

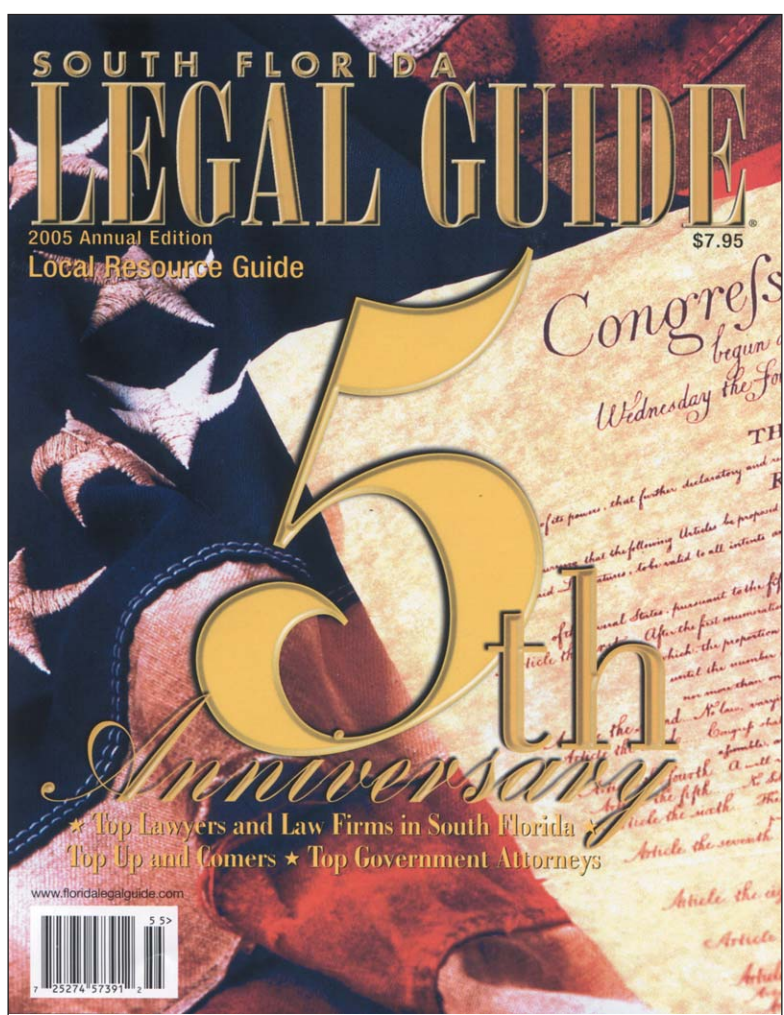


**THEIR BRAIN**  
BRANDING CONSULTANTS

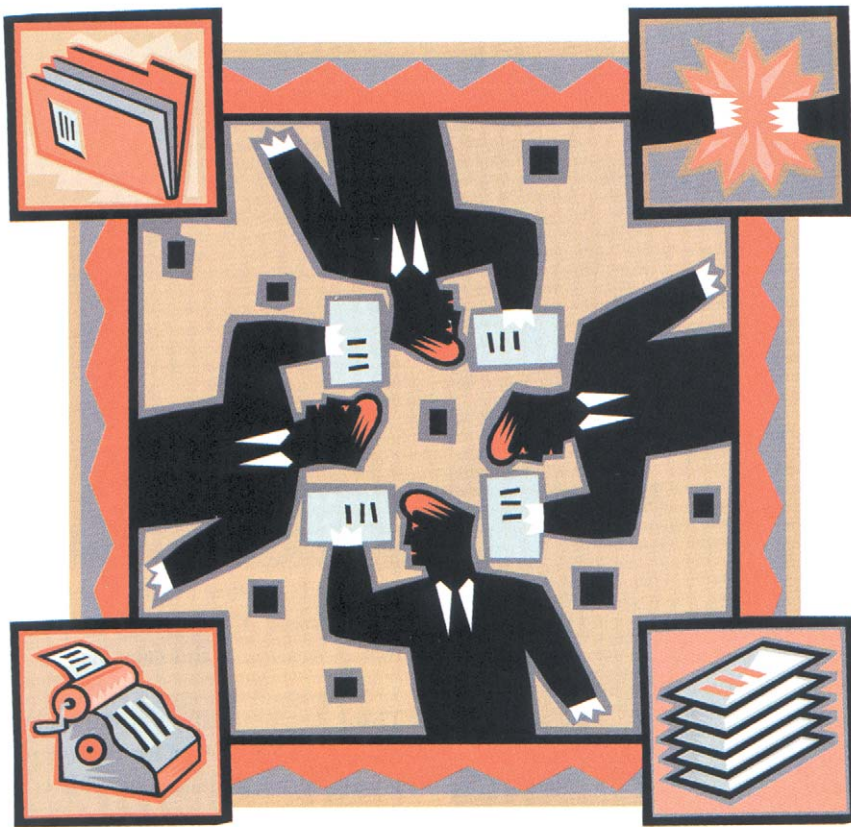
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**South Florida Legal Guide**  
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## Strong Brand = Stronger Bottom Line

