

BUSINESS & CAREERS

Get on headhunters' radar



THE HEADHUNTER

WARREN SMITH

Perhaps the single most common question a recruiter faces when making a headhunt call is "how did you get my name?" While the exact answer will vary from lawyer to lawyer, recruiters spend a great deal of time researching their market to seek out the best possible candidates for their clients. So what is it, exactly, that puts a lawyer on our radar? Here are a few common traits standout lawyers exhibit which draw the attention of recruiters (and clients) alike. We in the industry refer to them as the "4 P's":

Profile

You have to be known to be found. This is not to suggest only high profile rainmaker lawyers establish themselves on a recruiter's radar; profile can be established in the market through a variety of different activities. Reputation for excellence, a specialized knowledge base, or unique market connections are all facets a recruiter considers when determining a lawyer's market profile. Personally, I also

look for a lawyer's profile *outside* the legal market; this tells me a great deal about that lawyer's client reputation, which is often of even greater interest to a firm seeking to acquire talent in the marketplace. The key here is to understand how best to build your profile in a manner which plays to your personality strengths.

“Publishing remains a critical component of establishing your credentials in the market, as it helps reinforce your market strengths in a public forum.”

Publish

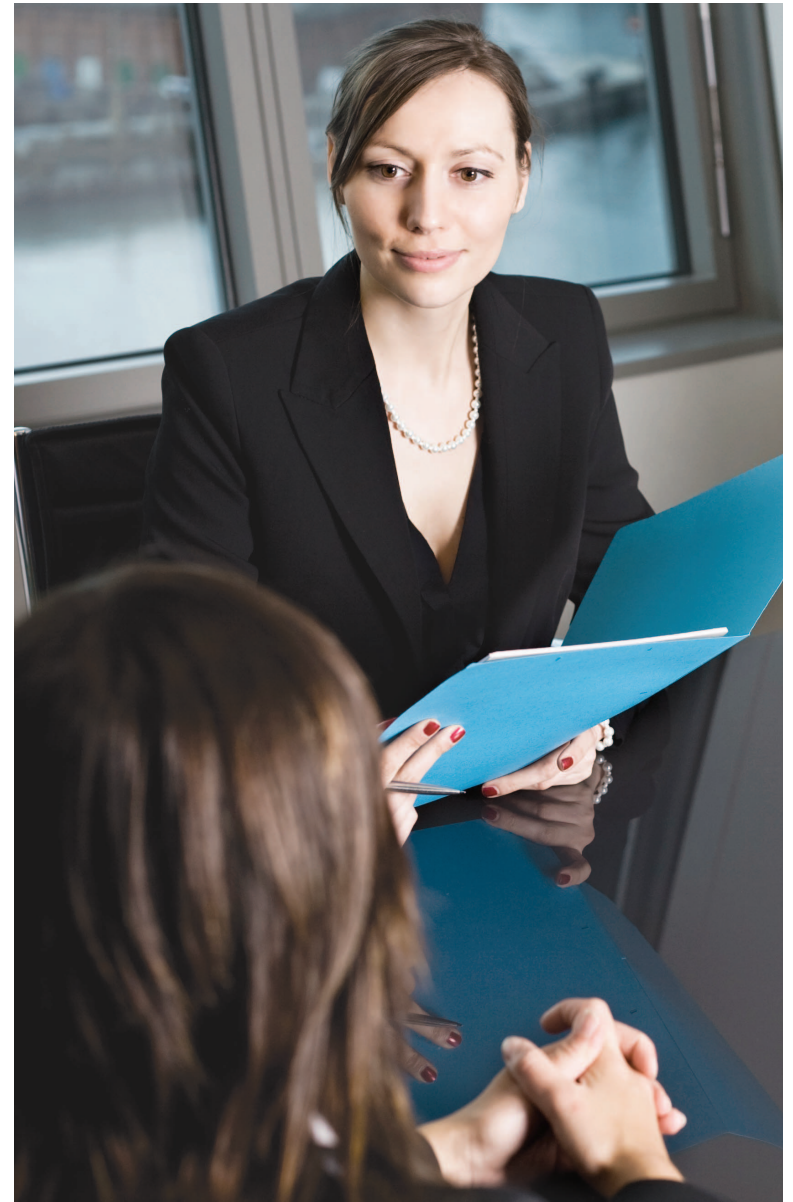
Publishing remains a critical component of establishing your credentials in the market, as it helps reinforce your market strengths in a public forum. The key to effective publishing is to determine the forum that best suits your talents and strengths as a lawyer, and then incorporate

publishing efforts into your daily activities. Publishing can take the form of an article in a peer reviewed journal, writing a mainstream news article, or establishing credentials with key journalists as one of their go-to quotable sources on issues related to your area of practice. Social media is a real option as well; an effective blog or Twitter account can quickly and significantly augment your publication credentials in the market. The benefit with published material is it persists in the market (and on the Internet) beyond the original presentation, making it easier for both recruiters and clients to find you down the road.

