

[Law Firm Branding: Do Your Clients Understand Yours?](#)

By [Cordell Parvin](#) on April 29th, 2015

Quickly tell me what first comes to your mind when you think of your firm's brand.

Does the brand just communicate who you are or what you do or does it also convey what your clients will experience working with you? How do you your firm's clients would answer the same question? How would your lawyers and staff answer the same question?

A lot has been written about branding for law firms and firms have paid consultants a great deal of money to develop the firm brand. I recently saw a New York Times on line article on branding [Letter from Pop!Tech: Tips on Persuasive Branding](#).

The article discussed a three hour primer on branding presented by [Cheryl Heller](#), the founder and CEO of [Heller Communication Design](#). She told the group that a good brand expresses identity, but a great brand conveys a promise. A great brand then would tell your clients and your lawyers and staff what they can expect in return for their fees and time.

According to Heller, employees (your firm's lawyers and staff) are the most important audience any company (firm) has. "If your brand promise does not engage your employees, you won't be able to deliver it."

If you read my recent blog: [Lagniappe: Giving Your Clients Value and Extraordinary Service](#), you read about my old law firm's "brand:" "The Jenkins Experience, the Experience You Deserve."

Those words were at least a promise, so using Keller's test we were on the right track. There was only one slight problem: What did we promise?

At the end of the New York Times article the question is asked: "How do you create a brand message that expresses your identity, delivers a



compelling promise, smf persuades your audience to behave in a certain way. There are four tips:

1. Be brief. Be Clear. The Jenkens Experience, the Experience You Deserve was brief, but it was not clear.
2. Don't clutter your brand promise with references to how you differentiate yourself. That means we should not have cluttered our message with how we give clients the Jenkens experience. Yet again, we needed to have clarity about the meaning.
3. Avoid common words used by other companies. I bet if I went to 100 law firm websites I would see common phrases like: "full service, client focused or client centric, experienced, innovative, strategic, focused, winning, leading, service or serving, committed and my favorite: solutions.
4. Speak to all your constituents. The Jenkens Experience did not speak to lawyers and staff. I doubt that half our lawyers and a tenth of our staff even knew that was our branding slogan.

Business clients have shared in surveys that they want their lawyers to understand their industry, their business and their own personal needs. They do not want to teach their lawyers these things while paying them to learn.

Clearly I am not a branding expert. Yet, knowing what clients want would cause me to focus on those promises. Suppose my old law firm's brand had been: "The Jenkens Experience: Lawyer who understand your industry, your company and your individual needs." I think we could have at least have met the criteria in Cheryl Heller's four tips.

Cordell M. Parvin built a national construction practice during his 35 years practicing law. At Jenkens & Gilchrist, Mr. Parvin was the Construction Law Practice Group Leader and was also responsible for the firm's attorney development practice. While there he taught client development and created a coaching program for junior partners. In 2005, Mr. Parvin left the firm and started Cordell Parvin LLC. He now works with lawyers and law firms on career development and planning and client development. He is the co-author of *Say Ciao to Chow Mein: Conquering Career Burnout* and other books for lawyers. To learn more visit his Web site, www.cordellparvin.com or contact him at cparvin@cordellparvin.com.

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