

Business & Careers

Showcase your success, but do it tastefully



Warren Smith
The Headhunter

I was recently at lunch with a highly successful, up-and-coming lawyer who recently received a leadership award in the legal community. He was doing all the right things with his practice, and not surprisingly his firm strongly supported him in his application in obtaining this recognition.

But despite the enormous amount of effort put forth by both parties, what struck me was how little was done after the award in terms of leveraging the lawyer's profile.

Profiling your success as an award-winner is undoubtedly tricky business. Promote it too much, and it comes across as "Look at me!" Conversely, by failing to capitalize on your success, you miss the opportunity to properly raise your profile, which is typically one of the underlying motivations in seeking the award in the first place.

Having worked with many top lawyers who have won such awards, here are some of the steps past winners have taken to make the most of their moment in the spotlight.

Have a marketing plan

Perhaps the most important step in maximizing the effect of an award is having a plan (and just taking out an ad in an industry publication is not a plan). Consider updating your web profile, letterhead, business cards, and signature blocks to draw attention to your success. Most



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awards typically have a logo you can include in your materials.

Explore how the firm could potentially highlight the award on your behalf in firm newsletters, publications, and advertising—your success is their success, and it's often better for the firm to be celebrating that as opposed to you doing it on your own.

Engage the media

Most likely your firm will send out a press release recognizing your success—consider if there is a unique angle or audience to whom this award may be of particular interest. Did you grow up in a small town? Are you involved in a specific community, be it faith, cultural, or special interest-based?

Brainstorming with your marketing department will help them better focus their outreach efforts, and increase their success in profiling yours.

Thank your clients

One of the easiest ways to profile your success is by thanking your clients in helping to make the award possible.

This is perhaps the most convenient way to draw attention to the award in a complimentary manner.

If your media efforts bear fruit, consider including the article as a third-party testimonial on the award as well.

Leverage alumni networks

One group that is generally on the lookout for opportunities to profile your success is your alumni network—this need not be restricted to university alumni networks. For example, if you are in-house, consider sending a note to your former law firm, as they will often have an alumni newsletter to send to others in the profession—this can help increase the visibility of your award across a broader audience.

In the end, like all things, awards are

what you make of them—recognize you don't win awards to hide them in your closet. Once you've made the decision you're going to seek out public recognition, don't feign humility as an excuse for not having a plan to make the most of the recognition you are due.

There are ways to highlight your success in a tasteful manner. You simply need to put the same, if not more effort into properly showcasing you and your firm's success as you did in obtaining the award in the first place.

Warren Smith is managing partner of The Counsel Network, and the first Canadian to be elected president of the National Association of Legal Search Consultants (NALSC), North America's leading legal recruitment industry association. You can follow him on twitter @lawheadhunter.

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