

ACCOUNTANCY

BEST FOOT FORWARD

Times are tough, yes, but clients are sure to notice if a business starts cutting corners.

Comment: Judy Reynolds

● In tight economic conditions, many businesses have a natural instinct to bunker down, retreat and reduce marketing and profile-raising activities – when the opposite should be done.

Challenging economic times let professional firms stand out, show they are flexible and responsive to changing circumstances, and meet client needs under all business scenarios.

Today, brand is everything and, by definition, successful brands have high profiles. A good brand is a composite of factors including quality of work, profile, perceptions and the intrinsic promise contained within the overall offering.

Does your branding need a makeover? Is it tired and jaded? Do the logo, letterhead, brochures and other collateral material properly reflect where your firm is now and where it is going?

Customers' expectations will more than likely have changed in response to tougher conditions. Respond and reposition where necessary. Above all, think what the customer wants and strive relentlessly to provide it. Be the visible, relevant solution.



Appearance counts:
Business coach
Judy Reynolds

Ensure you have a quality website. This is often the first port of call for prospective clients, and provides an anonymous means of checking out a business. The website needs to inform the reader of what the firm does, its culture, its range of skills and point of difference. Posted client testimonials are compelling third-party endorsements of how good a business is.

Be seen. Attend lunches, dinners and community events. People are more likely to buy from someone they can see rather than from an anonymous name. Well-recognised industry figures are usually prosperous industry figures.

Dress to match your professionalism and charge-out rates. Remember that appearances count.

Network. Hold business and social functions for existing and potential clients. Speak at seminars and conferences where client prospects are likely to be. This adds stature both to you and your firm's brand, and is a silent endorsement of your skills and standing.

Talk about how you can help clients make money and solve their problems.

Consider stylish, arresting and persuasive advertisements that are optimistic in tone. Secure exposure in trade and professional journals or, ideally, mainstream media – this says you and your firm are experts.

When it comes to visibility and marketing, be bold and be different. **BRW.**

Judy Reynolds is a director of Sothertons Gladstone, chartered accountants and business advisers, and a business coach.

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BRW.

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