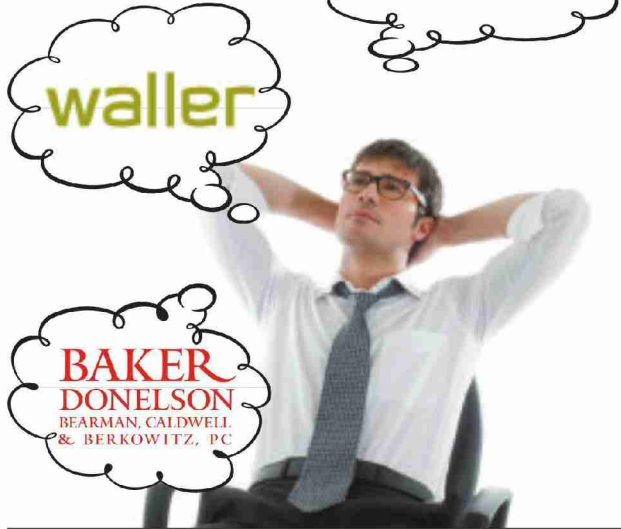


WHAT'S IN A BRAND?



branding concept.”
 Baker Donelson has made small changes, altering the font of its logo and launching a website, but Severson underscored a basic branding concept: You are what people think you are.
 “It speaks to, ‘What do you think of when you hear Baker Donelson?’ And then whatever those words are that come out of somebody’s mouth is what becomes the brand of the firm,” he said.
 But getting that word out is where firms, and other professional service companies, have faced a deluge of skepticism and hesitancy.
 Ten years ago, for example, leaders at **Butler Snow** might have questioned the use of the firm’s budget to do any sort of marketing.

“One of the barriers in the past has been ... many law firms probably think they run the risk of losing some of that sophistication and professionalism,” said Suzanne McKay, a business development manager at Butler Snow. “And then also, it wasn’t so long ago that bar rules prevented us from doing a lot of advertising. So that’s something that has evolved over the last decade.”

Butler Snow touts the firm as focused on teamwork with no billable hours or origination fees. But the firm doesn’t have an associated tag line.

And while cost plays a role in that, Butler’s chief marketing officer Sherry Vance said getting to that point also will take time.

“There is a no doubt that legal marketing is here and is going to progress and will be far more sophisticated than it is today,” she said.

Tradition trumps trendy with law firm branding

By **ANNIE JOHNSON**
 Contributing Writer

There’s a reason you don’t equate your attorney with some big logo or flashy commercial or catchphrase: Law firms haven’t always been the branding type.

When Waller Landsen Dortch & Davis shortened its moniker to Waller in May and unveiled a forest green logo, the move was out of the ordinary for

the typical law firm.

The reasons for the trepidation vary, but underscore an important balance that exists between a firm and its clients: The work is serious and sometimes unnerving, so ensuring a law brand isn’t too flashy can help put a company at ease.

“If you ask our clients or the clients in most any law firm, they will tell you that they hire lawyers, not law firms,” said Adam Severson, chief marketing and business development officer for Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz. “And I think that has been one of the fundamental challenges in getting firms and lawyers to agree on any significant

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Top brands

None of the leading U.S. law firm brands have a presence in Nashville.

1. Skadden
2. Jones Day
3. Kirkland & Ellis
4. Sidley Austin
5. Wachtell
6. Latham & Watkins
7. Baker & McKenzie
8. Morgan Lewis
9. Gibson Dunn
10. Sullivan & Cromwell
11. DLA Piper
12. Mayer Brown
13. Hogan Lovells
14. Fulbright & Jaworski
15. Cravath
16. Weil Gotshal
17. Baker Botts
18. Shearman & Sterling
19. K&L Gates
20. Vinson & Elkins
21. White & Case
22. Morrison & Foerster
23. Davis Polk
24. Wilmer
25. Simpson Thacher

Source: 2012 study
 by brand research company Acritas

