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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.

Is it Time to Reevaluate Your Firm Name?

As I tell all of my clients, a true legal marketing plan starts by first defining your firm's personality. Are you established, serious attorneys with a wealth of cases and clients? Or are you young, casual, creative thinkers out to change the world? Or are you somewhere in between? Believe it or not, it all starts with your firm name.

So what's in a name? Our number one rule for firms looking to update their marketing plan is this: shorter is better. Shorter firm names are **easier to remember, easier to say and easier to design a visual identity around**. Of course, shortening a firm name is never easy. Most partners have worked for years to get their name on the firm letterhead, which makes cutting it down an incredibly sensitive subject. Here are our top tips for handling the inevitable task of shortening a name.

Prove it.

Try this test. Tell five people your firm's name. A few days later ask them to recall it in its entirety. If they can't remember... you know you have work to do. Ask your partners to do the same and they'll be able to see firsthand that stringing together five, six or seven names just makes more work for potential clients.

Stick to three or less.

Two (or even three names) seems to be the magic number for most firms. Look around and listen up. How do people within the firm refer to it? I would venture to guess it's by the first two or three names. Sticking to two names also gives firm leadership an edge in softening the blow for those whose names may get cut. Usually the first two names are the most senior partners or founders. Seniority is always a fair argument.

Be concise and memorable.

Remember those two words: Concise and Memorable. Listen to the names and hear how they flow, see how they look together on paper and understand what would make something memorable to a potential client. Trust your instincts.

Compromise.

Consider shortening the firm name for branding purposes only. The legal name can stay the same and all “name” partners can be included in firm materials. This idea worked well for a former client of mine who had a tough time convincing four of the six partners to let their name disappear from the logo. In the end we created a fabulous visual identity using the first two names, yet included the remaining four underneath the logo on printed materials and below the address line on firm letterhead. It updated the look and feel of the firm’s branding while acknowledging the years of work by all six partners.

Set a precedent.

If your firm currently has only two or three partners, set the short-name rule in motion immediately. Make it clear as partners are named, that they will be included in the legal name of the firm, but not in the branding and visual identity.

Firm names are a tricky subject, but ultimately your first opportunity to create a lasting impression on potential clients.

If all else fails never be afraid to call in a marketing professional or consultant. Sometimes the truth is easier to swallow from a stranger. By approaching the discussion from a branding and marketing point of view you can, together, navigate the waters and achieve a delicate balance of **personality, simplicity, memorability and ego.**