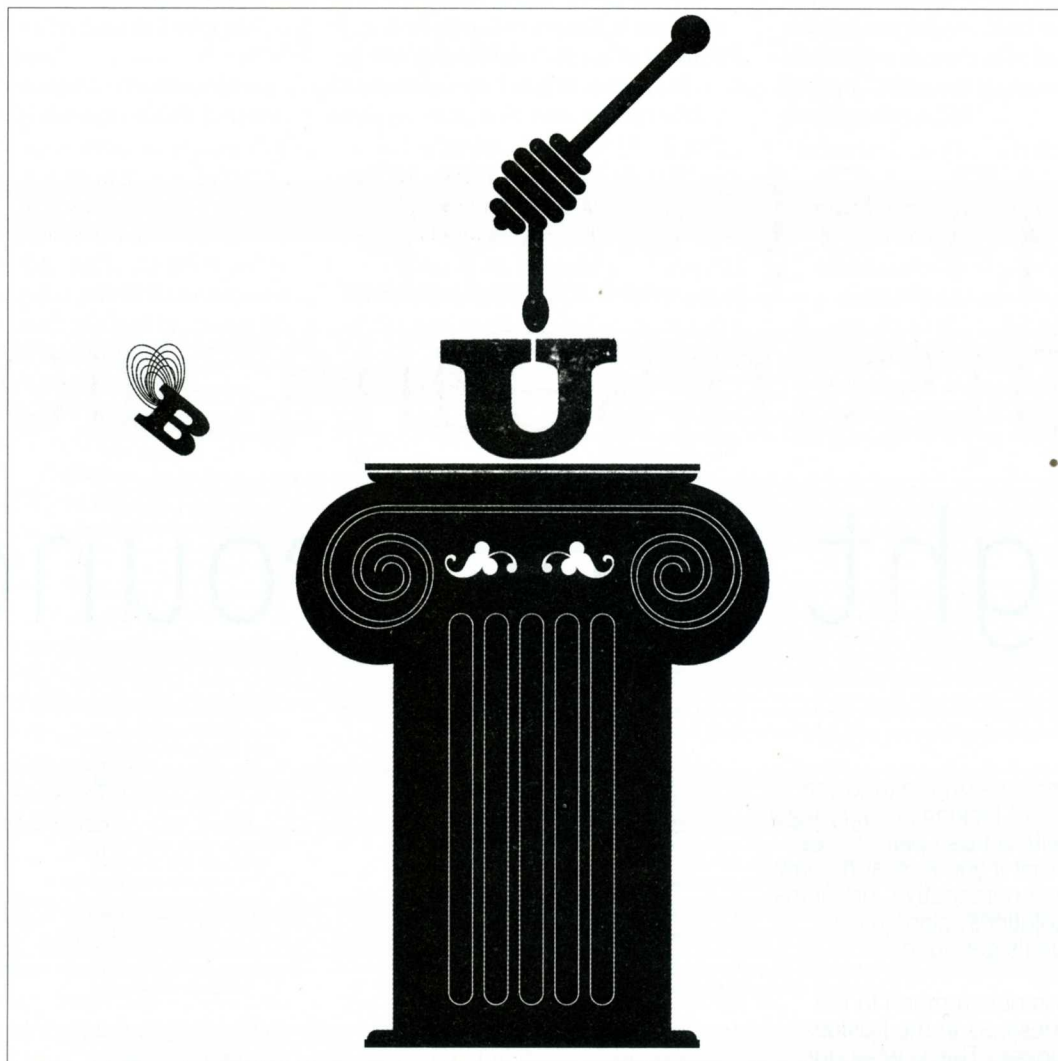


Sweetening the deal

As high-street names move into legal services and recession looms, law firms are becoming savvy about self-promotion. By *Rod Newing*



WITH RECESSION looming, innovation in marketing and public relations is becoming even more important as marketing budgets are pared back.

Stephen Allen, co-owner of Rapoport's online legal directory, says that whereas law firms have traditionally sold themselves as a service, they are now encouraging clients to buy into a brand philosophy.

"More firms are now working on their emotional selling proposition rather than their unique selling

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point," says Mike Walsh, managing director of Blueberry Creative, a legal design and marketing agency. "Buying decisions are as much about who you buy from as what you are buying. Branding in this context is about managing perceptions, expectations and delivery, not making sure all the brochures are in the right font and the same shade of blue."

