

# **The Visible Lawyer:** How to Raise Your Profile and Generate Work



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# Chapter 1:

## Where do you need to be visible?

Before you can take steps to become more visible, you need to know where you need to be visible and, more importantly, who you need to be visible to. If you are to work that out, you need to start by asking yourself one simple question: who do I want as clients? There are a number of filters you can apply in order to help you answer this question accurately and effectively. These include:

### **1. Your current client base**

Which of your current clients do you genuinely like working with? Make a shortlist, then take a few minutes out to think about exactly why you like working with them. It may be that they are a similar age to you or from a similar background. It may be that their legal requirements are a little off-centre and therefore the work is more challenging and, by extension, more enjoyable. It may be because their business or their interests are related to a sector you are particularly interested in, common ground which makes spending time with them more pleasurable. Although there are myriad factors that could come out of this exercise, the one thing I can guarantee is that there will be some common themes.

### **2. Sectors of interest**

Are there any industries or groups of individuals that really interest you? If yours is a commercial practice area, for example, it may be retail, sports, food and drink, or games and apps. If yours is a private client sector, it may be that you have a leaning towards particular nationalities, locations, or social demographics. As with all things in life, if you focus in on something

you like and find interesting, any extra work required to crack that particular nut will be less of a chore and more likely to happen.

### **3. Sectors with opportunity**

If your drivers are more financially based, there may be some potential client bases that offer more in terms of potential growth and opportunity than others. For example, the aforementioned games and apps sector is one that looks set to continue to grow on the commercial side. Similarly, more traditional industries like oil and gas may have started to decline, but under the energy umbrella there are new possibilities such as clean tech, and renewables continue to develop and take their place. Meanwhile, on the private client side, a number of professional services firms in the UK have reacted to the continued influx of Chinese nationals by building dedicated Chinese teams.

### **Building brand cameos**

Once you have your common themes, you will have the DNA of your ideal client. We call this a 'brand cameo'. When you have a brand cameo, you will not only be able to go online and actually identify some potential targets, you will also be able to piece together some of their likely behaviours:

- Where do they congregate?
- What do they like to do?
- What do they read?
- Which events/conferences/exhibitions do they attend?
- Which other professionals (accountants, wealth managers, IP attorneys, IFAs) advise them?

With this insight, you can work out how best to reach them. You can go to the places and events they're likely to be at and 'engineer serendipity' by accidentally bumping into them on

purpose. You can start to court editorial opportunities in their preferred publications. You can participate in the discussions they're having online and via social media. You can start to become *visible* to them.

Better still, because you have identified the common traits of your ideal clients, the routes to making yourself visible to those prospects will potentially make you visible to everyone who fits that cameo, not just to one specific target. This means that your marketing and business development is much more likely to actually achieve what should be your primary objective – generating new work.



### **'Yummy mummies', 'Academics', and 'Affluent greys'**

Size 10½ Boots worked with a small regional firm in the UK who wanted to pursue the high net worth market, but they quickly realised such a well-worn and poorly defined grouping was far too woolly if they were going to build an effective marketing strategy around it.

Instead, they started to think a little more creatively and built more focused brand cameos. They carefully considered where each of those groups would congregate and, therefore, what the best communication routes to those different settings would be. The groups and routes they chose were:

- 'Yummy mummies' who hang about in fancy hair salons and coffee shops, and do what ladies of leisure do – go to the gym, and attend the various Ladies Clubs being run locally;
- 'Academics' who in the main lived in different parts of this particular university town and were definitely not turned on by champagne, glitz, and glamour, but instead wanted a more professional, service-driven offering; and

- ‘Affluent greys’ who lived and socialised in very different post codes again and had a very particular set of legal requirements given their level of wealth and stage of life.

The result of taking this more targeted approach was that the messages being put out were more relevant and more memorable, which made them more effective. Because those messages were then delivered through the means most likely to hit their targets, the firm quickly noticed they were not only achieving their primary objective – more work – but also seeing a reduction in their overall marketing spend.

### **Building brand cameos into an effective personal visibility plan**

So, now you have an outline of the clients you want and a fairly accurate insight into their likely personal and/or professional behaviour. You now need to turn this into a plan that will bring you to their attention by utilising the available promotional vehicles.

When you sit down to build your personal visibility plan, the first thing to bear in mind is that you are most definitely not a full-time sales person (nor, I’m guessing, do you want to be), so the activities you choose have to be manageable alongside your fee-earning responsibilities.

