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Paula Black has advised law firms around the globe on everything from powerful and innovative design to marketing strategy and business growth. She is an award-winning Amazon-bestselling author and the force behind **In Black & White** (inblackandwhiteblog.com), a blog dedicated to clear, straightforward advice and open discussion of legal marketing issues. For more information on Paula Black, her books and her company please visit paulablacklegalmarketing.com.

5 Things You Might Not Think Are Legal Marketing...But Are!

Many people think of marketing in very specific terms. Ads, brochures, websites, newsletters... But the truth is that everything we do in our day-to-day business life can be filed under “marketing.” Our brand is our greatest asset, and must be reflected in everything we do, say and even send via email. From the appearance of your lobby to your business card, here are five things you may not think are marketing... but are.

How you answer the phone.

It may seem simple, but the way your phones are answered can set the tone for the entire firm. Tip #1: Have a real person answer the phone. It may seem tempting to opt for an automated message, but nothing can replace personal interaction—especially when you’re trying to reach your attorney. Tip #2: Select a patient receptionist with a pleasant tone. If the voice on the other end sounds harried or annoyed, you’ve lost the client before you can even pick up the call. Finally Tip #3: Don’t be afraid to give receptionists a phone script. It will help keep things consistent and make life easier for those answering the phones.

Your office space.

Another simple but effective marketing tool? A clean and well-organized office. Walking into a clutter-free space instantly gives the appearance of organized authority. Not that everything has to be perfect... just the space that clients might see. Keep waiting areas stocked with firm brochures and signage (make sure they know where they are!) and always have receptionists or assistants offer clients water or coffee as they wait. It’s the little things that make the difference.

Your e-mail.

It may seem like a simple form of communication, but your email is prime marketing ground. Call up a blank email on your computer right now. Does it have a signature line? Your contact information? Your firm logo? If not, create one right away. Branding your email makes it instantly recognizable and gives clients immediate access to your non-email contact information should they have questions or concerns. It's one more way to further your brand.

Your business card.

Business cards are one the most frequently underthought marketing materials in any business. It's often the first impression clients may get of your firm, and should always be clean, clear and concise. Make your logo the star and your contact information complete and easy to read. For more on business card design see our past article "First Impressions: How your business card can build your brand."

Everyday interactions.

Remember, you're always marketing. Whether you're sitting in your office or having dinner with a friend, potential clients are around every corner...be ready! You never know whom you'll run into, or who will need your services. The best way to be prepared is to prepare others. Make sure you friends and family (and even your dry cleaner!) know what it is that you do...and why you're good at it. Be careful not to sound like a brochure, tell stories that clearly illustrate what you're working on and give examples of situations or cases that illustrate your strengths within your practice area.

As a former client of mine once said "Marketing is much more than a press release. It's smiling, dressing appropriately and offering your help and services when needed. It's responding quickly to e-mails and phone calls, speaking honestly, working hard and truly understanding what your client or potential client is telling you."

I couldn't have said it better.