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Self-Analysis and a Client-Focused Brochure

By Steven A. Meyerowitz

You are about to read the best column ever written about law firm brochures. This column will tell you everything you need to know or could imagine wondering about brochures. And it will deliver this information to you promptly and efficiently and cost effectively and . . .

Please do not stop reading, even if the first paragraph of this column is enough to make you want to turn the page.

All too many law firm brochures are written like the first paragraph, and all too many readers of law firm brochures -- potential clients! -- react negatively.

A law firm brochure that makes broad general statements that are easily applicable to other firms, that uses platitudes, that talks more about the law firm than how the firm can help clients or that fails to include backup information to prove the brochure's conclusions is of little real benefit.

While there are many facets to preparing a firm or departmental brochure, practice-area capability piece or new business proposal, the most important is the content. Brochures should provide spe-

cific, supportable information that readers need or want.

Before a law firm can determine what to write in a brochure, however, it has to analyze itself. The firm's partners, or one or two partners in each practice area, should think about the questions that follow and put their answers down on paper or provide them to the person drafting the brochure. The writer can then evaluate the information, understand the firm and incorporate that knowledge into the brochure.

Describe The Practice

Lawyers usually have a shorthand way of telling other people what it is they do. "I'm an environmental lawyer." "I handle personal injury cases." "I am a litigator." While such descriptions may be fine to use in certain conversations, they are inadequate for a brochure.

A brochure must describe a law firm's practice in more detail. What different kinds of matters are handled? An environmental lawyer may represent clients

with respect to state and federal regulatory proceedings, general environmental compliance issues, environmental cleanup lawsuits, real estate transactions and financings and also conduct environmental audits. All aspects of the practice should be listed so readers can learn the kind of work the firm does and can retain the firm for any of the wide variety of services it provides.

The "nuts and bolts" part of a practice may not be very exciting, but it helps to pay the bills and should not be forgotten.

The brochure should categorize the kinds of clients that the firm generally represents. Do they have any particularly significant characteristics? Are they large companies or public companies or are they located in any particular geographic area? Are they always defendants in criminal matters or plaintiffs in negligence actions? This is important because it will help to focus the brochure and ensure that it is targeted to the appropriate audience.

Also to be considered is the extent to which the firm's lawyers work with each

Steven A. Meyerowitz is a lawyer and the president of Meyerowitz Communications Inc., a marketing communications consulting company based in Northport, New York.