

BLF

BIGGER LAW FIRM

A magazine for attorneys



SEO IN-DEPTH

Get your website ready for Google's mobile first indexing.

MESSAGING

How to make the most of your firm's latest press mention.

LAW + TECH

2018 legal tech review: What will your firm try this year?

Promote your content effectively



Many firms are unsuccessful at the promotional aspect of content marketing. They mistakenly believe that creating content is enough to increase exposure. However, that is unlikely to occur without content promotion efforts.

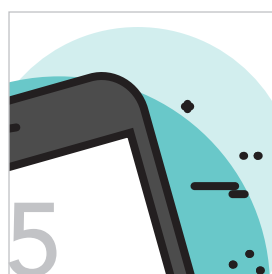




Promote your content effectively

Lawyers should think about promotion from the time at which they begin a piece of content until they gain viewers. They should also understand the ways people share content. It is seldom the case that one significant share is followed by an outpouring of shares.

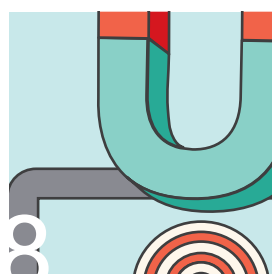
11



SEO IN-DEPTH

Get ready for Google's mobile first indexing

For over a year, Google has warned of an upcoming fundamental change to the way it ranks websites, called "mobile-first indexing." Websites that are not prepared could take a hit in search result rankings.



HOW TO

Local optimization for firms with multiple locations

More than half of consumers use the internet to look for local businesses. Therefore, having a strong online presence and being able to compete for local traffic is necessary for law firms to prosper.

SEO OBITER DICTA 2

Content reviews are a critical component of SEO.

MESSAGING 3

How to make the most out of your press mentions.

LAW + TECH 15

Practice and time management apps to amplify productivity.

VIRTUAL IMPRESSION 18

Responsive design tips for your firm's website.

POLICY 21

How often does the Supreme Court get the facts wrong?



Bigger Law Firm™ was founded to introduce lawyers to new marketing and firm management ideas. Advancing technology is helping law firms cover more territory, expand with less overhead and advertise with smaller budgets. So many tools exist, but if attorneys are not aware of these resources, they cannot integrate them into their practice. The *Bigger Law Firm* magazine is written by experienced legal marketing professionals who work with lawyers every day. This publication is just one more way Custom Legal Marketing™ is helping attorneys Build a Bigger Law Firm™.

The *Bigger Law Firm*™ magazine is part of the Adviatech™ family of companies. The content of this magazine, the magazine design, art, graphics and BLF logo are property of Adviatech Corp. All rights reserved.

To send mail to this publication, write to Adviatech Corp., BLF magazine, 4023 Kennett Pike Suite 57516 Wilmington, DE 19807, or email editor@biggerlawfirm.com.

Editor	Danuta Mazurek
Art Director	Kristen Friend
Designer	Jessylyn Los Banos
Staff Contributors	Brendan Conley, Ryan Conley, Hannah Felfe, Kristen Friend, Tami Kamin Meyer, Roxanne Minott, Kerrie Spencer, Dexter Tam
Subscriptions	Thomas Johnson, tjohnson@biggerlawfirm.com
Founder	Jason Bland
Website Offers	www.biggerlawfirm.com
Single Issue	\$6.95

SEO OBITER DICTA

Your content is a key component in attracting visitors and gaining leads. As such, it must be kept fresh and relevant.

Your website likely contains a variety of content, which has been written at different times throughout its history. Some may even have been produced before your firm had a website, and has been repurposed for use online.

Having a rich content history is good for your search engine marketing efforts. To keep your site fresh, all content should be revisited periodically. Content reviews are a necessary part of your SEO efforts, as outdated, irrelevant or erroneous content can be damaging to your website's reputation in the eyes of Google and your visitors.

Here are five questions to ask yourself when reviewing your content to help determine whether it needs an update.

Why do people read your content?

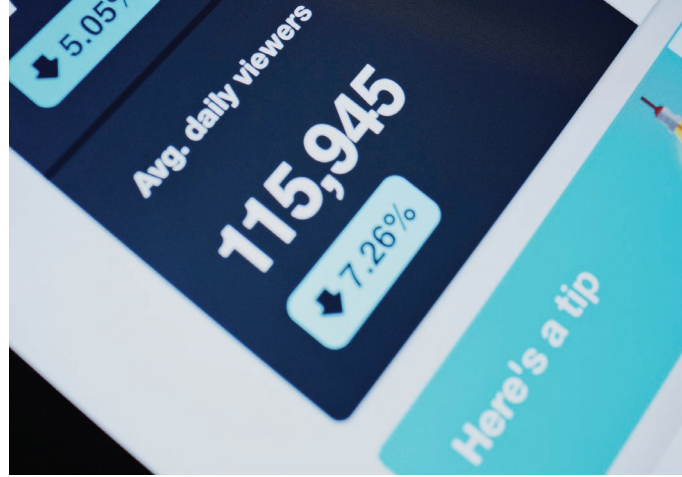
To understand why people read your content, you must know your audience. You should have a good idea of what your ideal client base looks like in terms of gender, income level, profession, age and other demographic traits. From this outline, dig deeper and try to think of the characteristics your clients have in common. For example, do they share any of the same goals or values? Are they likely to have any of the same hobbies or interests?

Now you have a portrait of your audience from which to extrapolate the reasons people might be reading your content. Are they performing research or reading for leisure and entertainment? Are they likely reading your website at home or at work? Would they want to share it? Once you can answer these questions, you will be better able to predict whether your readers will be interested in any particular piece of content.

Does your content satisfy readers' needs?

A law firm website should tell clients what the firm does and showcase the experience of its attorneys. These are the basics. Beyond that, sales related content must present a compelling reason clients will benefit from your services and differentiate your firm from others that do similar work.

Another component of the content on an attorney website is educational. More and more people are conducting their own research about legal matters and asking Google questions about the law during the course of their research. Can your content answer these questions? Great content will inform and persuade. It will answer the questions your potential clients might be asking.



Could your content be used on any other attorney website?

Lawyer website content often suffers from one of two challenges: 1) It is formulaic or, 2) It is so keyword stuffed that it contains very little actual information. When reviewing your content, ask yourself whether it is something you could see on the pages of any lawyer website, or whether the tone, presentation and facts distinguish you as different from other firms in your area. If you find your content repeats the same keyphrases over and over again, it will probably not pass this test.

Is your content grammatically and factually sound?

There is no excuse, especially on a professional services website, for poor grammar or spelling mistakes. Have an editor regularly review your content to look for errors.

Because attorneys operate within a regulatory and legal framework that changes over time, it is also important to review your content to be sure it is factually sound and provides the most updated information about the law.

Is your content thoughtfully designed?

Well-designed content will be aesthetically pleasing, and it will help the visitor scan the page. When people view content online, they tend not to read from paragraph to paragraph as they would when reading a book. Rather, they scan from top to bottom, left to right, looking for relevant or interesting information.

