

# LEGAL BUSINESS

## Legal advertising "way beyond putting a one-liner in the telephone book"

By Jane Mundy  
Vancouver

In the past several years, many successful law firms have embraced the advertising efforts that were once thought of as undignified and un-lawyer-like. Indeed, some firms have ongoing advertising campaigns that go way beyond putting a one-liner in the telephone book.

Competition for clients is getting tighter, and as the number of lawyers increases, firms such as Ramsay Lampman Rhodes (RLR), a large law firm in Nanaimo, B.C., realize the power of advertising and act on that knowledge.

RLR recently launched a new ad campaign to coincide with the firm's 26th anniversary. RLR's advertising campaign is diverse: It uses a tagline (a.k.a. "slogan"), a logo, and has even found a new spot to place an ad ... on Nanaimo public buses.

David Brooks, a partner at RLR, handles advertising and has seen the firm grow in correlation to its marketing and advertising budget. "Other firms advertised heavily [on] bill-

boards and T.V., and I felt they were getting more work" as a result, said Brooks. He has talked his partners into allocating increasingly more money each year: RLR now spends 10 times more on its advertising budgets than it did a decade ago. In that time it has grown to be one of the largest law firms on Vancouver Island and one of only a few full-service firms.

Brooks attributes a great portion of increased business to advertising. "I've basically learned to focus on brand recognition to increase our profile," he said, and to that end, the firm acquired a new logo, which is "RLR" on wavy green, blue and red stripes. "I put it on everything, from pens and hats to the sides and back of the bus — people have to see it there, they have no choice."

Transit ads in particular are geared towards the firm's personal injury practice but they have created brand awareness for the firm as a whole.

Another big bang for RLR's buck is sponsorship of various sporting events and teams. It has



One of Ramsay Lampman Rhodes' new bus ads, photo courtesy of Skunkworks Creative Group

placed signage by the scoreboard and purchased team jerseys. "For the cost of a set of uniforms, generally less than \$1,000, we get our name and logo on team jerseys," said Brooks. That's a whole lot of goodwill and parental appreciation. "And every time our team plays, the local newspaper reports us, giving us a free plug."

Where appropriate, Brooks concentrates on logo exposure. The logo is included in advertisements in event programs and signage in the lobby for various arts performances.

RLR's approach is geared toward awareness building and supporting the local community rather than a hard sell. For example, the only wording in the sports-themed placements is "Enjoy the Game" and in the arts-oriented pieces, "Enjoy the Show".

The firm also places ads in newspapers and buys banners in special edition issues, again geared toward brand recognition. "When someone glances through the [telephone book], something subliminal happens because everything revolves around the logo," he said.

Although hesitant about not getting his logo across the airways, Brooks recently placed some ads on the local radio station, "We paid for a lot of airtime — jump in with both feet or don't bother," he advised. "I advertised in a specific area where we don't have a large portion of the

personal injury market; it's a long-term commitment and you have to be patient, but I'm going to hang in there."

Derek Jonson, a partner at RLR said, "Particularly when we first launched this current image, people would comment that they liked the logo and our new look; I think it is about creating an image that will be recognized when they need a lawyer."

Both partners were instrumental in the initial decisions on transit advertising and community involvement. But to take it to the next level, RLR retained an outside marketing company. Jonson called Doug Jasinski, a lawyer he had worked with on a

Jasinski.

And the tagline — "Legal Excellence. Island Values" — communicates succinctly what the firm is about. RLR has a smaller geographic market than a Vancouver firm, for example, but nevertheless prides itself on the calibre of its legal talent. At the same time, as a local firm it espouses a deep understanding of the communities it serves.

RLR's advertising campaign goes to the heart of its marketing strategy: "Many law firms still tend to do a lot of scattergun marketing — with different practice groups or departments within a firm each doing their own thing without looking at each piece more strategically as part of a larger whole," said Jasinski. "For the last few years RLR has entrusted us with the creative execution for virtually all of their

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marketing campaign several years ago and who is now Agency Principal at Skunkworks Creative Group.

"Our role was to develop a new corporate identity for the firm including a new colour scheme, logo and tagline; in other words, they needed a refresher," said Jasinski. Most law firm logos consist of a word-mark of three or four names in a particular font, but RLR realized that a visual icon (something that is still unusual in the profession) would help anchor the brand to people's memory. "They also use the descriptor 'Lawyers' rather than the more formalistic 'Barristers & Solicitors' in their logo which I think helps to convey to their audience a no-nonsense, plain English sort of practicality," said

marketing and as a result we have been able to develop a very consistent brand for them." Its telephone book advertising has a similar look and feel to its print advertising, its website matches its transit advertising — all of it fits together into a unified platform, according to Jasinski. The net result is recognition and reinforcement: "You are no longer starting from scratch each time out."

Ramsay Lampman Rhodes knows the importance of visibility to their clients and potential clients. The cumulative effect of these non-traditional media placements alongside the more traditional advertising, its lawyers believe, has allowed RLR to grow into one of the biggest multi-service firms on Vancouver Island.

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