This kind of approach in the Innovative Lawyers marketing and public

relations category is illustrated by Clifford Chance, which stood out for its International Climate Change Survey. Carried out with Gracechurch Consulting, the objective was to

inform and influence governments, regulators and business leaders.

The survey revealed that businesses see climate change as a significant opportunity, not a threat, and want to see more regulation, not less, to facilitate global trading. It secured exten-

'Ensure that you lock in your key clients, develop them to the full and put in place pursuit teams to prise away competitors' crown jewels'

sive media coverage and was discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the United Nations Bali conference, the Economist Forum, Chatham House and with the UK's environment minister.

"The bigger law firms are following a path, which clients want us to go down, to have a moral conscience and contribute to the major issues of the day," says Nigel Howorth, co-head of the firm's climate change group. "With this report, we are seeking to put something back into society. If we are involved in the debate, we can help shape it for the benefit of our clients."

The survey tied into the creation of the firm's climate change group, which has grown quickly. "It launched us into the area with market profile and thought leadership," he says.

Clare Rodway, managing director of Kysen, a public relations consultancy, is concerned about the impact of the Legal Services Act, which has allowed a wider range of groups to provide legal services. In the area of the market where legal services can be commoditised, the term "Tesco law" has been coined and high-street names such as RAC, the car recovery service, have entered the legal market.

"When competing with such names, brand awareness and marketing strategy will be a key consideration for law firms," Ms Rodway says. "It will also be key to attracting external investment."

A practical approach to linking the brand with specific expertise was taken by Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, which stood out for its report, "Getting it right: Product recall in the EU". This combined independent research from Ipsos Mori with the firm's expertise. The report was e-mailed to 700 clients and 46 per cent clicked through to the firm's product recall website. It also received considerable media coverage.

A key aspect was a product recall toolkit and timeline of what to do on discovery of a potential product safety issue. The first few days of a product recall are crucial

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Publish and be seen

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES organisations, especially consultants, have long produced glossy business-style magazines for clients and potential clients. Law firms have recently entered this costly area, often using independent business journalists to produce content.

CMS Cameron McKenna claims to have been first, when it launched its Solve magazine in 2006. It aims to uncover legal issues that businesses face in their day-to-day dealings and provide practical solutions to these issues.

"Third party [journalistic] credibility strengthens our reputation as legal experts with a genuine commercial understanding," the firm says. "We also feature areas of interest to readers where we don't have a presence, providing subtlety to our marketing approach."

Houthoff Buruma Magazine features interviews with key figures within Dutch politics and business who are not clients and features fashion-like photography. "Useful and interesting

information or advice adds value to the recipient," the firm says.

Linklaters Quarterly includes interviews with the chief executives of the world's leading and most innovative companies. It is designed to demonstrate that the firm has a deep

understanding of, and active involvement in, the markets in which its corporate clients operate. It is sent very selectively, with personalised letters, to key clients and a public relations agency gains coverage in the wider media.

Stephenson

Harwood's The New Silk Road draws its title from the rapid shift eastwards of the global economy. It focuses on promoting its business in Asia, the Middle East and north and east Africa. As a mid-market firm, it has suffered from poor brand awareness. "Our readership is time-poor so articles are written with a humorous touch," the firm says. "The overall look is designed for the commute home, to entertain and be as appealing to the eye as it is to the mind."

'We feature areas of interest to readers where we don't have a presence, providing subtlety to our marketing approach'

PUBLISHING

Firm	Innovation	Originality	Rationale	Impact	Total	Description
COMMENDED						
Stephenson Harwood	The New Silk Road magazine	6	5	5	16	Heavily designed, humorous, colourful magazine that seeks to indirectly promote the firm in Asia, the Middle East and Africa
CMS Cameron McKenna	Solve	4	5	6	15	Client-facing, traditional magazine that features articles about the firm and some general business pieces. Gives advertising space to stakeholder partners
Houthoff Buruma	Houthoff Buruma magazine	5	5	5	15	Uses a professional photographer and journalist. It is well-designed but is essentially comprised of interviews with business figures
Linklaters	Linklaters Quarterly	5	5	5	15	Intellectual content on business topics, professional journalists, based on the McKinsey Quarterly idea but heavily Linklaters branded

and can be very hectic. "We aimed the report at people who already have an interest in this area," says John Blain at Freshfields. "The report is a practical piece of work that gives a lot of information on best practice in the field. This enables companies to pinpoint specific concerns to talk to us about. The report led to discussions with dozens of existing and new clients and further meetings and a client seminar are scheduled."