To help readers find what they are looking for, your content must contain the right balance of images, headlines, subheads and bulleted lists. Each of these items supports the text by calling out important features. These elements also help break up the copy into related sections that are easily seen and understood by visitors scanning your pages.

Content reviews can be cumbersome, especially if your website is content heavy. However, SEO best practices dictate they be done. Your content may be the only interaction someone has with your firm before deciding whether to call you. It should present your best face.

- Kristen Friend

How to Make the Most of Your Latest Press Mention



While third party validation feels amazing, rather than simply enjoying the attention because of your law firm's success, take the time to boost your media presence after you have received that first press mention.

Positive press mentions make law firms stand out against competition. They add to a firm's reputation and name recognition while helping with online marketing techniques like link building and SEO.

Christopher Earley, a personal injury and workers compensation lawyer in Boston, believes that "press mentions are crucial for law firms because they enhance a firm's credibility, which helps the firm project an image as an authority."

Competition in the legal world, fierce. Simply Googling "personal injury lawyer," for example, provides thousands of results and dozens of law firms near the searcher, all competing

for attention. Thus, rather than being just another variable in a world full of lawyers, make your firm stand out on its own. Press mentions get your firm's name in front of readers online, and perhaps in print as well, they provide third-party verification of your firm's trustworthiness.

A firm can blog about its own productivity and success, but there is always the question of integrity. However, third-party publications suggest that you have knowledge about the relevant subject and that your firm has a powerful presence. You are not just telling potential clients you are informed and experienced, you are showing them.



“It’s paramount that we remain innovative and creative — and we live it every day.”

Press mentions do not happen in a vacuum and, just like an online marketing strategy, cannot rely on only one tactic. If your firm has consistently superior online content, reporters are more likely to want to use you as a source. First, a reporter must see you as credible before they would be willing to quote you in a press mention. Once they give you that recognition, more reporters in the future are likely to see your firm as a good source.

Here are some easy steps your firm can take to maximize media exposure, build links, and further your online reach and presence.

Make your presence known. The reporter who quotes your firm and mentions your name should send you a link to the published article. Make an effort to comment on the article to start a discussion with the readers and to share it with your social media followers. By doing this, you are promoting readership. You can also express your thanks in the comments or in an email to the reporter, and offer to help with more projects in the future. This builds a relationship between your firm and the writer.

Make your mention go viral. Forward the article to your colleagues, who may further forward the piece or even provide a shoutout on their own sites. By sending out the article, you will

build positive connections that may help nurture referrals. If you work with certain associations, share your article with them. They might post the article, which would provide a further avenue for potential clients to hear about your firm. This will also positively benefit the reporter, reinforcing your relationship and strengthening your name recognition and reputation.

Another way to increase views is to circulate the article to previous or current clients. It will remind them that they made a good choice in choosing to work with your firm, serving as an affirmation of your services. They may even send your information or the article mention to friends and family, again increasing the likelihood of referral leads.

Share on social media and email. If your firm has a newsletter, include any articles in which you have been mentioned in the emails you send out. Post the link to your social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook. Add hashtags and @ mentions for the reporter and outlet to amplify your reach. If your firm does not have a newsletter or social media, you should strongly consider these as a way to further your reach and online presence.

Link to the press mention from your LinkedIn profile, your directory profiles and your firm’s website, in addition

to sharing it on Twitter and Facebook. Posting a note in your biography and website that you welcome press mentions can also be beneficial. You can use a service like Help a Reporter Out (HARO) to connect with journalists who are looking for sources.

Blog about press mentions. If your firm has a blog, and it should, blog about your press mentions and link to the articles. Blogging not only gives you a way to add fresh, relevant content to your site, it also gives you the opportunity to further comment on the topic of the article, which reinforces your knowledge and trustworthiness.

Terence Murnin of Lamber Goodnow stresses that for his legal team, “it’s paramount that we remain innovative and creative — and we live it every day.” Personal career development is crucial for a growing business as well as professionalism.

Receiving a press mention is not the end goal. Rather, a mention is the first step in building relationships, trust and quality links to your website. Link building is especially important for increasing your search rankings, generating more website traffic and potential leads.

In the end, a press mention is what you decide to make of it. Put your name out there today.

- Hannah Felfe





For over a year, Google has warned of an upcoming fundamental change to the way it ranks websites, called “mobile-first indexing.” The change is very important, and websites that are not prepared could take a hit in search result rankings. The good news is that getting ready is not difficult and most well-designed sites are already well-positioned for the update.

What is the mobile-first index?

Many websites serve up different versions of a given page depending on the type of device accessing the page. Smartphones typically have smaller screens, slower processors, and slower internet connections than desktops and laptops. A page specifically designed for a mobile phone will typically leave out non-essential content for faster loading and will be formatted for the smaller screen.

Google’s determination of how highly to rank a web page in search results is typically made using the desktop version of a website if more than one version exists. For much of the history of the internet, desktop computer usage has dwarfed mobile device usage, so this made sense.

Today, however, more web searches are conducted on smartphones and other mobile devices than on desktop and laptop computers. It is possible for a mobile page to have less content than a desktop page and to thus be ranked too highly from the perspective of a mobile user under the current ranking system.

Google has therefore concluded that they must at some point begin favoring the mobile-specific pages when determining rankings. In November, 2016, Google announced that at some undetermined future time, its algorithms would switch to using primarily the mobile version of a website to determine how to rank its pages. This is mobile-first indexing.

The exact date of the change is not yet known, and it may not happen all at once. Google wants to avoid large numbers of sites suffering big drops in rank and is allowing plenty of time for sites to prepare. However, the company had already begun limited experiments with mobile-first indexing at the time of last year’s announcement.

What needs to be done?

Setting aside the exact date as to when mobile-first indexing will become Google’s standard, the time to make sure your site is ready is now. In the blog post announcing mobile-first indexing, the company lays out two strategies for accomplishing this. The first is to use one of two flavors of future-proof web development; the second is a series of technical fixes aimed to make sure a mobile site is indexed properly by the search engine’s web-crawling bots.

Responsive web design (RWD) is a system wherein sites send the same HTML code to all visitors regardless of their device type or screen size. Within the HTML is a design language called Cascading Style Sheets (CSS), which is used to control how the page is rendered based on the screen size. In addition, page elements are sized relative to the total page width rather than in absolute terms, such as number of pixels.

Dynamic serving is an alternative to RWD wherein the web server, upon receiving a request for a page, requests information from the browser about the device’s screen size and delivers one of various versions of the site depending on the answer.

MORE: <http://blfmag.com/mobile-first-index>

Configuration	Does my URL stay the same?	Does my HTML stay the same?
Responsive Web Design	✓	✓
Dynamic Serving	✓	✗
Separate URLs	✗	✗

Because both responsive design and dynamic serving use a single URL for a given page, Google's bots will have no trouble finding and indexing all of their content. Sites built with these methods are ready for mobile-first indexing; nothing more needs to be done. An alternative system, however, requires some extra care.

