EXPERT INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE TO THE LEGAL CIRCLE

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Authenticity Doesn't Require Complete Transparency - Jasmine Daya

Six questions with Jasmine Daya on Law Girl, personal branding, professional boundaries and the relationships behind a legal practice. - **Interview by Adele Salikhova**

Jasmine Daya spent ten years making herself recognizable - the Law Girl podcast, morning-show appearances, a LinkedIn presence strangers quote back to her in bars. Then she tells you the part nobody expects: authenticity doesn't require complete transparency. In one of the most honest interviews we've published, the lawyer behind Law Girl talks about what all that visibility actually bought her practice, where she draws the line between brand and private life - and the one thing she'd tell every young lawyer to skip.

Jasmine Daya

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- **Founder, Jasmine Daya & Co.**
- **Host, Law Girl podcast**
- **Women of Influence 2025**
- **Top Toronto Lawyers 2021-2026**
- **Former owner, 3 Toronto nightclubs**

QUESTION 1 OF 6

What prompted you to start Law Girl, and who did you originally want to reach?

Law Girl actually started because of a few radio appearances I had done as an invited legal expert. I was amazed by how many people had legal questions and, perhaps more importantly, how appreciative they were of receiving advice in a relaxed, conversational setting. I also discovered how much I genuinely enjoyed helping people in that way. It was incredibly fulfilling.

At that point, I had been practising law for more than ten years, and I realized **I didn't want to sit around waiting for someone to invite me onto the radio. I wanted to create my own platform** where I could educate the public about the law whenever I had the time.

In May 2019, I launched the Law Girl podcast, becoming an early adopter of legal podcasting as a way to make legal information more accessible. While podcasts were gaining popularity, they certainly weren't as commonplace in the legal profession as they are today, and there wasn't exactly a step-by-step playbook for getting started.

There was no generative AI to help troubleshoot anything, and I remember spending hours trying to figure out microphones, sound equipment, recording software and editing techniques, relying on a handful of painfully boring YouTube tutorials. **I was a lawyer trying to become my own sound engineer!**

Interestingly, the name came quite easily. I had published my first novel, *Law Girl's Bump in the Road*, in 2018, and coming up with that title had taken me what felt like forever! When I decided to launch the podcast the following year, Law Girl seemed like the obvious choice. It already reflected both my profession and my personality.

When Law Girl launched, I think it came as quite a shock to people who knew me professionally. At the time, legal education was largely delivered through formal presentations, conferences and webinars. Law Girl was completely different. It was casual, conversational and sometimes funny. I wanted people to feel as though they were sitting down for a conversation with a lawyer rather than attending a legal seminar.

The relaxed format seemed to amuse people initially, but it resonated, and the audience grew.

What began as a way to answer everyday legal questions became something much more meaningful. Law Girl gave me an opportunity to connect with people beyond the courtroom and my office, share knowledge and show that lawyers could be approachable, relatable and even entertaining.

Looking back, I wasn't thinking about personal branding at all. I simply wanted to make the law more accessible, and I was having fun doing it.

QUESTION 2 OF 6

How did you decide what belonged under your personal brand and what belonged under your law firm's brand?

The line between my personal and professional life has always been somewhat blurred. I work seven days a week, but it rarely feels like work to me. It's simply my life, and I genuinely love what I do. My career, businesses, creative projects and personal interests are so intertwined that separating them into neat little categories would be nearly impossible.

That said, as my public profile began to grow through social media, television and radio appearances, I became increasingly conscious of what I shared. I have always been protective of my professional reputation, but equally important to me is protecting my children. I never want them to suffer the consequences of a poor decision I make, particularly one that becomes part of the permanent public record.

Beleive me, the lectures go both ways! My children have heard countless speeches about what they should and shouldn't post online. Once you put something out there, it's fair game. It can be saved, shared, taken out of context and potentially outlive you. Something that seems harmless today could close doors you haven't even considered opening yet. Maybe one day you decide to pursue a career in politics, for example. The internet has a very long memory, and I want my children to understand that their digital footprint matters.

There is also the reality of public perception, particularly as a woman practising personal injury law. I learned to be careful about posting my whereabouts in real time, especially when travelling. Ironically, I do some of my best legal drafting sitting poolside under the sun, which I attribute to my entirely self-diagnosed seasonal affective disorder! Give me sunshine, a laptop and a complicated legal argument, and I'm perfectly content.

The perception however, can be very different. Someone might see a photograph of me beside a pool and assume I'm on vacation rather than working diligently on their case. They don't see the hours spent researching, drafting and reviewing documents before and after that photograph was taken in addition to the fact I was likely actually working when that picture was taken.

The same applies to going out for an evening with my girlfriends, which, unfortunately, happens less and less frequently because apparently nobody wants to come out anymore. I'm hoping some of my friends read this because I'm officially calling them out!

