects the public’s view of lawyers and the legal profession most negatively?

| Category | Percent |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Television | 57 |
| Billboards | 23 |
| Direct mail | 5 |
| Mobile ads (e.g. bus, taxi, train) | 3 |
| Radio | 3 |
| Social media | 2 |
| Internet ads | <1 |
| Search Engine Optimization | <1 |
| Magazines | 0 |
| Newspaper | 0 |
| Yellow Pages | 0 |
| None of the above | 5 |

- Of the various types of lawyer advertising listed above, nearly three-fifths (57%) of all respondents report that television advertising by lawyers has the most negative effect on the public’s view of lawyers and the legal profession. Billboards (23%) is also reported with some frequency. The other forms of advertising are mentioned infrequently or not at all.

Of the law firms that do advertise, which communication channels do they choose to invest their marketing dollars in?

19. How does your law firm or legal office advertise? (MULTIPLE RESPONSE QUESTION – CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) (ONLY INCLUDES RESPONDENTS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE WHO REPORT THAT THEIR FIRM OR LEGAL OFFICE ADVERTISES)

| Category | Percent |
|---|---------|
| Internet webpage | 83 |
| Social media | 45 |
| Magazines | 16 |
| Direct mail | 13 |
| Yellow Pages (other than one line name of firm) | 13 |
| Billboards | 10 |
| Radio | 8 |
| Newspapers | 7 |
| Television | 4 |
| Other | 9 |

- Over four-fifths (83%) of private practice attorneys who are employed in firms or legal offices that advertise, utilize the Internet for advertising purposes. Over two-fifths (45%) use some form of social media advertising.
- The most frequently mentioned source under the “Other” category involves sponsorships.



Notice, this is an almost mirror reversal of the communication channels lawyers believed had the greatest impact on public opinion of the legal profession.

This is an important distinction.

And finally, the kicker: **81%** of lawyers who are actively marketing and advertising their law firms believe lawyer advertising is harmful to public perception of the profession.

15C. Do you believe that lawyer advertising affects the public's view of lawyers and the legal profession? – BY Whether or Not Respondent's Firm or Legal Office Advertises

| Category | Yes, Negatively Percent | Yes, Favorably Percent | Has No Effect Percent |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Firm or legal office does not advertise | 86 | 2 | 12 |
| Firm or legal office advertises | 81 | 9 | 11 |

- Over four-fifths (81%) of all respondents who practice in law firms or legal offices that advertise believe lawyer advertising negatively affects the public's view of lawyers and the legal profession.

If 11% of advertising lawyers felt their ads had no impact on public opinion of the profession, and only 9% felt their advertisements had a positive effect, doesn't it make you wonder what kinda ads are being created?

WHAT'S THE RESULT OF THIS ON THE LEGAL ADVERTISING LANDSCAPE?

Because the vast majority of lawyers don't advertise, because the examples of attorney advertisements (especially on mass media) feel like a blight on their profession, because they want to be cautious with their investments, the confidence levels in marketing strategies for most lawyers and law firms are safely low, and industry standard.



That's unfortunate, but not unexpected and leads to another legal marketing/advertising paradox.

When you think of examples of good advertising, you never think safe or standard. But when you're paying for advertising, you definitely want safety and standards.

So, rather than tons of unique, differentiated, branded law firms, lawyers investing in marketing are flocking their best practices together, replicating the same positioning and advertising decisions their competitors make, resulting in undifferentiated homogeneity across the legal advertising spectrum.

Furthermore, in regards to the communication channels advertising lawyers choose for their law firms, **everyone is online**, as more legal marketers switch their budgets from traditional mass media to digital. Again, look at the migration of marketing dollars from [mass media to digital](#) in the Florida Bar Survey, from 2009 to 2017.

If every legal marketing dollar spent is heading to the same digital marketplace, competing for the same eyeballs in a constant war for attention online, lawyers should really be solely focused on [creativity](#), a branded [web presence](#), and forging indelible and lasting [digital advertising](#) for their law firms that gets noticed and [grabs attention](#).

But they aren't.

