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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](http://paulablacklegalmarketing.com).

## Legal Marketing: How To Define Your Points Of Differentiation

You can't be successful at legal marketing and business development without answering one question: What makes you different? With 1,084,504 lawyers in this country, it's important to identify exactly what makes you stand out from the crowd. The first exercise I go through with new clients is to sit down and take inventory of what I like to call their "points of differentiation," those little things that make the difference in day-to-day business and keep clients happy (as well as attract new clients!). But how to identify them? Here are a few ideas...

### **Listen To Your Clients.**

No one knows you better than your clients. Call three long-term clients and ask them what they like most about your relationship and the work that you do for them. Listening to their feedback can help you realize what they truly value about your practice. Get detailed statements and ask for examples to help you better understand.

### **Stick To Three.**

Once you've made a list of the things you think make you different, narrow them down to the top three and reevaluate them. Make sure they're strong enough to be the basis of your future marketing efforts.

### **Be Creative.**

Lots of attorneys return calls promptly, but you may have a "2-hour" rule (as my friend Joe Gagliardo does over at Laner Muchin in Chicago), where all clients

receive a phone or email response within that time frame. All attorneys are experienced in their field; you may have specific expertise in your clients' industries. Example: an aviation attorney who was previously a pilot or worked for an airline. That sets you apart.

**Ask Yourself The Right Questions.**

If you're truly having trouble finding your niche, take a few minutes to ask yourself the following: If your practice were a car, what would it be and why? A beverage? A movie? It may seem silly but thinking from a different angle can lead you to what separates you from the crowd. I often do this with clients and you'll be surprised the insight you get into your practice. The key is focus on the WHY aspect. Realizing why you describe your practice as a Mercedes rather than a mini-van can help you understand what sets you apart for the client. The other key is to go with your gut. Don't think too deeply, just write down the first things that come to mind. Most often, those will be right on target.

**Focus on what clients want, not what you want to say.**

Think of your points of differentiation from a client perspective. What might be a benefit to you as an attorney, may not be seen a benefit to a client.

Take your time and think through your points of differentiation. These will be the building blocks of all your future marketing efforts so make sure they speak clearly to the audience you're trying to court. Once you've identified them, stick with it. Repetition is key in defining your brand and establishing your message!