What people don't always appreciate is that after spending entire days staring at screens, reading documents and working through complex legal issues, an evening spent laughing about absolutely nothing can be exactly what you need. It clears your mind, helps you relax and, at least for me, makes me more productive and effective when I return to work.

Ultimately, I decided that my law firm's brand should remain focused on the professional services we provide, while Law Girl could reflect more of my personality, experiences and interests. But having a personal brand doesn't mean giving the public unrestricted access to your personal life.

I've learned that **authenticity doesn't require complete transparency.** You can be genuine, approachable and relatable while still maintaining boundaries. **Not everything needs to be shared, and not everything that happens in your life needs an audience.**

QUESTION 3 OF 6

Your work includes a podcast, fiction and cookbooks. How did you approach sharing interests outside law? Did you ever worry about how colleagues or clients would perceive it?

Absolutely! In fact, I was so concerned about how people might perceive my first novel that I initially published it under a pen name, Leia London.

When Jack Fireman, the founding partner of my former firm, Fireman Steinmetz Daya LLP, decided to retire, I already had an established book of business, but I was admittedly nervous about branching out on my own. I remember Mr. Fireman looking at me and saying, "What are you scared about? You've been running the show for years!"

It was one of those moments when something suddenly clicks. I thought, *Oh my God, he's right. I have been running the firm!* Apparently, the title of Managing Partner hadn't quite registered with me, probably because I'd already been doing much of the work long before I officially held the title.

On July 4, 2017, I opened the doors to Jasmine Daya & Co. Around that time, I was also working toward publishing *Law Girl's Bump in the Road*, a novel that had begun as a personal journal during my final year of law school. After years of working on it, the book was finally published in 2018. That's when I started second-guessing myself.

Here I was, a woman launching her own firm in one of the most competitive areas of legal practice, trying to establish herself as a serious litigator, while simultaneously preparing to publish what could best be described as chick lit. It wasn't exactly the polished Bay Street or Wall Street image traditionally associated with successful lawyers, depending on which side of the border you're on!

I'm not going to sugarcoat the fact that I've encountered challenges as a woman in the legal profession. I absolutely have. I simply choose not to dwell on them. I'd much rather direct my energy toward accomplishing more and doing better than allow negativity to consume my time.

Nevertheless, I was conscious of how I might be perceived. I worried that publishing a lighthearted novel could undermine the professional reputation I had worked so hard to build, particularly at such a pivotal moment in my career.

So I took what I thought was the safer route. I published the book under the pen name **Leia London**, complete with a stock photograph of a woman on the cover. Then something happened that I hadn't anticipated.

When I held my first published book in my hands, I couldn't stop smiling. I was absolutely beaming with pride. I had written an entire novel and actually published it! Suddenly, hiding behind a pen name felt far less appealing. I was so proud of what I had accomplished that I wanted to tell the entire world. I knew right then that one day I would reveal the real author. I just needed to give myself a little time. A few months later, I relaunched the book under my own name, and it turned out that all the things I had worried about weren't nearly as significant as I had imagined.

That experience taught me an important lesson. **You don't have to limit yourself to one identity simply because you've chosen a profession with traditional expectations.** Being a serious lawyer doesn't mean you can't write a funny novel, publish cookbooks, host a podcast or pursue completely different interests. I've never stopped exploring those interests since, and I have no intention of starting now.

In hindsight, the irony is that I had the confidence to open my own law firm, yet I needed a few extra months to find the courage to put my real name on a novel. Sometimes the things that make us feel most vulnerable professionally are the very things that make us most relatable personally.

“Being a serious lawyer doesn't mean you can't write a funny novel, publish cookbooks, host a podcast or pursue completely different interests.”

QUESTION 4 OF 6

What has that visibility actually done for your practice? Can you share an example of a client, referral or opportunity that came through your content?

It certainly didn't happen overnight. The impact was gradual. Clients would mention seeing me on the morning news or reading a newspaper article in which I'd been quoted about a legal issue. I've had people contact me for legal representation because of those appearances, but I think the real value was something less tangible.

When people hear me speak, they get to know me as a person, not simply as a lawyer. I've never believed that having a professional designation or a certain level of education makes someone superior to anyone else. I don't think that's right, and frankly, if I ever started behaving that way, my mother would probably still show up and give me a lecture!

I've always tried to speak to people the same way, regardless of who they are or what they do. I don't see any reason to complicate a conversation with legal terminology when I can explain something in everyday language. People appreciate that, particularly when they're dealing with a legal issue that may already feel intimidating or overwhelming.

One of the funniest examples of how my public profile was growing happened at Pravda Vodka Bar, an iconic Toronto venue that I owned. Pravda attracted a largely corporate crowd, and it became increasingly common for people to approach me throughout the evening and say, "Hey, you're that lawyer I saw on LinkedIn!" I always found it amusing because I could be there enjoying the evening, completely removed from my legal practice, and someone would recognize me from something I'd posted or said online. My favourite moment came when two of the very beautiful bartenders who worked for me approached me one evening, looking genuinely curious, and asked, "So, what's with LinkedIn? Is it, like, a hot new dating app?" Umm, no. Not quite!