Success from this sort of campaign depends on effective follow-up. Legal consultant Andrew Hedley has seen a hardening market away from "fluffy" communications campaigns to hard-nose business development. "For savvy firms, the strategy is clear," he says. "Ensure that you lock in your key clients, develop them to the full and put in place pursuit teams to prise away competitors' crown jewels."

Research by Redwood ThinkTank, funded by LexisNexis's business analytics division, has found that firms are more likely to retain business when there are more than two partners significantly involved in client matters; the client provides the firm with a large amount of legal work; there is a mature established relationship; and the work involves two or more practice areas.

The link between branding and client development is illustrated by Maclay Murray & Spens. The firm carried out an integrated, 12-month campaign to promote KnowLEDGE, its added-value material, to clients and prospective clients. It overhauled its literature and materials, redesigned its website and introduced an entirely new series of advertisements.

It was the first legal firm to place 48-sheet poster advertisements in railway stations. A client hub was created that attracted just over 2,000 registrations, who requested nearly 10,000 requests for items. The firm has halved the average time of two years from introduction to sale.

"People signed up for an average of five items each, doing our cross-selling work for us," says David Sanders, the

firm's marketing director. "By itself, it doesn't lead to new instructions but the profile-raising from the branding campaign makes business development much easier."

Malcolm Cannon, chief executive of Hunter Boot, the boot maker, says he is bombarded with information from other firms. "KnowLEDGE is extremely

simple to use and lets you tailor it," he says. "Maclay Murray & Spens is so different from other law firms in simplifying things and giving a much more human touch. The branding is strong and consistent and the marketing is reassuring, so you feel you are buying into something that is special to them and so is special to you." ■

CASE STUDY

EVERSHEDS' 21ST CENTURY LAW FIRM REPORT

FOR MANY YEARS, THE public relations team at Eversheds felt it had been hitting a brick wall when trying to promote the firm's innovative ways of doing things. To help change attitudes, the firm commissioned The 21st Century Law Firm, a report from RSG Consulting, the legal sector research group that also undertook the research for the FT's Innovative Lawyers rankings.

The 100-page report contained the views of business leaders and lawyers on how the legal sector would develop in the next 10 years. It revealed that more than half of in-house counsel did not believe that the current growth of fees was sustainable and saw their biggest challenge as controlling costs and achieving value for money. A third of clients had plans to buy more legal services outside the "magic circle" of top-five London firms, to get value for money and better client service.

Although independent, the research reflected Eversheds' key messages. An abridged press version was produced, with the firm's own brief commentary and quotes. A selection of international press releases highlighted different aspects of the report for different audiences.

There was strong coverage in the US, South Africa and Australia, and UK coverage included the "quality" daily newspapers and the Law Society Gazette. Eversheds also ran an internal campaign to communicate the findings.

The report achieved publicity with an advertising value equivalent to approximately £500,000, giving Eversheds a 20-fold return on investment. However, the report paid for itself through its findings, which will be used to plot the future course of the firm. "It provides enough food for thought to last 10 years," says Alan Jenkins, Eversheds' chairman. "However, it has also proved to be a highly successful PR exercise that has crossed jurisdictions."

The campaign has also influenced the communications strategy for the

firm's forthcoming move to new London headquarters, with the message that Eversheds is "a law firm that brings clients the future now".

"It has enhanced the firm's brand and helped to establish its image as an innovative and challenging law firm that is willing to go beyond traditional thinking," says Sean

Twomey, head of public relations at Norton Rose. "It was more than just a PR campaign, it was an attempt to change the profession."

