

For celebrity lawyers, it's all about the packaging



While the recession may have been unkind to the legal industry, you're a lawyer who's pretty sure you're an exception. You've identified a hot little niche for yourself and read every word ever written on that topic. There's just one problem: Every time you start talking about your new expertise - say the legal implications of derivative instruments - you clear the room.

Enter Maggie Jessup, fame coach to the rich but not famous. To decode the fame gene, Jessup and her husband, Jay, studied the career trajectories of 75 powerful and famous people, from the Dalai Lama and Mother Teresa to Gloria Allred and Nancy Grace.

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What those superstars all have in common is a willingness to do what the Jessups think anyone — lawyers included — can and should do to rise to the top of their field. They play to what the public wants. They're composed, articulate and fun. They're like Austin Powers, Mike Myers' ctitious "international man of mystery" — women want him and men want to be him.

"We're not saying lawyers should go out and try to become the next Paris Hilton," Maggie Jessup explained from her home in Vancouver, Wash. "But in an industry where advertising was once completely taboo, look at a lawyer like Melvin Belli: He was this young guy with a cigar hanging out of his mouth, red piping on his jacket, driving a Bentley and throwing sound bites at any reporter who would listen." (Belli, the "King of Torts," famously represented Jack Ruby, for free, after Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald.)

The same tactic can be applied to less glamorous fields, the Jessup say. An environmental lawyer who wants to dominate the field should be on every channel that will have the lawyer, "commenting on everything that Al Gore does," Maggie Jessup said.

The trick is how to get on air in the first place. For about \$4,000 a month, the Jessups will tear you down, repackage you and roll you out to a media hungry for charismatic experts. It's not fakery, they insist; it's about developing your "maximum authentic self."

First step: public speaking and media training. Lawyers are "already brilliant; they've already mastered all the dry stuff," Jessup said. "Now they just need to learn how to communicate."

For a bit of fame training, pick up their new book, "Fame 101: Powerful Personal Branding and Publicity for Amazing Success." The book suggests that you listen to recordings of speeches and presentations by leaders in your field. Powerful speakers, the Jessups write, sound unrehearsed and humble and can weave in dramatic anecdotes that capture a listener's attention.

Once they've taught you how to speak, the Jessups will create a personal brand for you, complete with press releases, glamour shots, a Web site and even a book deal.

"Too busy" to write a book? The Jessups will brook no such excuses. "Get a digital recorder, put a teddy bear in front of you and talk to it for 10 to 20 minutes on your subject," Maggie Jessup said. "There — you just wrote a chapter. And it's conversational!"

And don't forget to sex up that book title, Jessup said. "Which is going to sell better: a book called 'Issues in Intellectual Property Law' or a book called 'Nail the Bastard'?"

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D.C. lawyers to the stars

Here are just a few D.C. lawyers who have made names for themselves representing high-profile clients in the otherwise not-so-sexy legal field.

A. Scott Bolden
Reed Smith LLP

Represents: Carlos Allen, White House party crasher No. 3, anybody accused of being an Adrian Fenty crony

Reid Weingarten
Steptoe & Johnson LLP

Represents: Roman Polanski, former WorldCom chief Bernard Ebbers, D.C. developer Douglas Jemal

Ted Olson
Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP

Represents: George W. Bush, gay marrying types

Robert S. Bennett
Hogan & Hartson LLP

Represents: President Bill Clinton

Warren Gorrell
Hogan & Hartson LLP

Represents: Represented CarrAmerica of cials in sale to Blackstone Group

S. Scott Morrison
Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

Represents: Western Development's Herb Miller in feud with EastBanc's Anthony Lanier

Peter Buscemi
Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP

Represents: The JBG Cos.' Ben Jacobs in dispute over convention center hotel deal

Kenneth Wainstein
O'Melveny & Myers LLP

Represents: Washington Wizards player Gilbert Arenas

Peter White
Nixon Peabody LLP

Represents: Wizards player Javaris Crittenton

Chuck Rosenberg
Hogan & Hartson LLP

Represents: Wizards gun incident witnesses

John Nassikas III
Arent Fox LLP

Represents: The whole Wizards organization

Brendan V. Sullivan
Williams & Connolly LLP

Represents: Oliver North, Dick Grasso, Henry Cisneros