Present

Public presentation, whether at forums, roundtables, client seminars, or continuing legal education (CLE) events remains one of the great ways to showcase your knowledge in an interactive environment. Done consistently, presenting reinforces a market impression of an expert status in your chosen field. Clients, perhaps even more so than recruiters, will often use this to assess potential counsel beyond the initial personal referral/introduction. Similarly, recruiters monitor events and seminars for key and

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Smith recommends using the "4 P's", profile, publish, present and plan, if you want headhunters to start calling.

Essential to keep track of what is already out there on the Web about yourself

Brand

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extent you're being discussed as a lawyer or firm, you need to be aware of it. And if you don't show up at all — well, nothing says something, too.

3. Take an active role in your brand.

Unless you have an online stalker with an axe to grind, nobody has more influence over your appearance on the Internet than you. It takes comparatively little effort to shape your online brand, but that effort has to be sustained, consistent and strategic. Here are some key steps:

Know your target market

This is a must-do for business development generally, but especially for the Internet, which basically consists of everybody. What specific demographic target are you aiming to reach: clients, industries, regions? Who are your competitors in this space and what are they doing online?

Build your content

You can't manage something that doesn't exist. Hang out your online shingle, not just through a website but also through blogs, e-newsletters and podcasts, making sure that this content delivers the key messages you want to convey about you and your practice.

Build a network

The best blog in the world won't produce results if no one reads it, and your best source of readers is your own established network. Before or during your production of online content, develop a network of contacts who share your interests and who will help spread your word through links, recommendations and conversations.

Stay focused on the practical

Thought leadership is great, but few clients are looking to hire thought leaders; they want lawyers. Only academics exclusively brand around expertise; every other lawyer should consider the business implications of what

they do online. Establish your real-world offerings, then grow your online brand around them.

SEO and content are connected

Search engine optimization (SEO) is an important part of creating an outstanding online profile. But Google favours pages that contain great, relevant content and that are supported by a solid network of legitimate links. If you want good SEO results, produce good content to which people want to link.

Look down the road

A quarterback throwing downfield aims the ball not where the receiver is now, but

where he will be when the ball arrives. Similarly, you should brand only what you intend to offer in future. Even if you're having success in an area today, don't push it as your brand unless you aim to be doing it months or years from now. ■

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DOs & DON'Ts



Keep covered at work, even when it's hot outside

Fashion

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Ross Woodford, a former stylist in London, England, who now lives in Beaver Bank, N.S. "Lawyers need to remember that they still need to look professional while trying to keep cool."

Ultimately, said Chris Hornberger, a partner with Halifax Global, a management consulting firm based in Nova Scotia, "you should dress like your client dresses or a notch above. Your client will set the tone for what is appropriate."

The greatest challenges, and choices, are faced by women. "For men who are lawyers, there may be the tightest restrictions," said Jackson. "For women, there are more options, but there is also more opportunity for mistakes."

For women, those mistakes

include sandals, bare legs, and clothing that is too tight, too short or exposes too much skin, said Ross Woodford. "Clothing should be made of natural fibres with just enough man-made fibre to keep items from wrinkling."

"Never wear anything that is too tight," she added. "You should be able to swing a skirt around your hips without it pulling up or creasing but not be baggy looking. It's a good test to ensure that you are buying the right size."

Another no-no is cleavage, stressed Hornberger. "There is no occasion in the office when it's appropriate to expose your cleavage. Rest assured, people notice—and the attention is not positive."

Which is not to say, of course, that lawyers cannot be fashionable in summer clothes. They just need to be aware of their appearance.

"As the weather warms up, it's only natural to dress lighter to keep cool—but many laid-back, breezy clothes are not office-appropriate," said Ohnjec. "Employees should try to look polished and professional at all times, even when dressed casually. That means tucking in shirts, wearing pressed clothing, and following the attire guidelines your firm or corporation has established."

"Also pay attention to footwear," he said. "A lot of sandals or casual shoes may look great after hours but are not appropriate for a legal work environment. If you have to ask yourself whether something is appropriate to wear to the office, chances are it isn't."

Common sense is the best barometer, said Jackson. "Short shorts probably don't lend themselves to the workplace. Neither do flip-flops.

If it tends toward beach wear, it's likely inappropriate."