Separate URLs, like dynamic serving, uses different pages for different devices, but this system also locates these pages at separate web addresses, or URLs. You can spot these sites by the "m." preceding the URL when you view them on your smartphone.

Facebook is a good example. Go to facebook.com in your phone's web browser and you will be redirected to m.facebook.com. The "m-dot" prefix indicates a mobile-specific site which is dramatically simplified for quick loading and ease of reading. This is why the separate URL system is also called "m-dot" web design.

Sites that use separate URLs must adhere to a number of technical guidelines to ensure that Google's bots discover and properly index the mobile versions of their pages. Otherwise, under the mobile-first indexing regime, the site could be judged on its desktop version's usability on mobile devices, which could be quite problematic.

These guidelines are spelled out in the Google blog post referenced above.

Should everyone go responsive?

Google recommends using responsive web design for a number of reasons. Pages made using a single responsive design are easier to maintain than separate versions for different devices. Additionally, responsive design ensures consistent content, user experience and aesthetics.

Note that there's nothing inherently wrong with separate URLs — at least not from a search ranking perspective. Google will not demote a page or site's rank simply because it redirects mobile users to mobile-only pages. In

other words, if your firm has an m-dot site, you need not panic. You should, however, take steps to ensure your m-dot site is indexed correctly. Ask your web developer or SEO firm for a full report on your site's preparedness for mobile-first indexing.

Indexing is not everything.

Preparing for mobile-first indexing is partly about making sure your site is indexed and ranked properly. But it is also about good design. Regardless of what system a site uses for displaying on mobile devices, it must be fast-loading and easy to navigate.

Even more importantly, sites must be full of high-quality, fresh content to rank highly. This is true now and will remain true in a mobile-first regime. A website that contains stale content of little use to anyone will never rank highly no matter how well-tailored it is to various devices.

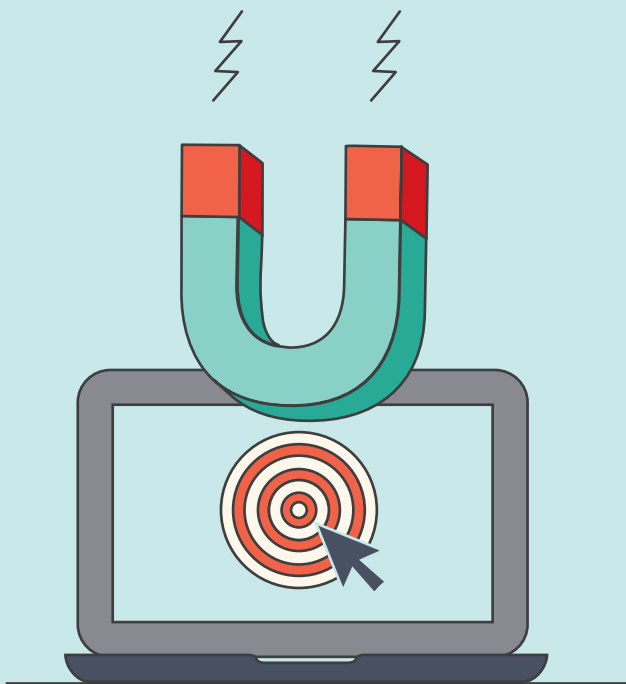
Invest not only in preparing for mobile-first, but also in regularly delivering well-written, useful, authoritative legal information that is indispensable to your target audience.

- Ryan Conley





Local optimization *for multi-location firms*



More than half of consumers use the internet to look for local businesses. Therefore, having a strong online presence and competing for local traffic is necessary for law firms to prosper.

As your law firm allocates time and resources to enhance its online search visibility, the benchmark for ranking well is increasing exponentially due to competition and extended knowledge. Since the tried and true SEO techniques are widely known and used by many, being creative in your approach can help set you apart from competitors in your area.

If you are a law firm with multiple locations, being listed on Google My Business (GMB) is key to your Local SEO strategy. If you are a law firm with only one location, optimizing for your business is straightforward. You have one set of information you need to distribute to help your potential clients find you online.

However, what if you have more than one location? How do you best present multiple addresses and phone numbers to your potential clients without confusing them or Google? How do you tell Google your multiple addresses are not a mistake?

Remember, Google will penalize you in its search results if it does not understand why you have multiple, conflicting addresses. Google may see these conflicting addresses as a sign that your firm is not trustworthy; you cannot be relied upon to provide accurate information.

A majority of online searchers consider local search results to be more relevant and trustworthy than organic or paid listings. In fact, the local map results dominate the results page on both desktop and mobile devices.

You can avoid this trap by creating a unique Google My Business (GMB) page for each location and implementing on and off-page optimization that indicates you are a multi-location law firm.

Google My Business

Google My Business was launched in June 2014 to help local business become more accessible via search. Google My Business has the benefit of allowing business owners to preform Analytics on clicks, views and requests for directions, and to monitor reviews.

Local businesses use GMB to establish a page or pages that are used in Google's local map, its search engine algorithm and on Google+. You can claim your page if it has already been created, or if you do not see it, you can build your own. Claiming a page

requires verification via postcard, email or phone.

If your law firm has more than one location, you will need unique pages for each location. A GMB business account would be ideal for you. With an account, one email address can be used to allow multiple people to access all pages. This is also helpful if you would like to use location ad extensions for your AdWords PPC campaigns. A business account allows people with access to make bulk edits, which will save you time if you are a firm with offices in multiple locations.

The requirements for having a GMB business account are: having more than ten locations, not being in the service industry (banking, insurance, etc.) and not being a marketing agency managing multiple clients. If you do not meet these requirements, you can simply set up the pages with your Gmail account.

Once you have housed all of your GMB pages in your respective accounts, you can begin optimizing them. Google My Business pages are essential to local search because they give searchers additional information about your firm.

While the organic search listing will show your website plus a description, an optimized GMB listing will provide information such the address, phone number and practice areas, which can

be the determining factor in whether a potential visitor becomes a lead.

The most important task in optimizing your GMB pages is to have a consistent and correct business name, address and phone number (NAP) for all locations. If you do not input the correct NAP for a given location, Google may penalize you for publishing incorrect or misleading information about your firm.

Find and delete duplicate or incorrect listings for your firm that you do not own or recognize. You can do this by claiming and deleting, or suggesting an edit to Google that the information listed is incorrect, and supplying them with the correct information.

Another way you can boost your local visibility is by having location-exclusive pictures on your GMB page. Find pictures that are relevant to that specific location and that will highlight why each location is unique.

Local SEO

Google's local map, also known as the 3-pack, is valuable real estate for law firms. The map is usually placed higher on the results page than organic search listings, and it provides information that can lead to conversions. A majority of online searchers consider local search results to be more relevant and trustworthy than organic or paid listings. In fact, the local map results dominate the results page on both desktop and mobile devices.

