



Barristers, be bold!

WARNING – THIS ARTICLE MIGHT OFFEND SOME BARRISTERS

“Where the bloody hell are you?” Lara Bingle’s plea from Tourism Australia’s ad campaign seems equally relevant for Australia’s barristers. If I were a barrister, I would do something about making myself easier to find – sure being subterranean is mysterious, but it is unlikely to be good for business. From what I hear, many barristers would like more business. So why be so coy about what you have to sell – you and your experience?

I have spent hours scouring Bar Association websites. It was not fun. I searched for bankruptcy barristers. Do you know that the South Australian Bar does not have bankruptcy as a searchable category? The NSW Bar does, but when you trawl through the list of barristers who claim to be knowledgeable in bankruptcy, many of them also claim to be knowledgeable in up to another 15 areas of practice, some as disparate as transportation, intellectual property and competition.

WEBSITES THAT WORK

If being bewildered and beleaguered by trying to find a bankruptcy barrister is not enough, you will also feel intensely dissatisfied once you click through to a barrister’s profile. Why? Because they reveal so little about their experience.

That is, unless you happen upon N J Allan from Trust Chambers in NSW. I’ve never met N J Allan. I have no idea if he is any good, but he links me to his website, which is modern, tells you what he does, how he charges and has a Skype forum. There is even music.

Up there with N J Allan, but without

IF I WERE A BARRISTER, I WOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT MAKING MYSELF EASIER TO FIND – SURE BEING SUBTERRANEAN IS MYSTERIOUS, BUT IT’S UNLIKELY TO BE GOOD FOR BUSINESS.”

Six things I hate about barristers (in order of magnitude)

	Behaviour	Message to client
1	Rarely prepared for meeting with instructing solicitor and client of instructing solicitor.	You are not important; this is not interesting enough; I am a very busy and smart person and can pick up what is needed right away.
2	Do not provide advice within agreed time frame.	I am a very busy person, you can wait.
3	Case jammed at last moment and cannot appear for you.	Inadequate diary management, disregard for impact on client.
4	Indicate likelihood of success is very high.	You have a good case.
5	Days before going to trial, indicate that the likelihood of success is problematic.	Barrister got it wrong; why did law firm recommend this barrister?
6	Insist on accommodation superior to that routinely taken by the client’s managing director.	Lack of commercial perspective; and I am a very important person.

the groovy website, is Victorian barrister Rosaline Germov. Her brief CV paints a clear picture of her experience and, when you download her four-page CV, you are left in awe of her achievements and how well she has structured her CV to make it interesting and informative.

When you Google N J Allan and Rosaline Germov, you click through to genuinely helpful information. This is not true of what happens when you Google many barristers’ names.

Most barristers’ profiles provide little more than name, chambers, DX, clerk, phone, fax, email address, a long list of practice areas and unflattering photos.

WORD OF MOUSE

We all know clients can brief barristers directly. Do they? From what I hear, they do not. Barristers, why don’t you make it easier for people to find you, and find out something about you? We all understand that word of mouth is very important and the effectiveness of clerks is very important but until now, word of mouse (and, yes, I mean mouse) and fundamental client service doesn’t seem to have been recognised as being quite as important. And they are.

In researching this article, I spoke to many solicitors and in-house counsel. I felt like the scriptwriter for *10 Things I Hate About Barristers*, yet I only have room to share the top six.

MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE

Addressing these six things is pretty easy. It is mainly about communication and putting yourself in the position of

one of your most valued work sources – your instructing solicitors.

A few suggestions:

- give instructing solicitors an up-to-date and informative CV for use with their clients. Have your CV available on your chambers’ site.
 - check that you’re easy to find when Googled – ensure the link to your informative CV works.
- Finally, consider how you can be of more value to your loyal law firms. Start by asking them what you could do that they would find helpful. They are likely to suggest things such as:
- participating in technical legal briefings for clients
 - running advocacy training for their lawyers
 - sharing stories with their lawyers about what life is like at the Bar
 - writing an article for use in their client newsletters.

Barristers of Australia, I urge you to stop hiding your light under a bushel. Let your market (and you know who that is) know how you can be of value and what you have done that makes that true. Show them a little of your personality and a lot of your passion for your craft. Match that with a stronger focus on client service and, who knows, the percentage of the working poor at the Bar may decline. ●

Trish Carroll, principal of Galt Advisory, helps law and business advisory firms devise and implement practical and successful marketing and business development strategies. She has not done that for barristers – yet. www.galtadvisory.com.au