When it comes to setting out plans, you are probably already aware of the acronym SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-scaled). While I wouldn’t say you need to follow this structure rigidly, it does provide a good mental tick-list to go through after you set your objectives, because if your plan ticks all of those boxes it will be much more likely to succeed. This is because it will be clear, and you will know:

- Exactly what needs to be achieved (specific);
- Exactly how many times you need to do it (measurable);
- Exactly why you're doing it and how you're going to do it (achievable);
- Exactly what you'll need to do it in terms of time, budget, and additional resources (realistic); and
- Exactly when you need to do it by (time-scaled).

You also need to be mindful of what you are actually good at, and what you will actually be comfortable delivering. If you choose a range of activities you don't like doing, then the chance you'll actually do them reduces, while the likelihood of your finding a reason not to do them increases. However, if you play to your strengths, you will not only be more likely to do what you set out to do, you will actually do it better. Why? Because you will be more confident, more comfortable, more genuine, and therefore more engaging.

And remember, everything you do marketing-wise – from speaking at an international conference down to updating your firm's blog – is in the shop window. If those looking through that window can sense what you're doing is either half-hearted or forced, they will not be impressed by or attracted to you so the majority of your efforts will be in vain.

To simplify the various options open to you, I will break things down into four groups – networkers, speakers, writers, and researchers – and while we will look at the practicalities of each of these in much more detail in the mini-masterclasses later in the book, here is a brief introduction to each:

### **1. Networkers**

When it comes to marketing legal services, there is an incorrect assumption that by 'marketing' we (the marketing and BD community) mean 'networking', and that by 'networking' we mean formal networking events.

It's true that traditional networking will be involved in some shape or form, but you should only include it within your plan if you are going to approach it seriously. If networking is going to be productive, you need to go to every event so that you start to build trust within the group.

You also need to totally forgo the 'went once, didn't get any work, won't go again' mind-set. You need to go in full 'I want to meet you' mode and make sure you put yourself about, talk to as many people as you can, and then follow up properly.

You also need to be patient. Once you are immersed in a particular network, you will receive referrals that convert quickly, but attaining that position may take a while. Again, you have to adopt a mind-set that blocks out 'went once, didn't get any work, won't go again'.

Networking events are a fantastic and proven way of making new contacts, but there are other types of networking out there. You can arrange to meet smaller groups in the pub, get a few contacts with a shared interest together, visit clients and spend some time chatting to them about things other than the matter at hand; you can join sports or personal interest clubs, you can volunteer to join local committees or relevant trade associations, you can even just plan to make more of social events.

My business partner, Bernard Savage, and I have won work from chatting to a fellow parent who turned out to be a lawyer, who – after following up with an invitation for a beer – referred us to a patent attorney he knew. We also won an opportunity for a client to deliver a seminar to a group at the heart of their target market on the back of a chat with a fellow parent at an under-12s football match.

Closer to home, our agency, Size 10½ Boots, wouldn't exist if I hadn't chatted to the enthusiastic stranger who struck up a conversation with me one sunny afternoon at Nottingham Castle.



### Thinking on your feet in the gym

A few days after a networking training session, a senior family partner in Lincolnshire found herself at her local gym in unexpected conversation with a particularly chatty chap she hadn't met before.

By her own admission, her usual reaction would be to make a few polite noises and then gently excuse herself as quickly as possible. However, because her recent training was front of mind, she thought 'you never know' and decided to make an effort to see what happened next.

Having taken time to listen to the man and take an interest in who he was and what he did, she was given the opportunity to tell him what she did. He then told her about his previous divorce and how poor his lawyer had been throughout the process, itself a catalogue of disasters that had them both laughing out loud.

A few days later, he turned up in the partner's waiting room and instructed her on his second and somewhat lucrative separation.

## 2. Speakers

While networking is a proven way to meet people, statistically the most effective way to build visibility is to be the speaker at the event.

If you think about the maths, if you go to a networking event with 60 guests, you may speak to six people. Of those, three may be of professional interest and worthy of meaningful follow-up (i.e. getting together for a coffee – you should always follow up with an email and LinkedIn request). That is only 5 per cent of the attendees.