On-page and off-page optimization techniques can be implemented to improve your local search rankings. These techniques are not limited to law firms with multiple locations, but are especially important for such firms. You do not want your main office or one location to dwarf

all your other locations as this will hinder your earning potential. Therefore, having all your locations performing equally well will maximize your overall revenue.

On-Page Optimization

Ideally, you will have pages on your website for each of your locations. These pages would have content exclusive to that address. Google considers your website the authoritative source for information regarding your business. An example of this would be to have pages with statistics on practice areas for each city in which you have locations. If you have offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles for example, you could write about how car accidents vary between the two cities.

For back end optimization, have a web developer include structured data to your pages to help Google understand your different locations more proficiently. Structured data gives technical meaning to the page through metadata. An example for structured data to help differentiate your multiple locations would look like:

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "http://schema.org",
  "@type": "LocalBusiness",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "addressLocality": "XYZ Town",
    "addressRegion": "FL",
    "streetAddress": "1234 Street"
  },
  "description": "X & Y Law Firm specializes in x, y and z law.",
  "name": "X & Y Law Firm",
  "telephone": "123-456-7890"
}
</script>
```

You would include this script on every page with the correct NAP for the location referenced on the page.



Use structured Data to tell Google what is on your pages.

The following script identifies you as a local business, distinguishes your city, state and street address, and tells Google what type of law you practice, your firm name and your phone number.

