

that you stop being alert to life's possibilities and sudden inspirations.

- **You don't have to make a list at all**—The 'To-Do List' is a tool. Methods for creating an effective list are suggestions, not commandments. If they help, use them and modify them to help fit your own circumstances.

Since the 1920's, we have been told that efficiency is king, time is money, the system is the solution and the company has all the answers. This resulted in increased productivity, corporate growth and increased salaries, as well as the segmentation of the whole person, the minimization of the individual, and the reduction, or near elimination, of fun from the workplace. This focus on efficiency inhibited spontaneity which, in return, limited our effectiveness. We have learned that the best results come from balancing our emphasis on efficiency with a focus on effectiveness.

Getting organized takes work and a conscious effort but, in the long run, it's worth it. Being organized gives us back some control in our lives. It helps to reduce our stress levels and it allows us to set aside some time to pursue our personal desires.

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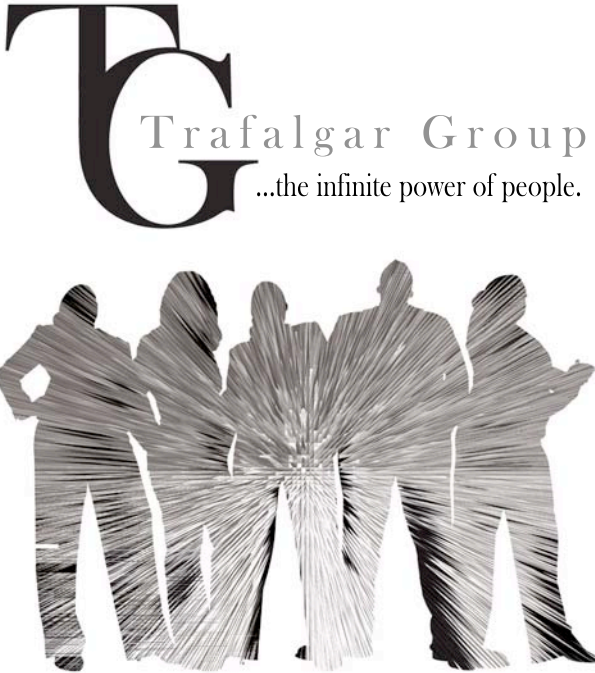
SELF-MARKETING FOR LAWYERS: BIOS MEAN BUSINESS

Helping lawyers market themselves is an on-going process and bios are marketing tools that help drive business. As many of us can attest, the business of bio writing can be either a cookie-cutter exercise or a merciless experience of ever-evolving track-changes. Neither needs to be the case.

While every lawyer needs a bio - and if you're reading this it's highly likely you've helped write one - it's worthwhile to stop and consider why we're doing this in the first place. Just what is a bio supposed to do? How can it help convince a client that, "this is the lawyer for me?" And, how can this be done in a way that serves the lawyer and, even more importantly, the client?

The Sameness Factor

The problem with many bios is sameness, which is perpetuated by two factors. The first is modeling bios on those of other lawyers who have modeled their bios to those of other lawyers and so on, and so on. The second factor is a tendency to take an approach that "it's about me, the lawyer" rather than "it's



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about them, the client". This sameness problem can carry such symptoms as verbose stories told in legalese, jumbled laundry lists of various experiences, and a self-congratulatory tone.

Given all this, is it any wonder that clients looking for legal talent can have a tough time differentiating one lawyer from another?

Dare to Be Different

As the Cheshire Cat said in Alice in Wonderland, "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there." Knowing where you're going means keeping the end result in mind. In this case, the end result is to clearly convey the message clients want to hear - "I understand your needs and concerns, and can help you achieve your goals."

In conveying this message, you'll want to spark a client's curiosity, persuade a client to think, "this is the lawyer for me," and trigger action in the form of contacting a particular practitioner.

This is where you must dare to be different. Being different within a profession schooled to be risk-averse can be a challenge; however, focusing on three simple elements can

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make all the difference: 1. Focus on what a client needs to know. 2. Apply a succinct and streamlined approach. 3. Use plain-speaking text with a lean, clean layout.

By considering the tips below, your lawyers will stand out from the crowd, and their bios will shift from “just the facts” to “get the business.”

1. Focus on What a Client Needs to Know

Essential Elements

Name
Title
Direct Phone Number
Email Address
Photo
Executive Summary

While the above elements are expected, the executive summary is a differentiator. And it is just that - a paragraph, hopefully no longer than seven lines of text that hones in on the lawyer’s practice(s) and highlights industry expertise.

Secondary Elements

Client work supporting practice(s) and industry expertise
Education
Bar and association memberships (memberships relevant to prospective client work)
Legal rankings and recognition
Publications and speaking engagements (relevant and recent)

Part of the sameness problem is the tendency to give precedence to bar admission and education information. While it may be a source of pride for a lawyer, this is not usually relevant to most clients. Clients say they look for two key criteria when hiring legal talent: capability of handling the work and proven expertise in the client’s industry sector. It’s a given that a lawyer went to school, studied law, graduated, and is licensed to practice.