If you are the key note speaker, you speak to *everybody* present. More than that, you underline your credentials as the 'go to' person in your field for all of those in attendance. Better still, a large percentage of those are likely to come up to you



to give you a card or ask for a copy of your slides – and they wouldn't do that unless they were interested in what you had to say, which means all are either potential clients or introducers (as long as you follow up and stay visible, of course).

In order to use speaking platforms to build visibility, broadly speaking there are two options. You can speak at third-party events, or you can organise and run your own seminars (though it's important to bear in mind the traditional seminar is losing popularity in an age where information is more freely available than ever). In Mini-masterclass 2 we will look in more detail at how to identify and pursue the right third party opportunities and at some more contemporary and more creative seminar models.

### **3. Writers**

Having said that the increased volume of information available today is a threat to speaking, it is however an opportunity when it comes to writing. All of that information has to come from somewhere and be published somewhere by someone.

When it comes to writing, there are a number of options. You can blog, you can write articles, and you can write shorter opinion pieces. You can write for established trade and/or local publications or you can self-publish special reports and white papers or a client newsletter that brings together all of your content for your clients and contacts.

Again, we will look at how to use all of these options to create visibility in more detail in Mini-masterclass 3. We will also look at how to get the greatest possible return from everything you write as well as how to work out what to write about and how best to convey the points you wish to make.

### **4. Researchers**

While you should be engaged in at least one (but preferably more) of the three previous activities, if the idea of marketing and business development really does bring you out in a cold sweat then there is a fourth option: research.

The networkers in your team or at your firm need to know where to go. Similarly, your writers need to know where to write and your speakers where to speak. One of the most often overlooked tasks in business development is research, yet it does make a valuable contribution to your firm or department's marketing efforts.

It's worth noting that, though it does add value to the overall marketing effort, in terms of creating personal visibility, research is not the most productive mechanism. That said, if you are to find the most productive events, networks, speaking platforms, and publications in terms of getting in front of your chosen targets, it is a useful skill to have so we will be looking at desk research in more detail in Mini-masterclass 5.

### **Choosing the most productive marketing options for you**

Nobody knows you better than you. Take some time to think about the various options open to you and which you feel you are best suited to (referring to the relevant chapters for more detail is probably a good idea before you come to a final decision).

There is a view in some quarters that lawyers should push themselves 'out of their comfort zone' and get involved in the activities they are less comfortable with as part of their personal development. I don't subscribe to that view. I think you are far better to concentrate on the things you are naturally good at and do them better, do them more often, do them more efficiently, and do them in a more focused way.

The reason I think that way comes back to the idea that all of this stuff ('stuff' being the technical term for marketing initiatives and activities!) happens in the shop window. I know 'you don't get a second chance to make a first impression' is a cliché, but it only became a cliché because it's true.

Make sure that everything you do to push your personal visibility makes a positive impression on the people you are becoming more visible to by doing it well and doing it enthusiastically. In the main, people want two things from a potential

professional adviser: confidence and likeability. If you are nervous in yourself or in your subject matter, you will promote neither, and the likelihood you'll get a second opportunity to try to create either with a particular person is negligible.

That means that when it comes to shortlisting your preferred routes to market, you need to be realistic and disciplined. Choose which of the four activities you want to use and then jot down how you want to use them next to the heading.

For example, if I were to do this exercise, my results would look something like Table 1.

| Heading    | Activity  |
|------------|---|
| Networking | Continue informal beers in various cities across UK<br>Continue quarterly client lunches with banking contacts<br>Ask for introductions from accountancy clients<br>Ask for introductions from IP clients               |
| Speaking   | No thank you!   |
| Writing    | Continue column for Solicitors Journal<br>Continue column for Private Client Adviser<br>Write <i>Tenandahalf</i> blog<br>LinkedIn postings<br>Maintain presence in other legal publications I've previously written for |
| Research   | Find new legal publications<br>Continue to research the law firms that meet our preferred brand cameo and identify potential introductions  |

Table 1: Plotting your best route to market

## What do you know now?

If you've followed each step (as illustrated in Figure 1), you will now have a mental or physical list that covers:

- Who you want to get visible to;
- How you could get visible to them; and
- How you will get visible to them.

This is your personal business development plan. What you need to do now is to add in the SMART aspect so that you can implement that plan in a consistent and meaningful way so that you start to build visibility. This is exactly what we'll be looking at in Chapter 2.



Figure 1: Where do you want to be visible – and to whom?