```
<script type="application/ld+json">
{
  "@context": "http://schema.org",
  "@type": "LocalBusiness",
  "address": {
    "@type": "PostalAddress",
    "addressLocality": "XYZ Town", ..... CITY
    "addressRegion": "FL", ..... STATE
    "streetAddress": "1234 Street" ..... ADDRESS
  },
  "description": "X & Y Law Firm focuses on x and y law.", ..... SERVICES
  "name": "X & Y Law Firm", ..... NAME
  "telephone": "123-456-7890" ..... PHONE
}
</script>
```

Off-Page Optimization

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important steps to optimizing for local search is to have consistent and correct NAP citations. Since your law firm has more than one location, you will need to spend more time making sure your citations are accurate across all locations — not just on your website or your GMB pages, but on all of your social media platforms. This can prove to be a time consuming task as you will have to make sure all your listings have consistent NAPs.

Increasing your visibility will only help you if you do it correctly, with accurate citations. Claiming or creating listings using consistent and accurate citations on sites like Yelp, Yellow Pages, on social media and other local directories, will help boost your rankings.

When Google sees that all your citations are in order, you appear more trustworthy. However, if you have a multitude of outside listings with incorrect or inconsistent information, Google will penalize you.

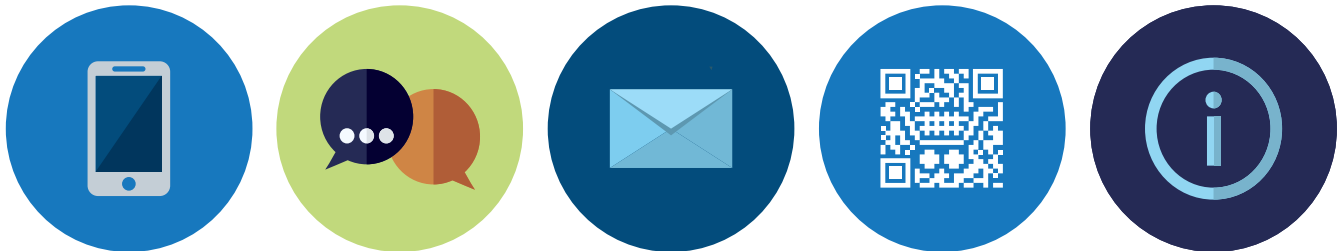
Lastly, having a collection of quality, user-generated reviews will help your firm advance to the local 3-pack. Having satisfied clients give you five star reviews shows you provide quality service and subsequently gives Google confidence to boost your local rankings.

In short, creating individual Google My Business pages with the correct information for each office, having location-exclusive pages on your website, and creating listings on local directories with accurate citations help boost your rankings for all your offices.

- Dexter Tam



Promote your



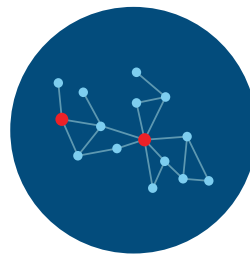
Many firms are unsuccessful at the promotional aspect of content marketing. They mistakenly believe that creating and posting content on social networks is enough for them to obtain positive feedback and attract new clients. However, that is unlikely to occur without content promotion efforts.

If you have already performed research on content strategy, and converted that research into content that targets the audience you have selected, you are on the way to establishing a relationship with that audience. Here are some methods that can assist you in strengthening that relationship.

Marketing to influencers

Influencers are the experts within the industry who have already developed a sizable audience. They are the people your target audience is attempting to reach. A way to build your audience is to cultivate relationships with those influencers, an especially useful tactic for marketers who are trying to create their own brand recognition.

Lawyers should think about promotion from the time at which they begin a piece of content until they gain viewers. They should also understand the ways people share content. It is seldom the case that one significant share is followed by an outpouring of shares.



content

If you have engaged in careful and correct planning, your content creation process can consist of influencer marketing. You can use Followerwonk to look for Twitter bios and create a list of people in your niche. Then, use statistics, such as the number of followers and social authority to select which influencers to contact.

Through Followerwonk search for Twitter accounts of influential persons or companies regarding the subject about which you have written. Reliable indicators are high social authority and a large number of followers. However, social authority can be more desirable than many followers because it implies having an engaged audience. Additionally, it is recommended that attorneys search for people

who have considerably more followers than the people they follow.

When identifying influencers you would like to contact, consider the factors you can use to make a favorable connection. Attorneys are more likely to be successful building a relationship with an influencer by asking them interview questions, or by requesting their input on a piece they are writing in the area of proficiency of the influencer.

Comment marketing

Comment marketing consists of relationship building and content promotion. Many attorneys may post unrelated comments with links on any blog post they encounter. However, this is an ineffective method. Such comments are nearly

always not-followed and can cause the attorney to be forbidden from sites that monitor post comments.

In lieu of placing links to your articles throughout comment forums, search the internet for individuals who are writing intriguing pieces that are relevant to the content you are discussing. Then, participate in conversations with them in the comments. At times, that could include posting a link back to a relevant article you have written. However, in most cases you should seldom include any mention of their services.

The important thing to note about comment marketing is that the attorney is becoming known as a person who possesses knowledge regarding, a certain subject. This will likely enable the attorney to establish a reputation on a long-term basis, and if the attorneys' comments are thought-provoking, writers and readers will desire to read more of the attorneys' remarks. Keep in mind that it is much more beneficial to comment on posts by influencers than possible clients.

How to engage in comment marketing

Find blogs that are recognized in your field. If you are not currently in possession of a list of such blogs, then perform a search for "[keyword] blog." Another option is to use Google's Blog Search. If you are conducting a search using the MozBar installed, which is free of charge, you will view some analytics that will enable you to determine which sites to read initially.

Visit the blogs you have selected, and leave comments that add to the conversation. Because you are in the process of building relationships, initially, it is best to avoid leaving links. After you have established some credibility with those sites, you can

You may have information that enables your social media team to reach more readers. For instance, if you have written a story, the inspiration for which was another article, send your team the link that was the motivation for that story, and the contact information for the other writer.

leave some links to content, including yours and that of others, that contribute to the conversation.

Guest posting

Guest posting offers attorneys an opportunity to create unique content for another site with a relevant audience and a wider reach. Similar to comment marketing, guest posting has developed a negative reputation because of the way it has been used. In the past, content was uploaded to any site with a half-way decent Domain Authority only to get links.

However, guest posting that is done well can be an effective tactic to establish your authority and increase your audience. As with all relationship building tactics, guest posting can entail a great deal of work. But if attorneys post in the correct places, it is likely they will realize much success.

If you decide to move in this direction, find credible sites relevant to your industry that will provide you with your own byline. Once you find suitable sites, then begin to compose stimulating and unique content that will encourage people to look for more of your content.



How to engage in guest posting

At the outset, guest posting greatly resembles comment marketing. Look for sites that have good Page Authority and Domain Authority, and strong related conversations. Begin submitting your comments on posts, and creating relationships with those sites.

Approach the editors of those sites with ideas for blog posts that are geared toward their sites. While you are doing this, avoid searching for the backlink, as you are establishing authority, and not building links. Actively promote any pieces that you have published. Then repeat the process.

Earned media

An additional type of promotion that is greatly dependent on building relationships is earned media, which frequently involves outreach to media and bloggers with a request for them to write pieces about you. In each instance, uncover the interests of the writer or reporter and carefully tailor your requests to make certain that you are sending them content they will consider interesting. Do not send publishers every piece of content you have ever written.

In most instances, individuals will want something special. Media usually want early access to information or some type of exclusive. Bloggers may also have an interest in free items or special deals for their viewers. Prior to approaching them, make certain you have read their submission rules.

Outreach and PR

The first thing to do is find the appropriate person to approach. Followerwonk is an effective tool to achieve this goal. Conduct a search of Twitter bios for words such as “journalist” or “writer” and the names of publications that are of interest to you, as well as keywords relevant to the subjects about which you are writing.

