

Marque Lawyers name inspired by wallet

BY ZOE LYON

MARQUE LAWYERS, the boutique Sydney firm recently launched by former Gadens managing partner Michael Bradley, was named after a wallet, Bradley has revealed.

"We are putting out various stories about that to create as much confusion as possible," Bradley joked. "But the truth of the matter is that we were sitting at breakfast agonising over it and one of the partners had a Marc Jacobs purse and we just thought that sounded great."

Being named after a wallet isn't the only thing about Marque Lawyers that's a bit out of left field. The firm also hit the headlines recently over its website, which declares itself to be "the world's worst website".

The no frills, one-page, site (www.marquelawyers.com.au) states that it was only put up: "so you will stop calling us and demanding we put up a website".

According to Bradley, the site, which was only intended to be temporary, has been received surprisingly well.

"We had fantastic feedback on it," he said. "It's not only the worst website

but it's also the cheapest ever created, so we are kind of tempted to keep it. But we are working on the new one at the moment."

Until recently, the site also listed two of its partners only as "mystery partners", but last week they were revealed to be Enjel Phoon, who will head up the firm's commercial team, and Amber Sharp, who joins the workplace relations group.

Phoon is an in-house veteran, having worked in senior roles at Virgin Group in Australia and the UK, Hansen Technologies, and most recently, as the head of legal for Asia Pacific at Booz & Company.

Sharp has moved across to Marque after six years at Henry Davis York. She's also previously worked at Minter Ellison, Baker & McKenzie and in-house at UBS in London.

Perhaps more interestingly, however, her profile reveals she can also "ski a double black diamond backwards (accidently or on purpose)" and that she has "useless niche expertise" in vocational training disputes.

Their appointments bring the Marque team to a total of 14 staff, including six partners, and according to Bradley, the firm won't be growing

much further. "We like it small, we've all come from big firms," he said.

Despite that, the firm will offer a range of commercial services, including corporate and commercial, workplace relations, intellectual property, trade practices, litigation and compliance.

Bradley, who reportedly left Gadens because it was becoming too conservative, created Marque with the aim of practising law in a "dramatically differently" way to that of traditional law firms. In fact according to the firm's website, Marque has "the single ambition of completely changing the way law is practised".

For a start, they've opted out of the traditional six-minute increment billing routine, instead working for clients on a fixed-fee retainer basis that can be adapted so suit the individual client's needs.

"Overall, if it's done properly it will cost clients less money. But the real benefit for them is that it is a risk management exercise – so they get greater certainty," he said. "We've had a great response from our clients. We have been rapidly converting them away from time costing and they've been very enthusiastic."