

# Watch What You Say About Yourself

By **Larry Bodine**, a business development advisor with Apollo Business Development. He has helped law firms nationwide attract new clients and generate new business by using strategy, business development training and individual attorney coaching. See [www.ApolloBusinessDevelopment.com](http://www.ApolloBusinessDevelopment.com). He can be reached at 630.942.0977 and [Lbodine@LawMarketing.com](mailto:Lbodine@LawMarketing.com).



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It makes a difference how you present yourself – in person and online. Accordingly, lawyers make sure their appearance is businesslike, their stationery reflects their firm, and their business cards include all their key contact information. **Lawyers should also devote the same attention to their bios online.**

A lawyer's online bio is available 24 by 7 by 365, unlike their calling cards. Yet for many lawyers, their Web bio is an afterthought -- a hastily drafted collection of boilerplate that does little to market your practice. This is a missed opportunity, and smart lawyers brush up their online resumes regularly, to keep them current and complete.

As a rule, clients hire lawyers – not law firms. Therefore, the human face of the law firm makes a difference in attracting new business. Your Web bio is your initial introduction to visitors, and unlike random social contacts, you have total control over what you present in your online bio. Exercise this control so that your bio contains:

- **A color photo.** It should be recent, so that when people meet you they don't note to themselves about how you've aged or put on weight. It should be high resolution so that publications can use it when they publish an article you wrote. And it should be color, because color doesn't cost extra to take or display on the Web.
- **The industries you represent.** One of the first things that corporate executives and in-house counsel look for is familiarity with their industry. (Think about it – law firms work the same way: they look for vendors that have experience and references serving served law firms.) Lawyers at Vorys Sater Seymour and Pease list industries; see [www.vssp.com](http://www.vssp.com). For example, Gail C. Ford represents clients in the transportation, manufacturing, banking, environmental, chemical and insurance industries. Your own doesn't need to be exhaustive – just a list of four or five primary industries that you can talk intelligently about.
- **Representative clients.** Potential clients want to know what other companies you've worked for, primarily to substantiate your industry expertise. Also, in-house counsel tend to know each other and like to be able to check you out with their counterparts at other companies. Many law firms list representative clients on their Web sites, because they know they have a strong relationship that will prevent a competitor from poaching their client.

- Business memberships. It is important to list your board memberships and trade association memberships (note: this does not include law organizations; see below). The 450-lawyer firm Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney does a great job with its bios. If you take a look at the bio of Mary Ann Dunham, the [Originate!](#) 2010 Woman Rainmaker of the year at <http://www.bipc.com/professionals.php?PeopleID=132>, you'll see he has an ample listing of professional and other activities set forth.
- **Articles available on the Web site.** If you list an article you wrote, be sure there is a link to it on the firm Web site. Visitors expect your Web site to be interactive, and if the article isn't available on the Web site, it's much less impressive.

### Boilerplate

Here are some items that are considered boilerplate, and are not particularly important in a lawyer's bio:

- **Law school attended.** This is of interested to opposing lawyers who are profiling you, but is not especially interesting to clients. They are not familiar with the comparative reputations of law schools and consider a lawyer's school record to be ancient history.
- **Bar association memberships.** This information is too "inside law" for clients to care about. They can't distinguish between a mandatory and a voluntary bar, and it doesn't matter to them anyway. Clients view bar memberships as lawyers talking among themselves.
- **Anything old.** Don't clog up your online bio with a collection of speeches, memberships and articles you presented more than two years ago. A web site is supposed to inform visitors about what you're doing right now, not be an archive of what happened a long time ago.

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For more on this topic, call:

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