Upon deciding whom to target, capture their attention. In order to accomplish this, make use of some suggestions from Distilled, an online marketing agency. Discover what topics are interesting to the journalists, and be personable. Journalists wish to publish novel and fascinating stories, and not re-post press releases that all others are publishing. Demonstrate that you have placed some thought into your outreach and how it will help them.

Social media

Even if your content is appropriate for a certain audience, that does not mean they will view it. This is where social media can be advantageous. If your content and social media teams are nearly aligned, then you are already writing the type of content they wish to share.

Keep in mind that social media is more concerned with building relationships than promotion. Therefore, you should anticipate that your content team will also share content that was not posted by you. This is beneficial for you because it can direct new viewers to your social channels.

You only have to know a few things to begin promotion with social media. First, you must select the correct channel. While there is content that is ideal for Facebook, some is great for Twitter and other content is appropriate for both. You should be sufficiently knowledgeable of both the social platforms and the audience associated with them, in order to promote your content.

Be strategic about when you post. Social media management tools, such as Sprout Social, Hootsuite and Buffer can provide you with information as to the days and times of day your readers are likely to be active. Make use of hashtags sensibly. While it is easy to use hashtags excessively, they can be useful in attracting new viewers to the content you are posting on social media.

Paid promotion

Paid promotion encompasses a broad range of tactics, from paid search to display ads, paid social and content distribution networks. These kinds of tactics are frequently grouped together under the realm of pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. Prior to engaging in any kind of paid promotion, it is recommended that you know your budget. Knowing your budget can help identify which channels to use, and which targeting tactics to implement.

It may be advantageous to earmark some of the ad dollars toward Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms. When promoting content with the use of paid ads on Twitter, create a campaign based on your objectives. Then identify your chosen targeting method.

During the creation of your ad, it is best to always use an image or video. Ads that have a visual component receive more impressions and engagement. In every campaign, run more than one ad,

and test different creative elements and calls to action. In so doing, you will be able to make a comparison of the results and discover what was successful, and where improvements could be made during subsequent promotions.

Recommended tools

Content promotion tools can be instrumental in making others aware of attorneys’ personal brand, cause people to visit their site and lead to potential clients. Among the recommended content tools is the If This Then That (IFTTT), a service which links apps and websites to enable attorneys to build processes to automate anything, including sharing of content.

When engaging in outreach for earned media, uncover the interests of the writer you are contacting and tailor your requests to be sure you are sending them content they will find interesting.

CisionPoint, or vision, is a PR vehicle that makes it easy to distribute press releases, and it facilitates the way you monitor and analyze news coverage. It is pricey compared to other types of content promotion.

Outbrain is a content syndication tool that distributes content to several top publishers. It functions on a cost-per-click basis, with a minimum daily cost of \$10.

Become familiar with the various content promotion tools, and continue to write and promote content. The next step is to perform an analysis and research the results of your content promotion. Then perfect your technique.

- Roxanne Minott

Tech applications for attorneys are hot. There are hundreds of options available, and new apps are being introduced regularly. Who has time to try them all out?

Fortunately, *BLF* has done your homework for you. Here are some practice management and productivity apps for your consideration.

01 PRACTICEPANTHER

Track time, get important deadline alerts and manage your invoices.
www.practicepanther.com

02 CLIO

Streamline processes from intake to invoicing.
www.clio.com

03 LEGAL FILES

Keep your expenses, emails, documents and deadlines organized in one place.
www.legalfiles.com

04 Bill4Time

Includes trust reporting, conflict of interest checking and trust accounting.
www.bill4time.com

05 Lexicata

Capture, track and stay in contact with your leads.
lexicata.com

2018 legal tech review

[WHAT WILL YOUR FIRM TRY THIS YEAR?]

LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

PracticePanther

PracticePanther gets consistently good reviews and is used by thousands of law firms in 35 countries. The software helps users meet deadlines with alerts and makes it easy to get paid with one-click billing. It can track expenses and billable time by the hour, as a flat fee or on contingency. PracticePanther is intuitive and user-friendly, and it works on any device through its mobile app.

If you are worried about security, PracticePanther offers automatic real-time backups, 256 military grade encryption, HIPAA compliant file management, enterprise level security and custom security settings.

PracticePanther offers a free trial. Plans start at \$49 per month.

Clio

Clio is another popular practice management solution, built for lawyers from the ground up. The makers of Clio claim their software saves legal professionals up to eight hours per week thanks to its intuitive time tracking, matter management and billing.

Clio streamlines processes, from intake to invoicing, necessary to run an efficient and effective law firm. It also boasts a comprehensive menu of over 70 apps, like Microsoft Office 365, Zapier and QuickBooks, that integrate with Clio.

One added benefit for tech savvy lawyers and law firms is that this software is cloud-based, permitting users to manage their work from any device, anywhere. Attorneys currently using this software are happy with



the intuitiveness of the application functionality, and the easy-to-use interface with a broad selection of features and integrations.

Clio charges per user, per month, and plans start at \$39 monthly. A free trial is available.

Legal Files

Legal Files is suitable for law firms or any company that needs to track legal issues. Law firms will appreciate the level of customization available with Legal Files, which integrates with Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat to accommodate any workflow.

Legal Files organizes expenses, emails, documents, contracts and deadlines in one location, which keeps users up-to-date on the most relevant and current information for a case. It is also one of the few practice management products available that handles case management, docketing and calendaring, and document management natively.

Bill4Time

Bill4Time helps attorneys with time tracking and billing. Its legal billing application includes ABA Task Codes, trust reporting, conflict of interest checking and trust accounting. Reconcile trust and IOLTA accounting without needing a second app.

Bill4Time has an industry-specific legal edition. Bill4Time is an end-to-end, mobile-ready legal time billing solution offering 256-bit data encryption and local data backup. Bill4Time claims you will stop losing more than 30 percent of your billable hours when you use its application. Invoices are easy to brand. Online payment options mean you can get paid faster through a secure client portal.

Bill4Time offers a free trial, and legal plans range from \$25 per month for 2 users, to \$85 per month for unlimited users. All plans offer unlimited clients and matters.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) SOFTWARE

Lexicata

Lexicata is a CRM software designed specially for attorneys. Lexicata is a combination of a client intake application and a CRM. It is able to capture lead information, create and send documents for signature, and track all other matters up until the client is formally signed.

A law firm CRM is designed to help firms build stronger relationships with prospective clients, maximize conversion rates, increase client satisfaction and grow revenues. The beauty of a CRM like Lexicata is it allows the firm's attorneys to keep in closer contact with new leads from intake to invoicing. Clients do not slip through the cracks, and everyone at the firm can collaborate and stay organized throughout the entire time a client is doing business with the firm.

06 CONTACTUALLY

Build relationships with potential clients and referral sources.

www.contactually.com

07 ACTITIME

Track time, requests for leave, and register time off or sick time.

www.actitime.com

08 RESCUETIME

Get a clear picture of how your time is spent.

www.rescuetime.com

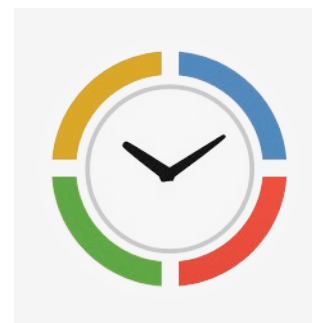


06

08



07

**Contactually**

Contactually has an interesting focus on building relationships. It categorizes contacts (clients) into different groups, such as existing clients, referral sources and potential clients. Users are sent reminders to keep in touch with people in each of these categories. Given that law firms are usually extremely busy with ongoing work, reminders to keep in touch with potential clients could result in conversions.

