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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.

LEGAL MARKETING: When is it time to re-brand your firm?

Though I CONTINUALLY stress the importance of repetition, there are always instances where a firm re-branding is not only smart, but necessary. A new look can breathe new life into a firm, get members and staff excited and is a fantastic way to kick-off a marketing initiative. But when moving forward with the project, there are certain things to consider. As I mentioned above, repetition is key to a great brand so think hard before throwing an existing one away. If your firm has had the same logo for 30 years and it works...don't change it. There are plenty of ways to update materials without an entire re-branding, and often just a little design magic can make a world of difference. Here are 4 instances when re-branding is a good idea:

- 1. Starting a new firm.** In this case it may seem to be about starting a new brand, but in reality the new firm can often be seen as an extension of your personal brand. Confused? If you have a long and illustrious career in a certain area or leave big law to become a solo practitioner your name may very well be your greatest asset. If it's recognizable to colleagues and within the community at large you should, by all means, make it the centerpiece of your branding. Especially if you're a solo practitioner, think carefully about what already exists as your personal brand. Known for wearing red? Use red as your firm color. An expert at commercial litigation? Put it in your tagline. Build on what you've already become associated with rather than starting from scratch...it will help your marketing and business development infinitely.
- 2. Reforming a firm with a new name.** When partners come and go and the firm hierarchy begins to shift, it may be time for a new look. But if the firm has a strong

following and is known within legal circles and beyond, the re-branding process can be tricky. If you decide to stick with the old name (which is not always a bad idea), a simple update can be an easy solution. Adding an icon or toying with colors or layouts can add a fresh look while retaining the name recognition. If you choose to change the name, you may want to consider retaining a bit of the old to keep a connection to the previous firm. Think about how you can apply firm colors or fonts to keep a bit of consistency.

3. Taking the firm in a new direction. Sometimes when firm members shift, the focus of the firm can change. You may bring in new practice areas or eliminate others. You may even choose to market the firm to one specific audience (ie. Aviation, Maritime, Construction, etc...) When this happens it may be time to consider a re-branding. Re-branding with an eye toward a specific audience can have a huge impact on your marketing and business development. Speaking to exactly the clients you want through your branding will make it easy for outsiders to recognize what you do and whom you work with. As with the above examples, however, if your firm already has a strong name recognition it may be smart to stick with that name.

4. Updating or adding to your materials. Make no mistake, there are many firms out there whose firm materials haven't been updated since 1982. If your firm falls into that category, it's definitely time to consider a re-branding. Moving to a new and more modern look can breathe new life into an established firm while giving them a chance to reintroduce themselves (and their attorneys) to clients and colleagues. Little changes such as shortening a long firm's name and tweaking the existing color scheme or icon (or even adding a tagline), are all great branding strategies that won't discount the firm history.

So while small changes may work for some firms, a re-branding isn't always a bad idea. Re-branding can be an exciting project—and one that can reap incredible benefits. Remember to stick to your firm personality, listen to the advice of professionals and above all else (once you've completed the process)...stay true to your brand!