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LAW + TECH

Can lawyers embrace chatbots for their own business purposes?

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SEO
OBITER DICTA

Writing SEO-friendly content: Search engine optimization (SEO) is integral to making sure online content is seen, and that it reaches the right people.

SEO copy writing refers to the creation of content that is valuable to both website visitors and search engines. For law firms, it is a way of writing quality content that ranks well among Google search results and also attracts potential clients. Copy writers must think of ways to engage people rather than focusing solely on appeasing Google with the technical aspects of a blog post, such as keyword usage. In fact, the search engine's standards champion useful, engaging copy over website design, optimized images or any other SEO factor.

One of the toughest challenges that copy writers face is writing content that is optimized for search engines yet will also appeal to people. Focusing exclusively on the technical aspects of SEO means neglecting the crucial role that SEO writing ultimately plays in driving user engagement.

While search engine algorithms are constantly evolving, the goals of a copy writer remain the same: increase readership and thereby conversions. Strike the perfect balance of informative content that is both SEO-friendly and useful to prospective clients, and you are on your way to driving more conversions, which is one of the main goals of SEO. Here are some simple practices for achieving high-quality, user-oriented content:

Choose your words wisely
There is no alternative to writing great content. Words have the power to drive engagement and give website visitors a reason to stay on the page. Copy that is stuffed with keywords or consists of low-quality writing will not help your target audience nor will it improve your organic search engine rankings.

One of the keys to effective copy writing is self-editing, and that means ensuring your words pack a punch. Replace mediocre vocabulary with strong adjectives and action verbs that lend a dynamic quality to your writing, making it more appealing to readers. For example, if a law firm is describing the consequences of serious personal injuries, instead of saying "very bad," they can use words like "life-altering" or "devastating."

Pay attention to format and structure
People love articles that are easy to read and that get straight to the point. One of the simplest ways to make your content more SEO and user-friendly is to break it up into easily digestible chunks. Focus on shorter paragraphs with more line breaks between them. Headers, sub-headers, bulleted lists and bold text are some effective techniques that can help give your readers' eyes a break and allow them to scan content instead of having to plow through a wall of text.

Structure is the backbone of copy writing. Writers should spend time on a compelling introduction that grabs the reader's attention. Quickly tell readers why they should care about the content, whether it is a page about why someone should hire you or a post about what to do after an accident. If your introduction convinces the reader that the content is useful, it is more likely to convert.

As you move through each section of the piece to the conclusion, points should build on each other in a coherent way. Use transition phrases to link your ideas together with phrases like "furthermore," "in addition" and "as well as." End with a powerful conclusion that reiterates your main point and leaves the reader with a memorable idea or image.

Include solid CTAs
Actionable copy takes the website visitor by the hand and guides them through a piece of content. It tells the person what to do after reading the article or blog post, whether it is to contact your law firm or sign up for a newsletter.

Integral to good copy writing is a strong call-to-action (CTA) that directs the reader to take a desired step. An effective CTA is straightforward and crafted using action verbs.

Consider using a different size or color to ensure the CTA stands out. Ultimately, your copy needs to be persuasive enough to compel people to take action. If your blog posts and articles conclude in a lackluster way, your content will never stay in the reader's mind long enough to make an impact or convert them.

Write compelling headlines
An essential part of good SEO copy writing is optimized headlines that capture the website visitor's interest and get them to click through. Copy writers can turn to a number of online resources, such as BuzzSumo or CoSchedule, to stay abreast of the latest headline best practices. Even if your content is valuable, your click-through rate will remain low without a headline that entices readers. Remember though that it must be relevant to the content and not simply written to grab eyeballs.

Copy writers understand that including the target keyword in the headline is a must. Along with telling website visitors what the piece is about, the headline should combine creativity with an SEO punch. There are many different ways to write a unique headline, such as by including numbers. For example, a blog post could be titled "5 Estate Planning Tips for Married Couples."

While there are plenty of other aspects that contribute to good SEO copy writing, paying attention to the above elements will help law firms meet the requirements of both search engines and website visitors. Ultimately, the goal is to achieve a perfect marriage between technical SEO and copy writing SEO in order to engage readers and convert them into clients.

- Dipal Parmar

HOW PERSONALIZATION *IMPROVES YOUR* WEBSITE PERFORMANCE

The days of creating a simple website to promote a law firm's practice are over. Now, law firms need to personalize their websites to better provide relevant content that resonates with a wide range of people. When potential clients do not understand a firm's services, that firm loses opportunities to boost clientele and profitability.