When you sign up, you can import your address book and categorize each contact by putting each person, or the firm he or she is associated with, into a different bucket. After your contacts are imported, you can determine how often you want to be in touch. You may, for example, wish to contact top referral sources every 30 days and former clients every 180 days. Every day, your dashboard will tell you which people to get in touch with. Also, each day you get an email listing your to-dos.

Contactually makes it easier to consistently stay in touch with your referral sources. Contactually is easy to use and comes with the ability to automate sequences and schedule repetitive activities, and an outreach

function that includes creating new tasks and auto-replies.

Contactually offers a free trial, and pricing ranges from \$39 to \$99 per month, billed monthly or annually.

TIME TRACKING**actiTIME**

Both solo practitioners and large firms will find features to like in actiTIME. The software effectively tracks all employees' time and can register staff time off and sick leave. In fact, actiTime offers leave request management with a feature it calls actiPlans. It works on-and offline through actiTIME Mobile, which allows you to track time anywhere, on iOS or Android, and sync that data with a corporate time sheet.

The software allows multiple users and lets you to add comments within a weekly timesheet. It can make case and project estimates and send deadline and budget alerts, if costs begin to creep. Detailed and customizable reports let you see how time is being spent and identify areas where efficiency could be increased. QuickBooks integration is available.

For small teams of up to 5 users, actiTIME offers a free version. A free 30 day trial is offered for other plans, which range from about \$2 to \$6 per user, depending on the number of users and the length of the plan.

RescueTime

RescueTime is not a timekeeping app; rather it is a productivity app. RescueTime provides users with a clear picture of how their time is spent, which can be helpful when working on multiple cases that require billable and non-billable hours.

RescueTime monitors your computer use and tells you when and how you are productive or distracted. It keeps a log of your activity and accomplishments, and tells you how much time you have spent on emails and in meetings. RescueTime can even block websites you do not want to let yourself open while working.

RescueTime runs securely in the background on mobile devices and computers. With only one time, it is best for individual or solo use. Free and premium versions are offered at \$9/month or \$72/year.

- Kerrie Spencer

Responsive design

Why your website should be responsive and how to make it work.



People visit law firm websites on a variety of devices, the sizes of which range from a small smartwatch to a generously sized television monitor. In order to maximize user experience, websites need to be constructed to accommodate those broad ranges and ensure each interaction with the site as is easy as possible.

Enter responsive design, “an approach to website design that aims to provide the best viewing experience for the visitor regardless of the type of device they are using — anything from a small mobile phone, through a desktop, up to a television-based browser,” says Tom Murzenski, Chief Technologist with Impel Digital in Northern New Jersey.

When a website layout is responsive, pages will naturally adapt to the size of the screen on which they are being viewed. You can recognize a website that utilizes this technique as you change your browser

size on a desktop. If the content adjusts to a browser window of any size, the site is most likely responsive.

According to Igor Ilyinsky, founder of FirmWise, a Chicago-based web design and development firm, responsive design has become the standard in the industry. “Responsive design does not mean a site is only mobile-friendly but also that it responds to any device of varying dimensions,” says Ilyinsky.

Google’s attitude towards responsive design

While Google recommends website owners implement responsive design over other methods for making pages mobile-friendly, it has never stated that any specific method will receive preferential treatment in rankings. Despite these reassurances, some SEO professionals have concluded from their own experiences that Google’s algorithm tends to rank responsive pages higher in results than those with mobile-specific urls.

Responsive design can help boost pages in search engine results, according to Linda Sorrells-Smith, a project manager with Haley Marketing in Buffalo. Sorrells-Smith has found implementing responsive design beneficial to clients. “If your site is responsive, it’s more likely to score higher than a web site that is non-responsive,” she says.

There are at least two ways to check the mobile-readiness of a web site. Google offers a simple testing site, found at <https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly>. Another way to determine a site’s mobile-readiness is by looking for its hamburger menu in the top left-hand corner of site’s home page when it appears on a mobile device, says Sorrells-Smith.



Using responsive design tells how far a developer went not only to accommodate various devices but also the various, different orientations and uses of those devices

First impressions are important, especially online. “Web sites should be easy for the visitor to use and find information,” she says.

“Google does not prefer responsive web design, it does prefer your web site function well on a mobile device, so it has a variety of tools to test its usability on a mobile device. Those tools differentiate between responsive or adaptive design,” says Ilyinsky.

Ensuring smartphone and desktop users have the same good experience when visiting your website is becoming increasingly important. The number of people using mobile devices to access the internet has exploded since 2009. According to Statista, less than one percent of all visits to websites that year were performed using a mobile device. However, by the end of 2017, it was estimated that more than half of

all web site visits were accomplished from a mobile device.

The type of device visitors use to access a page is often linked to the information they are seeking. For example, when a mobile device is used, the visitor is usually looking for quick information, like a firm’s phone number, hours or address. That type of quick hit information is ideal for smaller, hand-held devices, while laptops and desktops are more conducive to research and in-depth topic investigations.

Should lawyers care about responsive design?

Although the code used to implement responsive design is a back-end aspect

of a website, meaning not something obvious a user will see when they first visit a site, it is imperative for a site to utilize it, says Ilyinsky.

“Lawyers should care their website is mobile-friendly. Responsive design doesn’t mean a site is only mobile-friendly but that it also responds to any device of varying dimensions,” he says.

Murzenski agrees. “Mobile-friendliness is a ranking factor, so if a lawyer cares about their search engine ranking, and they should, they should care about responsive design. This is true even if the majority of your customers are not on mobile devices, as in corporate law, for example,” he says.

“Responsive design is becoming so ubiquitous that if your site is not responsive it will soon look old-fashioned and unmaintained,” he says.

Ilyinsky cautions lawyers not to be lazy when it comes to testing how their firm’s site looks on one device versus another.

Not surprisingly, all three experts agree it is best for lawyers to hire a professional web designer to create or update a law firm web site.

“If you want a high quality product, be sure your web designer does not does not use templates. Your web site is supposed to differentiate you from your competition. If not, you might as well use a website design template from the Internet that comes pre-formatted,” he says.

Why responsive design matters

In addition to helping your pages rank well in Google’s search engine results and ensuring pages easily adapt to the device used to view a site, using responsive design tells another story.

“Using responsive design tells how far a developer went not only to accommodate various devices but also the various, different orientations and uses of those devices,” says Ilyinsky. He notes how a page will look distinctly different on a 27-inch monitor with retina display than a four-inch long mobile phone screen. Using responsive design tells your visitors that you care about these different experiences.

Ilyinsky says he even goes to Apple stores to visit a sites his team has built to see how they look on large monitors.

- Tami Kamin Meyer

What can you do to make your responsive layouts work?

You know how responsive design can help with search marketing; what can you do to make sure your responsive are effective?

1. Optimize images.

As layouts adapt to smaller screens, images are often replaced with text or solid colors to help reduce page size. Any images that do still display should be as small as possible so that pages can load quickly. Smush Image is a popular WordPress plugin that optimizes images for fast loading. For those who do not wish to use a plugin, compressor.io is a free online image compression engine that significantly reduces file size.

2. Plan your forms.

