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**Gaynor Meilke • Kristy Short • Mar. 13, 2014**



Accountants tend to fall in the analytical–left brain–thinker camp. This makes it difficult for some practitioners to make the transition to right brain creative thinking when the time comes to get a marketing program up and running. Additionally, many accountants still cling to the misconception that everything they put out into

the market must be stoically professional—and that tends to rule out creative

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## **Tell a *Different* Story About Your Firm**

It's time to get more intimate. Clients and prospects want to view their accountant as not just an advisor, but as a trusted friend as well. Show a little more of yourself to really create a unique brand—one that sets you apart from all the other firms with the corporate blue logo and power ties. Take your marketing communications to a new level of cool and unique. Explain who you are (in your own style), why you do what you do (say it with passion), and how your services help clients succeed (clients love to hear how you can help them). Try not to spew out a dry resume when you tell your story. Instead, give it some creative color.

Once you've found your new voice, spice up your marketing initiatives even more by adding engaging images and graphics and eye-catching colors. Don't be afraid to be quirky...this is a surefire way to set your communications apart from everyone else who follows a boring blue template.

## **Sass Up Your Website**

If your website looks like a generic template and reads like a CV...it's time to reevaluate. You really have to get into the brand mindset—that is, how do you want visitors to “feel” about your firm. Take the time to create custom content that properly relays your exclusive story (lose any generic boilerplate), and design a site that is aesthetically compelling and easy to navigate. Also be sure that your site is not a static brochure of information, but instead serves as the new “front door” to your firm—where visitors can interact and do business. You'll want to consider client portals, helpful educational downloads (white papers, fact sheets), and videos.

If you are a firm that strategically serves certain niche markets, equip your site with related content. Add custom industry pages to your website, and within them use the right language and ask the right questions to start a dialogue with prospects. For

example, if you serve veterinarians, indicate your understanding; it's complex—

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beauty has replaced function. Take Apple for example...it's not enough to offer products and services that perform well, consumers want them to be aesthetically pleasing as well. Design trumps function. Consider updating the interior of your office—pick a new brand color, one that is updated and bold—and go with it. Update exterior signage as well using new fonts and colors. Again, be creative.

Creativity is King! And believe it or not, we all have some creative skill. Take some time to review your communications, website, and office and make needed creative enhancements. You'll be surprised at how a few tweaks can bolster your brand image. Trust your inner creative.

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