Firms are beginning to develop sites with personalized content that enhances the user experience and leads to new clients and cases. Instead of using a one-size-fits-all approach to content, website personalization enables firms to utilize tactics to connect people with the content that is most relevant and compelling to them.

Law firms also can utilize technology to assess visitors' interactions, browsing preferences and where they go while on the site. That helps to better determine what is important to that individual, versus what is more important to potentially millions of other visitors. The following is a closer look at how website personalization can help your law firm better communicate particular solutions to visitors' problems.

Know your audience
It is impossible to personalize a law firm website without first knowing its audience. With potentially thousands of visitors from around the country, it might seem daunting to know a website's audience, but technology can make the task easier.

A law firm operates in a geographically defined area based on attorney licensing and physical location. A firm's website audience is likely located in the same geographic area. Online tracking tools that identify unique IP addresses of each visitor can help to determine the exact geographic location of website visitors, and match them to specific locations.

Identifying audience behavior and demographic profile is important. Law firms can study behavior by collecting data on which pages a particular visitor browses, time spent on each site and whether or not the visitor is new to the website or a return visitor. Demographics can include geographic location and time accessing the website. Using simple surveys that help people to self-identify as male or female, ages and other basic personal data also can help to create unique profiles for each visitor, including any social media profiles they might have and provide.

Once a website audience is identified, it makes it much easier to personalize the experience to each visitor. It helps to start with the homepage that a law firm presents when people access it for the first time.

Homepage landings often fail
Many online marketers think of a website homepage to be like entering a storefront. The experience is exactly the same for everyone, which raises a major problem – not everyone seeks the same thing. Forcing everyone to access the exact same information can discourage those seeking answers that help with their particular situations. It also makes the experience highly impersonal, and that turns off potential clients.

There are many ways in which a law firm can utilize website personalization to improve the homepage and make the experience better for potential clients. Website visitors come from many online searches, different locales and at different times of day. That makes it possible to tailor the homepage for many different visitations.

Instead of having a single homepage that addresses all visitors, each person who comes to your website can have a much more unique and personal experience. Often, a simple change in imaging and wording is all it takes. For example, a law firm that handles personal injuries will have potential clients from many different backgrounds. Some might have injuries from vehicular accidents. Others might have suffered slip-and-fall accidents, and yet others might have workplace or other injuries with which they seek legal help.

Rather than providing a single homepage that requires the visitor to locate and navigate toward relevant content, a personalized homepage designed for particular search terms,

such as "car accident" or "workplace injury," will better engage and guide a law firm's website visitor. It also will help that potential client to better learn about a law firm's areas of practice and experience, while guiding them to the most relevant and useful information for them. That helps to keep visitors engaged, while also increasing their time on the site and helps with SEO rankings.

Website personas make browsing more personal
Law firms can make the user experience more personal by developing an online persona that better guides website visitors to the content they most desire. Some might seek information on personal injuries, while others might be interested in other areas of law, such as contractual law.

A law firm's practice areas will narrow searches, but many visitors likely have no idea what a particular law firm does, and instead are simply looking for solutions to their individual problems. Website personalization can help.

A good example is a virtual assistant, who can ask questions designed to guide new visitors to the information most relevant to them, while making the experience more personal. It helps if the virtual assistant has a personable image.

A virtual assistant gives a law firm's website visitor something beyond text and images to browse. Better still, a virtual assistant helps people find the information they find most useful, while keeping them engaged and improving the overall user experience via website personalization.

Marketing tools support website personalization
Website personalization can make each visitor enjoy a unique and immersive experience. Visitors can access content that is relevant to them, which makes them more likely to become future clients. Harnessing the power of marketing tools helps to affirm the success of website personalization.

Performing A-B testing of longstanding website pages compared to new personalized pages typically affirms the effectiveness of personalization, while identifying areas needing improvement. Similarly, account-based marketing tools can help determine the particular effectiveness of specific web pages in generating leads that result in cases and paying clients. Harnessing the power of the internet is much easier when law firms personalize their websites for greater engagements that lead to better client leads.

- Mike Heuer

Supreme Court Considers Cap on Fees for SSDI Representation

On November 7, the Supreme Court heard arguments in a case that could have a significant effect on attorneys and the clients they represent in Social Security Disability Insurance benefits appeals.