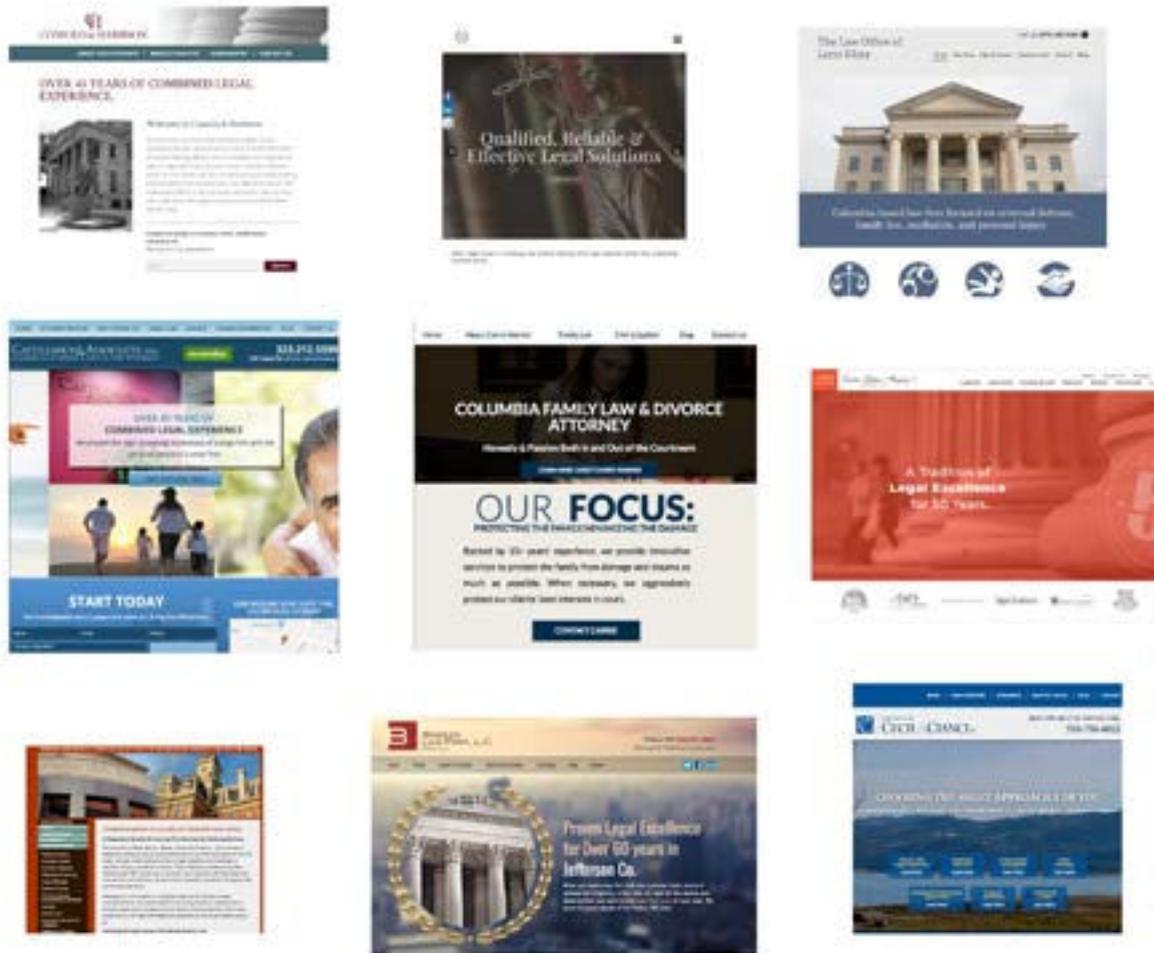


WE WANT THE SPOTLIGHT, NOT THE SCRUTINY

Most law firms, like most businesses in general, don't want to be too outgoing or "kitschy" in their marketing and advertisements because this may portray them as non-serious about their core business.

Better to be rational and serious on their website and ads and tell everyone you have 200 years experience. Just tell them we are no frills, reliable, and we know what we're doing.

Yeah ... that'll stand out.



At some point, we'll have to agree that "Trusted Forever" is just as much of a legal marketing trope as "Strong Arms" or "Hammers."

WHAT DOES AN EFFECTIVE LAW FIRM ADVERTISEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Are you going to be the Hammer, or the Eagle, or Sensible & Trusted Forever? The great news is, this is up to you! But to be successful in advertising, you need a strong brand and you need confidence in your strategy.

Depending on the personalities and comfort level of the shareholders, effective branding in a law firm can be sensible and strong and even silly. Bottom line: The brand needs confidence, and it needs to be memorable.

Depending on the strategy and goals, effective advertising looks different for every law firm. Bottom line: The ads need to get noticed by a ton of people and get the phone to ring.

So what really makes for an effective advertisement?

Every advertising campaign has a wide variety of tactical options and elements (creativity, distribution, branding) to consider in order to create an ad that reaches its desired goal.

Should you pay more money for distribution? Should you pay for placement? Should you invest in top-notch creativity or talent?

What is the desired balance among these advertising elements that actually achieves sales?



PERCENT SALES CONTRIBUTION BY ADVERTISING ELEMENT



Nearly 500 campaigns across all media platforms
Source: Nielsen Catalina Solutions © 2017; Period 2016-Q1 2017

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According to [Nielsen](#), **creativity, strong brand assets**, and **good distribution** were the main contributing factors in effective ads that led to sales for more than 500 brands surveyed in its [Five Keys to Advertising Effectiveness Report](#).

So, stated another way – your law firm can create effective advertising by focusing on creativity above all else, developing a strong and memorable brand, and paying properly to distribute your ads to as large an audience as possible.

Seem like a lot to handle?

Then make sure you find a marketing and advertising agency that can help you create distinct ads and deliver them to your potential clients. [We know some people](#).

THE KEY TO OVERCOMING THE FEAR THAT ADVERTISING CHEAPENS YOUR LAW FIRM?

The key to succeeding in legal advertising is mainly one thing – confidence.

Confidence in the strength of your law firm’s brand and its distinct place in the market.

Confidence in your [marketing strategy](#), the communication channels, the target audience, the intended actions.

Confidence in the ability to [measure your marketing ROI](#).

Confidence that [creative](#), strongly branded advertising will help your law firm achieve business goals.

When it comes to legal advertising, the formula for success is simple:

Confidence + Strategy = SUCCESS!

Without confidence, not only will your advertising fail, it may bring your “cheap law firm” nightmares to life and end up costing you more than just money.

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