

Moneyball and Attorney Bios

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What group has a better success rate in making partner at BigLaw firms: those who graduated from the University of Chicago law school, or those who graduated from the significantly less prestigious Loyola University Chicago School of Law? If you said Loyola, [pat yourself on the back](#).

Any number of reasons may explain this superficially surprising data point. It may be that University of Chicago grads are more likely to head on other jobs—with the government, or as professors—after a few years in BigLaw. Or perhaps Loyola grads tend to have a “regular guy” quality that allows them to connect better with clients. Whatever the reason for it, the data point is a valuable one for hiring partners at BigLaw firms, who may wisely choose to shift more recruiting resources into identifying and wooing the best candidates from schools like Loyola.

This could be called the *Moneyball* approach to law firm management: a willingness to accept the lessons that the data is teaching you (Loyola grads are very good bets), rather than sticking with the views ingrained through gut feeling, tradition, and inertia (we only consider grads from top-14 schools). *Moneyball*, [a brilliant Michael Lewis book](#) before it became a Brad Pitt vehicle, shows how the general manager of the Oakland A's used this data-driven approach to player selection, upending much conventional baseball wisdom along the way.

In a [recent NLJ article](#), Adrian Dayton applied the *Moneyball* approach to legal marketing. He makes a very convincing case that just as a smart hiring partner would direct more resources to recruiting Loyola grads, the smart BigLaw marketing department would focus much more—and invest much more—in its attorney bios. Attorney bios are, after all, where visitors to law firm sites spend half to three-quarters of their time.

This data point is much less surprising than the one above. Clients hire lawyers, not firms—it's only to be expected that prospective clients will care most about individual lawyer pages. And yet . . . they never seem to get the attention they deserve.

How can a firm improve its bios and create a competitive advantage of the type that led the Oakland A's to its remarkable success? Adrian makes two main suggestions, both of which are excellent:

- 1) Establish a schedule for the regular updating/improvement of all bios. There is nothing worse than a stale bio, and the ways in which bios can be enhanced (by linking lawyers' social-media accounts, to give just one example) are always evolving, so the process should be an ongoing one. If your firm is divided into three overarching practice areas, audit the bios for one of those groups each year on a revolving basis.
- 2) Give your biographies some life. Adrian, being the learned type, likens this strategy to a form of persuasion Aristotle called “[pathos](#).” We would probably call it “humanizing your bio.” Either way, it is a highly effective way to elevate the attractiveness of an attorney bio. Include a picture that isn't quite as stuffy—one that reveals something about the attorney. Better yet, include a video snippet of the attorney talking about why she became a lawyer and her approach to her practice. If that investment is too much, include some personal facts throughout the bio: what groups is the attorney involved in outside of the law, what's her regular Starbucks order, what's her favorite book? These will undoubtedly be the parts of the bio that the attorney gets the most comments on, because they are the ones that help website visitors connect to their prospective lawyer. This “humanizing” strategy should be present, also, in describing the attorney's work. Injecting a small bit of personal narrative into a description of the lawyer's expertise—as opposed to relying on a laundry list of practice areas—will bring the attorney bio to life in rewarding ways.

Law firm bios are undoubtedly the most important area of a law firm website and simultaneously the most overlooked. By focusing resources there, a law firms can gain a tremendous advantage on its peers.