Over half of people who file for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits are denied. After being denied, individuals can follow an appeals process, starting with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and culminating, possibly, with arguments before a federal court. These cases can stretch over years and are often complicated. Claimants are more likely to be successful if represented by an attorney.

The Social Security Act imposes a 25 percent cap on attorneys' fees in Social Security cases. Courts are split on how to apply this limit. The 6th, 9th and 10th Circuits have held that the cap applies only to cases argued before a court. The 4th, 5th and 11th Circuits, however, have interpreted the fee as an aggregate. That is, the cap applies to all work done on a case, including arguments before the SSA.

Because of this split, attorneys in different areas can see large disparities in the fees they are able to recover, causing the value of work to be arbitrary or unpredictable. *Culbertson v. Berryhill* will resolve the split in the lower courts, and offer an answer as to whether the Social Security Act imposes an aggregate cap on attorneys' fees for all work performed, or whether the cap only applies to time spent on arguments presented in court.

Richard Culbertson, Esq., has represented numerous clients successfully before the

SSA and in federal court. In most cases his clients signed fee agreements stating they would pay legal fees equal to 25 percent of past-due benefits in addition to a separate lawyer's fee for representation before the SSA. While this did not seem out of the ordinary, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit issued a decision capping his fees at 25 percent of past-due benefits for representation before both entities in total.

Two federal statutes govern how attorneys' fees may be awarded in Social Security cases. One, 42 USC § 406 permits the Commissioner of Social Security to set a fee for client representation before the agency, and the district court to set a fee for representing a claimant before the court. Another, 28 USC § 2412 allows a claimant (the attorney) to ask for fees under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA).

The EAJA states that recovery of "reasonable attorneys' fees" from the government is allowed where a plaintiff wins and the government's position was not "substantially justified." Section 406(a)(1) does not set a cap, while Section 406(a)(2) limits a lawyer's fees to the lesser of 25 percent of past-due benefits or a specified amount, currently $6,000.

The SSA automatically withholds 25 percent of past-due benefits for payment of legal fees allocated under Sections 406(a) and 406(b).

The case goes to the Supreme Court
Richard Culbertson represented four clients who had been denied disability benefits, and was successful in all four. Culbertson asked for four different fees for each of his successful cases. In one case he was awarded $1,623 when he had asked for $4,488 and in another, he was awarded his requested fee of $3,325 on the condition that he not return to ask for more. In the other two cases, his petition for fees were rejected, for a possible loss of $24,847.

While federal law limits fees charged by attorneys to 25 percent of a client's owed benefits, or $6,000, these cases often require numerous hearings, a possible appeal to the Appeals Council and a possible appearance in federal district court. These kinds of cases may have a life span of several years and involve a lot of work for the attorney. Thus, a lawyer is allowed to file a fee petition with Social Security that exceeds the maximum of $6,000. Since Culbertson was denied his fees in two cases for which he did a large volume of work, he appealed.

Daniel Ortiz represented Culbertson, the petitioner, before the Court. Anthony Yang, represented Nancy Berryhill, the respondent and acting social security commissioner. Both the petitioner and respondent were arguing in favor of a separate cap, so Court appointed Amy Weil to defend the position of an aggregate cap.

Ortiz largely based his argument on the plain text meaning of Section 406(b). The relevant part of the statute states:

"Whenever a court renders a judgment favorable to a claimant under [Title II of the Social Security Act] who was represented before the court by an attorney, the court may determine and allow as part of its judgment a reasonable fee for such representation, not in excess of 25 percent of the total of the past-due benefits to which the claimant is entitled by reason of such judgment."

Ortiz argued that "such representation" clearly refers to the preceding phrase "represented before the court," and therefore the plain meaning of Section 406(b) is that the 25 percent cap applies to representing a client "before the court," not including agency representation.

The Justices seemed to agree that Oritz and Yang had a strong case when looking strictly at the text of the statute.

Weil, defending an aggregate cap, had a harder time when presented with the textual argument, going so far as to state the statute "is not a model of clarity. It's a piecemeal statute that was enacted over a series of amendments over a course of 50 years." Justice Elena Kagan admitted she was "struggling with" Weil's argument.

Weil was attempting to argue that the statute does not specifically state whether combined legal fees may go over the 25 percent mark and that Section 406(a) and (b), when read together to interpret intent, support the combined fee rule, and that the blended cap permits a logical division of court and agency fees from the 25 percent benefit pool.

