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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 Ways to De-Lawyer Your Writing

Having worked closely with lawyers for a good part of my career, I can safely say that you are masters of many things—negotiations, details, strategic thinking—but when it comes to writing for the masses you may need a little guidance. Trained in legal writing, many lawyers have a hard time making the transition from legal document to biography, article or practice explanation. Writing for the public at large can be a completely different type of writing, especially if you're not used to it, so below I've put together five tips for lawyers to consider when they try their hand at copywriting.

1. Remember your audience. Think about whom you're writing to. Is it a potential client? A current client? Readers of a particular magazine, journal or website? Write to them. Keep a specific person (or job title) in your head as you put the words on paper and it will help steer you away from legalese. If your audience is within a specific industry feel free to use industry terms, if not— try to be as clear and concise as possible.

2. Don't dumb it down. Just because your audience isn't lawyers doesn't mean they don't have a basic understanding of the law. While you do want to keep things simple (meaning free of too much legal language) you can still work within a sophisticated voice. Finding a balance between explanation and commentary is always something to strive for.

3. Avoid the dreaded lists. If your sentence contains a list of more than four practice areas/cases/charges/industries it's too many. If you want to engage your reader and

keep them reading you must tell them why your subject is important, not give them a list disguised as a paragraph. Show them, don't tell them. (Note: If you must make a longer list try it in the form of bullets, it will make it easier to digest for a reader.)

4. Avoid the dreaded statistics. Using statistics to make a point is certainly a great way to hook your audience, but throw in too many and you're sure to lose them. Instead of giving straight-out numbers, try to illustrate your point through narrative copy—meaning relate those numbers back to your audience. Show them how those statistics affect them (and their business) and why or how they need you to help.

5. Inject some personality! Don't be afraid to show some humor, some emotion, and some opinion. Let your voice come through. While writing, use stories that illustrate your point and give examples from real client situations. When putting together your bio, try and give potential clients a real understanding of who you are and what you do... not just a list of schools, cases and organizations you belong to. And when writing copy, help them better visualize your firm by giving your brochure or website copy the same feel. Write a motto, a mission statement or a firm summary and get input from others. Make sure it reflects the firm personality you want clients (and potential clients) to relate to.

In general, remember that you're not preparing a legal document, you're writing to a real person. Lawyers have the built-in advantage that they are experienced writers; it's just small tweaks here and there that can make the difference. Give your copy warmth, personality and information rather than legal statistics and lists and you'll be hooking readers within no time.