2. Apply a Succinct and Streamlined Approach

Judicious Editing

Choose relevant information that helps clients quickly sense that the lawyer is an expert on current business trends, and legal needs and regulations within particular practice areas and industry sectors.

- Use this information for the executive summary paragraph
- Keep sentences short (18 words or less) and avoid serial commas
- Bullet points help to present straightforward details

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Make client work examples as specific as possible. For example, which sounds more enticing:

“September 2007: Assisted a Fortune 500 company in the construction industry on a \$6 million contract dispute, saving \$4 million in litigation through alternative dispute resolution”

or

“Has experience in commercial litigation and ADR.”

Evidence of accomplishments, such as identifying clients either by name or industry sector, along with dates and dollars, demonstrates that the lawyer knows business and the value of what they provide. Also, avoid acronyms (and alliteration) always. Not every client will know what an acronym represents so it’s best to be clear and spell it out.

Keep information current by reviewing bios every six months to add new content while eliminating dated material (anything more than five years old). For example, any mention of that non-event called Y2K is ancient history and is also indicative of not keeping pace with today’s business environment.

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3. Use Plain-Speaking Text With a Lean, Clean Layout

Prospective clients are busy people with limited time. They tend to scan, not read. To help them find the information they need, take a first-things-first approach:

- Essential elements listed at the top of the page
- Executive summary paragraph appears beneath essential elements
- Secondary elements and feature material can appear in a sidebar

It's wise to ensure ample white space. This enables readers to more easily identify key words as they scan. Make sure there is high-contrast between text colour and the background (this is especially important for online bios), and offer a print-friendly PDF version.

Bios Online

Websites are open for business 24 hours a day, making it easier and more convenient for prospective clients to find a particular practitioner. Including key words in bios that clients might use in a search engine will help them find your lawyers and boost your firm's search rankings. Consider including practice and industry terms along with landmark case names. Include words, terms and variants that a client might use. Keywords must be relevant to the text. A word of caution - avoid excessive keyword insertion. Search engines can recognize this tactic and may reject the page.

From a technical perspective, it's smart to include the lawyer's name on the page title of their bio. The page title is the text area at the very top of the page frame, above the website address. This area can include the practitioner's name along with relevant key words with a usual allowance of 96 characters. This seldom-used yet vital type of search engine optimization tactic is especially helpful in being well ranked, as it is more likely that this page will appear when any of the page title key words are entered into a search engine. For the technology-challenged, this is something that can be done by website programmers or perhaps your IT staff.

In closing, while bio preparation will always be part-and-parcel of legal marketing, it need not be an arduous task. Best of all, once you get the hang of it, you'll be better able to help your firm's lawyers drive business - and position yourself as an even more valuable resource.

Heather Suttie is a legal business development and law marketing consultant. She works with law firms, legal teams, and individual lawyers in all areas of practice and consults to some of Canada's leading law firms—large national, mid-size, and boutique. She has taken her own advice in constructing her bio and has optimized her website to rank well on search engines. Evidence can be found at heathersuttie.ca and she can be reached at 416.964.9607.

HR SIG SESSION BUILDING BRIDGES: COLLABORATION AT WORK

The benefits of "Building Bridges" or relationships are far reaching. At the HR SIG session held on Thursday, November 29, 2007, Gloria Cook gave us tangible tools to reinforce what some of us might already be aware of. We are better equipped to overcome conflict and foster a collaborative work environment when positive experiences have already been cultivated with the person.

Gloria Cook defines a Bridge as "the positive investment that you have made in that relationship prior to conflict". The bridges made in everyday interactions ultimately assist you in overcoming conflicts and connecting with the other person.

Before we can begin to build bridges there are certain things we should understand about ourselves such as:

- **Emotional reaction** – Any behavior that serves as a catalyst for a negative emotional reaction by you. Discover your "hot button triggers".
- **Reaction to people pressures** – These are subjective and can be affected by personality, communication style, values, beliefs or rules, our background & experiences, our emotional and psychological state at that moment.

There are three key areas that can help you build a collaborative environment.

1. **Appreciating differences** - Look for the positive in people. Ask what can this person bring to the table? What have they done well? What do you like best about them? Why are they an asset to your group? Do not dwell on the negative. When you can start to look for the positive in people, then you can begin to build and develop relationships with them.
2. **Understanding the human drive and its impact on people** – Four primary motivators that drive people are:
 - i. **Accolades** – The need to be recognized for excellence and success.
 - ii. **Affiliation** – The need to be in relationships or feel part of a group.
 - iii. **Authority** – The need to be impactful and influential.
 - iv. **Accuracy** – The need for quality, precision and detailed procedures.

Once you identify these motivators in people, you can adapt and develop a cooperative style. You can determine a person's

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