[The report] has enhanced the firm's brand and helped to establish its image as an innovative and challenging law firm'

MARKETING & PR

Firm	Innovation	Originality	Rationale	Impact	Total	Description
STANDOUT						
Clifford Chance	International Climate Change Survey: global issue research to influence government and business	6	7	8	21	Going beyond the usual market research survey to create a piece of thought leadership that was discussed at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Secured extensive media coverage and positioned the firm as a leader on this key issue
Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer	'Getting it right: Product recall in the EU' – the only data-rich report in response to a surge in product recalls	6	7	6	19	An independently researched report that was combined with the firm's expertise in the field to contribute to debate with the regulator, win the firm work and start conversations with potential clients
Linklaters	A series of seminars looking at climate change from different perspectives. Exceptionally well-executed	5	7	7	19	Involved some the leading figures – Lord Stern, author of the Stern Review on climate change; Hilary Benn, the UK environment secretary; and Lord Browne, ex-chief executive of BP. Attendees felt it was comparable to a Chatham House event and commendable for the firm to instigate this debate
Maclay Murray & Spens	MMS KnowEDGE: integrated branding and promotional campaign for the firm's added-value knowledge products	6	6	7	19	Launched a client hub on the firm's website along with an integrated marketing campaign over 12 months that resulted in 1,624 registrations – 40 per cent of whom were individuals at or just below board level
HIGHLY COMMENDED						
DLA Piper	DLA Piper Rebrand: the process from inception to roll-out (including a global advertising campaign)	6	6	6	18	A successful rebranding exercise that involved consultation with employees to come with the strapline, "Everything Matters" – an unusually deep, systematic and efficient exercise for a law firm with some new elements
Eversheds	A survey about the relationship between private equity firms and management teams	5	7	6	18	Using the firm's partners to conduct research in the mid-market private equity space was novel. Enabled the firm to be a useful provider of information to private equity firms and to position itself as a thought leader. Also garnered extensive media coverage
Herbert Smith	C2SD: joined-up legal advice on legal and regulatory issues relating to climate change	6	6	6	18	A forum for the firm to bring together all its advice on climate change issues in conjunction with its European law firm partners, Gleiss Lutz and Stibbe. Has directly generated work for the firm, enhanced know-how and made the firm more attractive to graduates.
TLT Solicitors	Body and mind day: a novel take on corporate hospitality to build a specific client relationship	7	6	5	18	A day event for 12 senior managers that looked at their work-life balance in the morning, with poker sessions in the afternoon to address the challenges of taking risks
Allen & Overy	Client Analytics: a tool to measure the health of client relationships	7	6	4	17	A business development tool that enables the firm to analyse the strength, breadth and depth of client relationships. Innovative in its measurability and move away from a pure financial measure
Clifford Chance	Düsseldorf Energy Law Day: firm-organised conference on energy regulation	5	6	6	17	Three hundred and fifty key players in Europe's energy industry gather every year to attend this high-level event that raises the firm's profile, generates work and provides a unique talking shop for the industry
Noerr Stiefenhofer Lutz	The Kiss Principle: use of bank-card-size hand-outs that has won clients	6	5	6	17	Groundbreaking for the German market to use humour and irony in this way to market the firm. These small cards carry important guidance and have won direct instructions
COMMENDED						
Baker & McKenzie	Client Business Forum: an upgrade on the seminar idea	5	5	6	16	Using a Harvard Business School case in the forum to ensure real-life issues for clients were addressed. Analysing the decision-making process of both in-house and private practice lawyers was novel
Blake Lapthorn	Sponsorship of Geoff Holt's Personal Everest, the disabled yachtman's attempt to sail singlehanded around Britain	6	5	5	16	Firm runs a series of "Challenge" lectures into which this high-profile sponsorship fitted. A potentially risky initiative as Geoff Holt is a disabled sailor and the appeal of his quest was primarily personal rather than business oriented
Denton Wilde Sapte	IGNITE: the rapid transformation of business development, client relationship management and pitch production in the firm	4	6	6	16	A comprehensive overhaul of the firm's business development and client relationship management capabilities. Two man years of processing time have been saved and the entire partnership trained in best business development practice
Nabarro	Branding exercise for the firm which produced the strapline 'Clarity Matters'	5	6	5	16	A thorough branding campaign that involved some innovative elements such as the use of comic sketches to engage employees with the firm's core brand values
Russell Jones & Walker	A suite of six value-added services to intelligently address employment questions	5	6	5	16	These cover whistleblowing, reviews of compromise and severance agreements, a microsite for senior executives and an online questionnaire regarding discrimination. They aim to give quick, tailored advice to clients
Tuca Zbarcea Asociatii	Circumventing Romanian rules restricting law firm marketing through www.bizlawyer.ro	6	5	5	16	The website acts as a bridge between the Romanian legal community and those of other countries. The firm teamed up with Bullet Media of the UK to produce a comprehensive resource that acts as a service to other law firms