

Goodbye, Garbo

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"The world . . . no longer has any tolerance for - let alone fascination with - people who aren't willing to publicize themselves."

So goes the lament in a [recent think piece](#) from Ben Brantley of *The New York Times*. For a guy who normally writes [theater reviews](#) (extremely well, by the way), he proves himself to be a pretty interesting thinker about public relations.

His piece is titled "What Ever Happened to Mystery?," and Brantley notes with some sadness that a figure like [Greta Garbo](#) - whose fame blossomed from the very distance she kept from the world - could never exist today. "Figures swathed in shadows," Brantley says, "are démodé in a culture in which the watchword is transparency."

That is true for celebrities, yes, and it's equally true for professional service firms. Look what's happening at [Cravath](#), perhaps the closest analog BigLaw has to Greta Garbo. The Cravath name is gold, and that used to be enough. But according to *The American Lawyer*, Cravath is hiring [four new marketing employees](#) (two replacements, two new positions), and will reportedly be pitching stories to magazines and vying for awards rankings.

Today, smart actors know that keeping their distance is a ticket to irrelevancy. The smartest ones stay engaged with fans (not via drunken escapades on TMZ, mind you, but in positive forums like [Twitter](#)). It's the same thing with the smartest law firms. Just look at Cravath. Even they have realized it's 2010, and they've got to get out there and make a name for themselves.