

## Brand Marketing for Law Firms: Boiling It Down

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From HBC's Sound Bites Blog ([www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites](http://www.hellermanbaretz.com/soundbites))

Recently, [John Hellerman](#) wrote two well-received articles (“[How To Make It Rain By Marketing Individual Lawyers](#),” with [Steve Bell](#) of [Womble Carlyle](#) and “[5 Marketing Lessons From Howrey's Graveside](#)”), both about the general need for law firms to market and sell what it is their clients actually buy: their partners. You see, for a long time, it has been our contention that—for the most part—law firms should see themselves as collections of talent and, therefore, as brand marketers rather than as the brands themselves.

However, the question remains: what would that look like? How would a law firm describe itself if it were geared toward “branding” its individual talent rather than the firm itself?

Being a PR firm, we considered what a boilerplate—the standard “about us” language placed at the bottom of news releases—might look like if a law firm considered itself just that, a brand marketer rather than the brand. First, to get an idea of what a brand marketer's boilerplate looks like, we examined the boilerplate language of one of the most successful brand marketers of all time, [The Coca-Cola Company](#):

The Coca-Cola Company (NYSE: KO) is the world's largest beverage company, refreshing consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still brands. Led by Coca-Cola, the world's most valuable brand, the Company's portfolio features 15 billion dollar brands including Diet Coke, Fanta, Sprite, Coca-Cola Zero, vitaminwater, Powerade, Minute Maid, Simply and Georgia. Globally, we are the No. 1 provider of sparkling beverages, juices and juice drinks and ready-to-drink teas and coffees. Through the world's largest beverage distribution system, consumers in more than 200 countries enjoy the Company's beverages at a rate of 1.7 billion servings a day. With an enduring commitment to building sustainable communities, our Company is focused on initiatives that reduce our environmental footprint, support active, healthy living, create a safe, inclusive work environment for our associates, and enhance the economic development of the communities where we operate. For more information about our Company, please visit our website at [www.thecoca-colacompany.com](http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com).

As this example makes clear, despite being a large multinational corporation, The Coca-Cola Company does not market itself as a branded company but instead markets its collection of high-profile brands that its consumers actually purchase (of course, the company has become branded in its own right for producing successful and iconic brands—much the same way law firms become branded by the collective reputation of their partners earned over time). Typically, professional service firms fail to take this approach, instead focusing on the firm as a whole with no reference to the individual talent their clients actually hire.

For instance, take a look at the current boilerplate of White & Case LLP:

White & Case LLP is a leading global law firm with lawyers in 37 offices in 25 countries. Among the first US-based law firms to establish a truly global presence, we provide counsel and representation in virtually every area of law that affects cross-border business. Our clients value both the breadth of our global network and depth of our US, English and local law capabilities in each of our regions and rely on us for their complex cross-border transactions, as well as their representation in arbitration and litigation proceedings.

It's informative, but very broad in focus; the perfect example of a standard "big law" boilerplate. Now, imagine applying the "product is the brand"-based marketing technique of The Coca-Cola Company to White & Case LLP:

White & Case LLP ([www.whitecase.com](http://www.whitecase.com)) is one of the world's largest law firms, with more than 2,000 attorneys in 25 countries on call to serve its clients. The firm features numerous attorneys and practice groups consistently recognized as being of the highest quality, including International Arbitration practice group head [Paul Friedland](#), who *Chambers* says "[h]as a more extensive technical knowledge of arbitration than any lawyer out there"; Global Antitrust/Competition practice head [J. Mark Gidley](#), selected by his peers as the world's leading competition lawyer under 45; and Project Finance practice head [Arthur Scavone](#), a Tier 1 *Chambers Global* partner since 2001. As one of the ten-largest firms both in the United States and globally, with [over 35 worldwide offices](#), White & Case has the ability to handle the most complex and far-reaching matters of our clients. Our partners are focused on initiatives to [reduce our environmental footprint](#), provide an inclusive work environment for our associates and staff, and enhance the economic development of the communities where we operate.

Of course, not every law firm is a "big law" law firm, and even smaller firms could benefit from a brand marketer's product-based marketing strategy. Consider, for instance, the current boilerplate of Nexsen Pruet:

Nexsen Pruet, LLC is one of the largest law firms in the Carolinas, with more than 180 attorneys and offices in Charlotte, Greensboro, and Raleigh, N.C. as well as Columbia, Charleston, Greenville, Hilton Head and Myrtle Beach, S.C. Founded in 1945, Nexsen Pruet provides a broad range of legal services to the business community and represents companies and other entities in local, state, national, and international venues. For further information, see [www.nexsenpruet.com](http://www.nexsenpruet.com).

What if it simply said the following instead?

For more than 65 years, Nexsen Pruet ([www.nexsenpruet.com](http://www.nexsenpruet.com)) has represented the Carolinas and beyond with an army of [top-tier-ranked](#) attorneys, including [Marvin Infinger](#), Charleston's "Bet-the-Company Litigator of the Year;" [Elbert Dorn](#), a "Best Lawyer in America" for product-

liability litigation; and [Susi McWilliams](#), named one of “America’s Leading Business Lawyers” in employment law and litigation by *Chambers USA*.

While some might choke over doing this to their overall firm boilerplate, consider instead how this would work for a specific practice area boilerplate. For example, what could DLA Piper do to alter its boilerplate for Government Contracts?

Here is the current boilerplate of DLA’s Government Contracts practice:

DLA Piper has one of the largest Government Contracts practices in the country and enjoys a prominent reputation within the aerospace, information technology, and professional services industries. DLA Piper's attorneys provide a broad and deep range of contract counseling and litigation resources.

It’s short and sweet, but doesn’t tell us much about the power of the practice. What if it took the opportunity to highlight its talent as well?

DLA Piper US ([www.dlapiper.com](http://www.dlapiper.com)) has one of the preeminent Government Contracts practices in the US. One of the largest in the country, our Government Contracts practice has been repeatedly ranked among the top three firms nationally in the discipline by *Chambers USA*. It is led by top-tier attorneys, such as Washington SmartCEO’s Legal Elite attorney, [Richard Rector](#); *Washingtonian*’s “Top Lawyer,” [Carl Vacketta](#); and *Best Lawyers in America*’s Super Lawyer, [Nancy Dix](#), who have prominent reputations in the aerospace, information technology, and professional services industries. The #1 ranked global law firm by *Law360*, we are the only firm that offers both a top-tier US practice in Governments Contracts and the ability to draw upon experienced procurement lawyers in the European Union and throughout much of the world.

Are you curious to see what the boilerplate for your firm or a key practice area would look like if it was more “partner-oriented”? Give it a try yourself or [contact us](#).