I couldn't stop laughing. Here I was, thinking about professional networking, business development and building relationships, while they were wondering whether they were missing out on the next big dating platform. That experience really illustrated something important to me. My professional identity had become recognizable in places and circumstances that had nothing to do with practising law.

Over time, that familiarity helped generate client inquiries, referrals and professional relationships. People felt comfortable approaching me because they'd already heard me speak or had some sense of who I was. I think that's ultimately what visibility has done for my practice. It has helped remove some of the distance people traditionally feel between themselves and lawyers.

I don't want someone to retain me because they think I'm more important than they are. I want them to feel confident in my abilities, comfortable asking questions and reassured that I'll take their concerns seriously. **You can command respect without demanding it, and you can demonstrate expertise without making someone else feel inadequate.** I've always believed those qualities are far more valuable than simply being recognized.

QUESTION 5 OF 6

Which format has been most valuable for building relationships, and which took more effort than you expected?

The podcast has probably been the most valuable format for developing professional relationships.

A podcast creates an opportunity for a meaningful conversation that you simply don't get from exchanging business cards at a networking event or commenting on someone's LinkedIn post.

When I interviewed lawyers about their careers and areas of practice, I wasn't just creating content. I was learning about them, their professional experiences and their perspectives. Those conversations created connections that could continue long after the episode was recorded.

What surprised me was how much work goes into producing a podcast properly. People see the finished conversation, but they don't necessarily appreciate the planning, scheduling, research, recording, editing and promotion involved.

Writing books is another undertaking that requires considerably more work than people might expect. Whether you're producing fiction, a cookbook or a professional publication, the writing is only one component. Editing, design, publishing and distribution all require attention.

If I've learned anything, it's that creating content is relatively easy. Creating something worthwhile, consistently and professionally, is where the real work begins.

QUESTION 6 OF 6

For a lawyer starting today, what would you recommend they do first, and what would you tell them to skip?

First and foremost, understand the power of **networking**. There's an old expression, "It's not what you know, it's who you know," and while I certainly believe what you know matters, people sometimes underestimate just how much relationships can influence opportunities.

Think about it this way. You have two equally qualified candidates applying for the same position. One is a complete stranger, and the other happens to be someone you met last summer through your father. Assuming everything else is equal, who are you more likely to hire? Probably the person with whom you already have some connection.

That's human nature, and it's why I encourage young lawyers to get out there and meet people. Attend events, introduce yourself, have conversations and take a genuine interest in others. You'll meet some incredible people along the way, and you never know where those relationships might lead. One introduction can lead to another, which leads to another, and suddenly an opportunity presents itself that you never could have anticipated. **Build relationships for enjoyment, not expectation and the rest will follow.**

Second, **work hard, particularly at the beginning of your career.** The practice of law can be a grind. There are long hours, difficult clients, demanding deadlines

and moments when you question why you chose this profession in the first place.

But the effort you put into developing your skills early in your career will pay dividends for decades. Learn your craft, ask questions, take on challenges and build a solid foundation. The stronger that foundation, the more confidently you'll be able to navigate whatever comes your way.

If you skip that part and try to build a career on appearances rather than ability, eventually the house of cards will collapse and when it does, the stress, anxiety, frustration and potential failures can be overwhelming.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, **do what you love.**

Not everyone is a great public speaker. Not everyone enjoys legal writing, appearing on camera, hosting a podcast or creating social media reels. And that's perfectly fine!

I think one of the biggest mistakes lawyers make when trying to develop a personal brand is assuming they have to do whatever everyone else seems to be doing.

If you hate being on camera, don't force yourself to make videos because someone told you that's how you build a following. If you love writing, write. If you enjoy speaking, find opportunities to speak. If you're naturally good at connecting with people, get out there and build relationships.

The reality is that if you don't enjoy something, it will always feel like work. Chances are, someone else who genuinely loves doing it will do it better because, to them, it's fun.

That's probably the biggest lesson I've learned from Law Girl and everything I've pursued since. I've never wanted to limit myself to being just a lawyer, but I've also never felt the need to pursue something simply because it was fashionable or because other people were doing it.

My advice is to stop worrying about what everyone else is doing and focus on becoming exceptionally good at what you do, building meaningful relationships and finding what you genuinely enjoy and pursuing it with passion.

As for what to skip? Skip the shortcuts, skip the comparisons, skip the unnecessary drama, skip the negative energy (and negative energy people) and definitely skip trying to become someone you're not. There's already one of everyone else. The world doesn't need another imitation.

About Jasmine Daya

Jasmine Daya has spent nearly two decades in practice across complex civil litigation, personal injury, insurance, and regulatory matters, and is licensed in Ontario, Alberta, and California. She is the author of *Law Girl's Bump in the Road* and the *JD in the Kitchen* cookbook series. She holds a JD from Queen's University and an LLM from Osgoode Hall Law School.

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