Attorneys need to collect a lot of information from clients. It can be tempting to try to collect much of that information during the lead intake process. However, every additional form field presents a barrier for users who want to contact you. That is not to say visitors will not fill out forms; they will, if you choose your form fields wisely.

Request only information that you need to begin a conversation with a potential client. If you ask for information beyond contact details and a basic summary of the issue, make sure all fields are easy to interact with, error messages are obvious, and that visitors are happy to turn over the data you are asking for.

3. Pay attention to typography.

The way words are physically displayed on a page has an impact on readability and conversions, particularly on small screens. The rule of thumb is that your font size should be at least 16 pixels, or 1em, on a mobile device. If your target clients are members of an older demographic, you may want to increase your font size beyond this recommendation to ensure visitors can comfortably read your pages.

Additionally, make sure each of your lines of text has enough space in between them so that the eye easily flows from line to line. Too little,

and the type is crowded. Too much, and it floats apart. Both issues make paragraphs difficult to read. Finally, break up content with headings and sub headings of different sizes to make sure visitors can easily scan through it on all devices.

4. Design with column patterns.

Responsive design has been around for long enough that internet users are used to seeing columns behave in certain ways. For example, in a mostly fluid pattern, columns on the right will flow onto the next level of a page to sit below columns on the left as the screen gets smaller.



In a column drop pattern, columns will stack one on top of another as the browser window shrinks. These are familiar patterns and using them helps visitors navigate your content as it adapts to devices in predictable ways.

5. Carefully size buttons and links.

Mobile users face two challenges when navigating links. Hover effects, which are usually easy to see on a desktop as your mouse wanders naturally over the page, do not appear on mobile devices. Additionally, buttons that are easy to click with a mouse may be less easy to tap with finger.

If a visitor cannot see your links, conversions will be negatively affected. And few things are more frustrating to mobile users than trying

to click on one link and accidentally tapping another, forcing them to click back and try again to get to the right page. For maximum usability, all links must be obvious to users and be large enough and have enough space around them that they are easy to tap with even the clumsiest of fingers.

6. Employ minimalism and visual hierarchies.

Pages, especially those that contain a lot of content, must be organized so that they are easy on visitors' eyes and make important information easy to find. This is especially important on small screens.

The way words are physically displayed on a page has an impact on readability and conversions, particularly on small screens. Make sure your text is big enough for your target audience to read comfortably.

Group topically relevant items together and break long paragraphs up into shorter ones. People tend to read only a headline and one or two sentences of a paragraph before moving on; make those elements your most compelling.

White space is also a powerful design tool. It lets people's eyes rest, provides a sense of calm in a sea of otherwise distracting stimuli, and contributes to a feeling of distinction and value. White space can be used to break up content naturally and help lead visitors through a page.

Remember, good responsive layouts adjust in ways that are familiar to users, making the transition from device to device as seamless and user-friendly as possible.

- Kristen Friend

For every ruling made by the U.S. Supreme Court, some will think the justices made the wrong decision. But a recent report shows that the court also gets the facts wrong in an alarming number of cases.

What happens when the Supreme Court gets the facts wrong



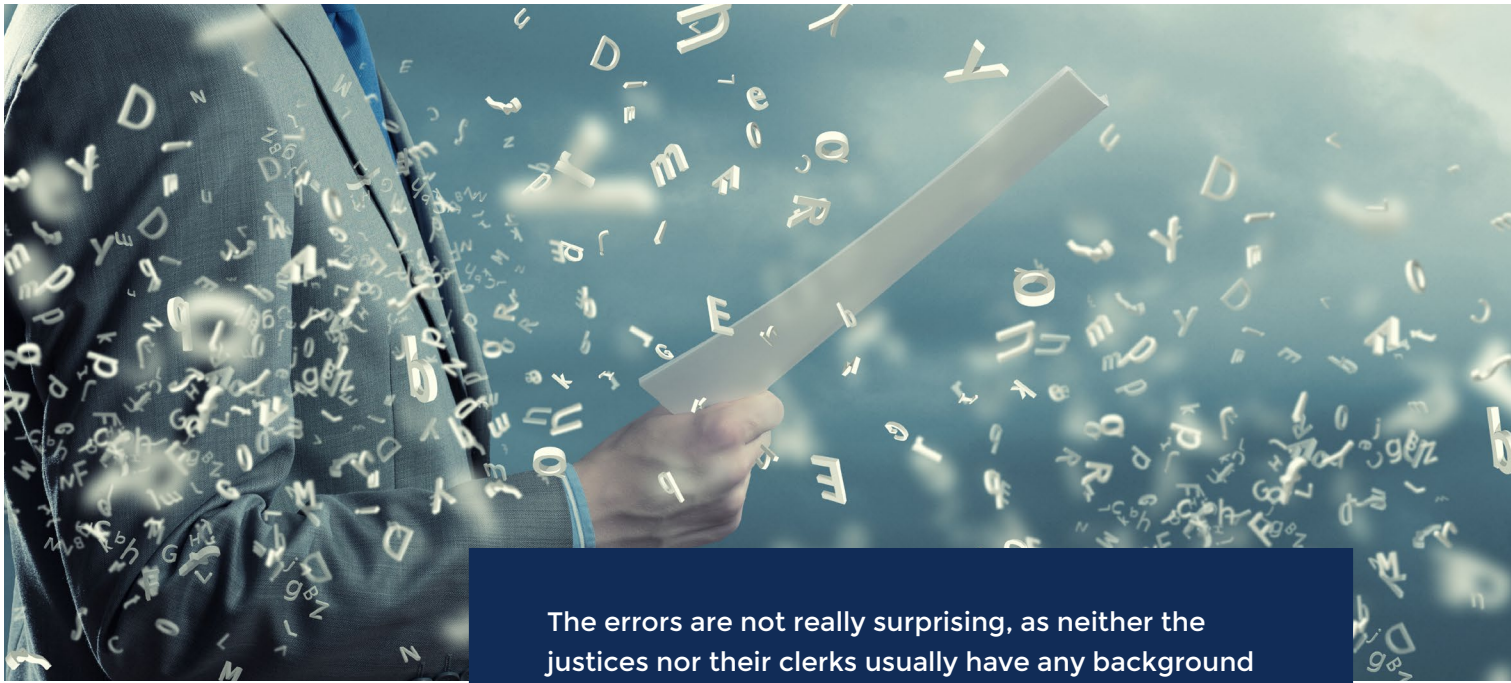
ProPublica, a nonprofit organization that produces investigative journalism, examined a sample of Supreme Court cases from 2011 to 2015. In the 24 cases that relied on real-world facts, the group found seven errors. Some mistakes were arguably minor, but others concerned a central aspect of the case.

In the 2013 case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 4(b) of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was unconstitutional. Section 4(b) contains the formula that determined which states needed preclearance before changing their voting laws or practices, and the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, determined that section was unconstitutional because the formula was based on decades-old data.

Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority, published a chart in the body of the opinion showing the gap between black and white voter registration levels in the six states covered by the Voting Rights Act. The chart was meant to illustrate the undeniable fact that black voter registration surged between 1965 and 2004. But some of the numbers were wrong.

ProPublica discovered that Roberts relied on a 2006 report generated by staff members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Those staffers used a reliable source, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2004 post-election survey, but they used the wrong numbers, perhaps due to unfamiliarity with how the census bureau handles race and ethnicity.

The staffers mistakenly pulled numbers from the “white alone” category, which includes Hispanics, rather than “white non-Hispanic alone,” which would accurately show the registration levels for white voters.



The errors are not really surprising, as neither the justices nor their clerks usually have any background in statistics, and there is not an established research service or group of fact checkers to assist them. The court often relies on amicus briefs that cite factual assertions, some of which are unsubstantiated.

As a result of the error, the chief justice's chart showed that black voter registration in Georgia in 2006, which had reached 64.2 percent, exceeded the white voter registration level of 63.5 percent. This was incorrect, as the actual white voter registration level was 68 percent. Roberts' chart also showed that white voter registration in Virginia in 2004 exceeded black voter registration by only 10 percent, when the actual gap was 14.2 percent.

In the 2011 case *NASA v. Nelson*, the Supreme Court unanimously held that independent contractors working for the federal government could be asked about their private lives in background checks, including questions about drug use. Justice Alito, writing for the unified court, wrote that such questions are "part of a standard employment background check of the sort used by millions of private employers."

Roberts cited an amicus brief submitted by background check industry groups that claimed "more than 88% of U.S. companies ... perform background checks on their employees."

When ProPublica questioned the National Association of Professional Background Screeners about the source of its "more than 88%" figure, the association was not able to provide one, and ProPublica found that the association featured the 88 percent figure in lobbying materials months before the survey that supposedly provided the data was even conducted. ProPublica warns that its sample was too small to draw any conclusions about the rate of factual errors in Supreme Court decisions, but it is troubling that significant errors were uncovered even in such a small sample.

The errors are not really surprising, as neither the justices nor their clerks usually have any background in statistics, and there is not an established research service or group of fact checkers to assist them. The court often relies on amicus briefs that cite factual assertions, some of which are unsubstantiated.

The justices sometimes acknowledge their own lack of expertise. During oral arguments in a recent gerrymandering case, Chief Justice Roberts referred to some of the evidence being presented as "sociological gobbledygook."

Legal expert Kenneth Culp Davis proposed a solution to the problem in the 1980s. Davis said that the Supreme Court should have its own research organization similar to the Congressional Research Service, to perform needed research and analysis. The idea did not take hold at the time.

Of course, the justices could choose to employ clerks with training in statistics instead of just law degrees, or hire experts with such training. But some solution must be implemented. The justices of the nation's highest court, deciding cases of the utmost importance, need to take seriously the need for accurate empirical facts in their decisions.

- Brendan Conley



Are you competing against your marketing company?

BRISKMAN BRISKMAN & GREENBERG ISN'T



CUSTOM
LEGAL MARKETING

If your marketing company isn't exclusively working for you, they're helping your competitors. That's why Briskman Briskman & Greenberg trusts Custom Legal Marketing. They know Custom Legal Marketing won't work with any competing firms in their No Competition™ Zone.

**Secure your law firm's No Competition™ Zone at
customlegalmarketing.com/exclusive**

No Competition™