

Branding for success



Most people are by now well-versed in what a brand is, and how companies work with and develop it for commercial success. But in boosting the firm's reputation, it's important not to lose sight of your own personal brand. How you present yourself online has always been important, but it's particularly relevant now that more people make use of social media platforms for career moves and development.

Whether it's organising internal firm initiatives or speaking at conferences, lawyers must be aware of how they present themselves and how they are perceived by others. Here, representatives of the Wibl group's gold sponsors provide tips and tricks for how to build and maintain your own personal brand.

A&L Goodbody

By partner **Niamh Ryan**

Building your brand is essential to developing as a lawyer, but it also helps build the brand of the firm you work for too. At A&L Goodbody we have always emphasised that the first step in building your brand is interaction with your client, and that applies at whatever stage your career is at. That of course means focusing on providing the highest level of service to clients, but also thinking about the client even when the transaction is long since over by sending legal and regulatory updates or articles that may be of interest, or just keeping in touch by meeting for coffee or lunch.

Lawyers at all levels in the firm are encouraged to do this and to explore ways to build relationships with clients. However, it can feel like a challenge particularly in the early stages of your career, so the firm also holds client and networking events specifically for associates and more junior lawyers, where they are encouraged to invite their client contact and develop their networking skills. Building your brand externally is also important and for me, in my practice area, that has meant getting in-

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involved with industry associations, speaking at seminars and writing articles. This kind of thought leadership, positioning yourself as an

expert in your field, is a great way to build your personal brand, but it is also good for the firm in helping to win new clients.

DLA Piper

By partner **Allison Page**

Your personal brand is your reputation. Building a personal brand is essentially about understanding who you are and what drives you, alongside how you are perceived by others. A good starting point to refine your brand is understanding your values, key personality traits and motivators. This will help you to understand the direction of travel you should consider for future career success.

As a lawyer, it is important that people identify you with a particular area of expertise and therefore undertaking speaking engagements, writing articles and always keeping up to date with what is going on in your industry is absolutely essential. All of these are important to building your professional profile, but they really only get you to the starting gate. What is key to success is being completely authentic in how you present yourself. You need to identify what is unique about you, and use it to your best advantage.

Building an online presence is also very important — just take care to be consistent in how you present yourself, across all forms of social media. Post regular updates that position you

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Allison Page

as an authority in your field of expertise, and don't be afraid to show your personality. Think about the first impression your profile photo will create, and consider using keywords relevant

to your chosen area in your profile heading — this will make it easier for people to find you from search engines.

Shearman & Sterling

By partner **Denise Grant**

Regardless of where you are in your career — junior associate to seasoned partner, sole practitioner or in-house counsel — building your personal brand will help you differentiate yourself among your competitors, and attract and retain clients. I always tell women entering the legal profession not to be afraid to promote yourself as your male counterparts regularly do. Make sure you're noticed from your first day at the office, and create your own opportunities.

Ask yourself what your strengths are. Are you a good writer or public speaker? Are you passionate about a certain area of law? Are you adept at bringing people together? Assessing your strengths honestly will help you capitalise on what is true to you — accentuating the specific attributes that make you an indispensable asset.

Building a brand is all about connecting, and my work showcases that ability for consensus-building — when you are working on a transaction, oftentimes, in addition to your client, the counterparty has to be satisfied. You want to end a deal where you get thank-you notes not only from your side, but from the other side.

You also have to be in the game to get your name out there. Contribute ideas, write articles, and speak at panels or conferences. Use social media thoughtfully. Shearman & Sterling created a Twitter handle, @ShearmanWomen, where the

Making a difference by reinforcing the message that law holds great opportunities for young black and minority lawyers is important to me



Denise Grant

firm's women can share news and issues affecting women in law and business. Get involved in committees either at your firm or outside of work, on subjects that you really care about.

At Shearman & Sterling, I co-chair the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, which lets me do what I love — mentoring and team-building — and increases my visibility both inside and outside of the firm. As the firm's first black partner, this work is close to my heart, and led to my being honoured as one of the 2015 Most Influ-

ential Black Lawyers by Savoy magazine, along with other recognitions. Making a difference by reinforcing the message that law holds great opportunities for young black and minority lawyers is important to me. In this way, doing what is natural to me in an area where I have a strong passion allows me to build my brand organically.

No matter who you are, or what skills you have, being true to yourself and speaking with your own voice is your best way to build your brand.

Sidley Austin

By partner **Aparna Sehgal**

Everyone has a personal brand, whether they are aware of it or not. Your personal brand is an expression of how you appear to the world and, in this digital age, this is a combination of your online presence; how people perceive you; and how you present yourself. You would therefore want to proactively, and strategically, cultivate and manage your brand. To do so requires an open and honest conversation with yourself: what are your strengths and weaknesses; what area(s) would you like to communicate expertise in; what attributes do you want people to associate with you when they think of your name; where can you best position yourself within trends dominating your industry and practice area at any given time. Ultimately, your brand should be an authentic reflection of who you are and the best sort of professional you wish to be.

A great place to start is by looking at someone you admire professionally, and dissembling their brand: what does it consist of; how did they achieve it; and how do they maintain it? Initiate a conversation with someone obviously and consistently successful in your firm about his or her professional journey. This is less daunting than it sounds as there is active encouragement by management in law firms today for senior partners to make the time to mentor and share. Speaking engagements; presenting at conferences; and writing leadership and industry-relevant articles are also all great tools to create, build and maintain your brand. Finally, do not neglect to build and maintain your online presence; keep your firm online profile and your LinkedIn profile up to date.

At Sidley we have a number of support sys-



“It gives me a tool to get in touch with powerful and inspirational women”

Aparna Sehgal

tems to help associates identify and build their personal brand. Each associate works with an allocated partner to develop a personal development plan using a base template of key milestones and discussion points. This means thinking about your career in the short, medium and long-term. The personal development plan is a dynamic instrument to be revisited ahead of each annual appraisal, and otherwise as often as an associate would like.

However associates are not confined to the formalised personal development plan programme to stimulate discussions about their career development. There are also formal and informal mentoring programmes in place, and a women's committee which provides a forum

for female associates to form links with female partners. The firm also runs clinics for effective and professional management of LinkedIn profiles, and regularly organises training with external providers at the top of their game to advise on tools for effective networking; giving presentations; public speaking; and managing other such professional situations which can be daunting even for the most successful individuals.

You already have a personal brand. Do take the time to think about its component parts, and look to access all that is available in your organisation to nurture it. Your brand will exist either way, so do what you can to stay in control of it.

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