Men's attire will be well suited for summer. "Men should wear lightweight suits in neutral colours, and keep light colours for days when you will be in the office catching up," said Ross Woodford. "Darker colours present a more authoritative look and are best worn when important meetings are scheduled. A crisp white or lightly coloured shirt and tie are necessary at all times."

What is never acceptable, she noted, are frayed collars or cuffs, rings around the collar, neckties not properly knotted, and scruffy shoes.

Many firms have a casual day for lawyers and staff, a time to loosen the pant strings a little. Sometimes it is a little too much. "Lawyers need to understand what the firm means by casual wear, and they need to

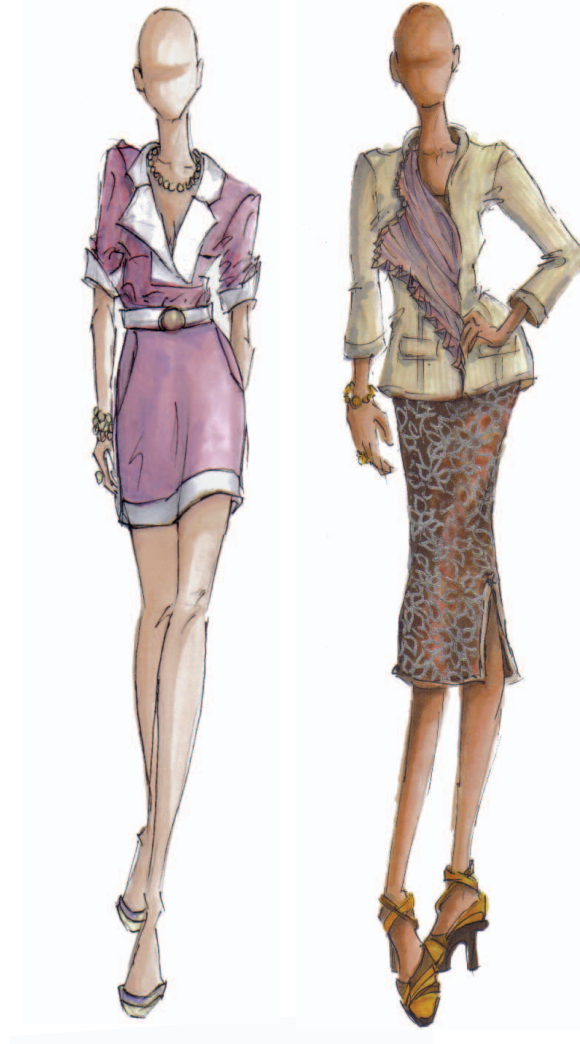
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WHAT'S HOT THIS Summer?

SUMMERTIME FASHION is fun yet professional. Be Envid, a designer clothing outlet in Pueblo, Colo., and internet retail store, points to two top trends for women. First, there are flowers—everywhere. Pick your favorite blooms on dresses or skirts. "Those cool summer fashion clothes are the hit this hot, hot summer season," said owner Anne Niccoli. "I recommend adding fashion accessories that fit your personality."

The second trend sweeping stores is high-waist fashion. "High waist is in, whether tulip skirts, balloon skirts, shorts, and pants, the high-waist fad is looking brilliant to all the ladies of style," said Niccoli.

For men, this summer exemplifies a shift from the "skinny boy" suit to one with a little more atten-hut [a military term meaning come to attention], wrote Daniel Dykes on fashionising.com. "Think of a cut that... would appeal to a military officer," he said, "one that accents a sense of the masculine through three key silhouette elements: broad shoulders, a slim waist, and slim trousers."



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Doing a presentation is a great way to get your name out there.

Have a clear strategy to get headhunters to give you a call

Headhunter

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emerging legal personalities. This helps us stay abreast of rising talent and leading lawyers for future headhunting opportunities.

Plan

Perhaps the most important key to getting the headhunter to call is the same used to build a successful (and enjoyable) practice: successfully implement your business plan. Understanding your personal strengths, and building a plan to showcase them in the market remains a universal theme amongst all lawyers who recruiters and clients consistently seek out. While it is a given that all leading lawyers must first be good lawyers, it is not enough to rely solely on your knowledge of the law to build a successful practice in today's market.

While the temptation may be to toil away at your desk, working solely on matters for other partners or a select few clients at the firm, this may limit your opportunities for growth down the road, whether at your firm or in the market generally. Recruiters make a career out of tracking talent in the market; if we don't know who you are or where to find you, odds are potential clients or future employers won't either. ■

Warren Smith is a Managing Director with The Counsel Network, Canada's oldest and most respected lawyer recruitment and career consulting firm. He is also the only Canadian elected to the Board of Directors for the National Association of Legal Search Consultants (NALSC), North America's leading legal recruitment industry association.

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