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Building a strong brand is one of the most arduous, emotionally charged – and vital – processes that a firm can undertake. Branding's power extends well beyond the Mercedes and Starbucks of the world. As recent industry research demonstrates, a firm's brand and reputation are the second most important reason clients select law firms, only exceeded by the reputation of the individual attorney. Done right, branding brings business in the door of a professional services firm, increasing cash flow and market share, and it can produce a 10 to 20 percent premium in fees.

Simply stated, a firm's brand is the promise it makes to its clients and the delivery of that promise. It drives the firm's marketing plan and is supported by everything the firm does and produces. Consistency and integrity are critical, as is positioning — identifying your target and crafting your message. Too broad a position and you will fail to differentiate your firm. Too vague a message and you

won't spark interest from a potential client. Focused positioning and a consistent message impart clarity to your firm's identity and the value it offers in the marketplace. You want your target market to see you as their preferred choice in today's competitive marketplace.

Before marketers appropriated the term, branding referred to "...the searing of flesh with a hot iron to produce a scar with an easily recognizable pattern for identification." In other words, people assume that branding HURTS! The result is that the process gets ignored by law firms along with other necessary yet dreaded tasks like business plans, taxes, and 401(k) administration. Yet like a business plan, the branding process creates and sustains focus within a firm. Remember, moreover, that development of an effective brand is a strategic goal rather than a simple marketing function. Without the necessary resources, the process will not succeed.

Simply stated, a firm's brand is the promise it makes to its clients and the delivery of that promise. It drives the firm's marketing plan and is supported by everything the firm does and produces. For that reason, the brand must be developed at the top levels, and must guide the marketing efforts that fulfill the firm's prime directive.

### Getting Started: Listen, Learn, Analyze

Start by asking questions to identify reactions to your brand and your firm. You want to gauge current brand strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as well as the strategic goals behind existing marketing efforts. In this investigative phase, it is crucial to talk to your staff, clients, and fellow attorneys. This is also the time to bring in a third-party consultant for an unbiased brand analysis.

Once you know the perceived reputation of your firm, you can begin to map where you want the brand to go and the appropriate aesthetic and tone for your chosen target(s).

### Optimize Your Branding Effort

Branding is not a logo or tagline. It is a combination of all your marketing efforts that revolve around your branding statement. Test the truthfulness of the statement and whether you can keep that promise. If so, the message must be instilled in and supported by everyone in the firm and everything they do, from the partners to the receptionist.

If the proper methods and research have been incorporated into your firm's branding, it will become a powerful tool to attract and retain clients, enable premium pricing, and distance you from competition. A focused brand increases the impact of each exposure, reducing overall marketing costs. Ultimately your strong brand produces a stronger bottom line.