Prior decisions on the matter are mixed. In *Dawson v. Finch*, the 5th Circuit decided Section 406(b) does impose an aggregate cap on legal fees for representing a client in administrative and court proceedings. The court reasoned that Congress added Section 406(b) for two reasons: to encourage effective legal representation by insuring lawyers receive reasonable fees directly through certification by the Secretary, and to prevent excessive fees which had been known to reach 33 percent to 50 percent of a claimant's past-due benefits. Thus the imposition of a 25 percent cap on fees would ostensibly take care of both of those concerns.

In *Morris v. Social Security Administration*, the 4th Circuit also held Section 406(b) imposes a cumulative cap on legal fees.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg both seemed troubled by attorneys billing clients directly for legal fees in excess of 25 percent. Justice Sotomayor asked, "Are we going to have people garnishing something or attaching something that belongs to clients?"

More recently, courts have focused on the textual interpretation of Section 406(b), holding the cap only applies to representation before a court. Even the SSA has had mixed opinions on the matter. The acting commissioner initially supported the 11th Circuit's decision imposing an aggregate cap, before agreeing with Culbertson.

While Oritz and Yang had a strong case on textual grounds, oral arguments were not limited to the text of the statute. Justices also questioned attorneys on the implications of the law in its various interpretations. Many of the Justices seemed worried about the potential for attorneys' fees to increase steeply should individual caps be applied.

Oritz argued that most attorneys would accept the lower payment should a court only award 25 percent and would not go after clients for the difference. None of the justices appeared convinced that Congress intended for attorneys to be able to go after clients for fees, or that Congress intended for fees to escalate to 50 or even 75 percent.

Speculation by legal pundits suggests that the plain-meaning interpretation is trending with the court and that a decision would likely support attorney Culbertson's arguments. There is no indication as to when the Court may issue a decision.

- Kerrie Spencer

For many law firms, having a strong internet presence is a cornerstone in acquiring new clients. If your website is intuitive, user-friendly and packed with helpful information, it will reassure visitors that your firm is the right one for their needs.

Website traffic low?
LOOK FOR THESE
Red Flags

If your web traffic is low, it will not matter how great your website is, because not enough people will have the opportunity to see what your law firm has to offer.

In order to evaluate your web traffic, your will need Google Analytics and Google Search Console set up for your website. These free web services will allow you to see your website's performance, and analyze traffic issues. There are paid site analysis programs available that will give you a deeper look into your website, like keyword performances compared to your competitors. These programs are usually expensive. However, being proficient at deciphering your traffic data with Google Analytics and Search Console can still help you remedy website traffic issues.

If traffic is low, are there any red flags website owners should look for?
If you notice a sustained a period of poor traffic, there are red flags you can look for to investigate why your website is not performing to its full potential.

If you have recently made significant updates to your site, such as a site redesign or migration, you may suffer from a burst of crawl errors. Crawl errors occur when the Googlebot, Google's crawler, cannot access certain pages on your site. This will cause that respective page to show an error, thus not allowing users to access it. To fix these crawl errors, go into your Google Search Console, and click Crawl > Crawl Errors to see the list. Search Console will show you the error code these links are exhibiting, such as 404. You can easily fix these 404 errors by redirecting the link to its correct URL.

If your search marketer has been engaging in black-hat SEO, techniques that have been deemed violations in accordance to Google's Webmaster Quality Guidelines, you may be given a manual action penalty, a severe disciplinary punishment that would cause your website to plummet on search engines until remedied. In order to get a manual action penalty lifted, you or your

If you see that your organic search traffic has been systematically dipping, check marketing news outlets to see if a new Google algorithm update was introduced. Google updates its algorithm frequently, and your traffic could take a hit if an update decides to devalue any of your SEO modifications.

search marketer will need to reverse whatever efforts were made that caused the penalty in the first place. Usually it will be actions that are considered black-hat.

Backlinks are an important part of the SEO process. Backlinks give websites credibility, because if someone links to your content, it means they trust your information enough to give their own users the option to see it. They are so important, that Google has publicly stated that links are one of the three most important metrics in deciding search engine positions. So if you lose a valuable backlink from a respected website, such as domains with .edu or .gov, your website may drop in visibility, causing your traffic to slide.

How can you use your Analytics data to uncover reasons for dips in traffic?
Google Analytics allows you to discover in-depth traffic your website gets. You are able to see how many users have visited your website, how long they stayed, how often they leave after the first page and more. With Analytics, you can possibly discover what has been causing your web traffic's decline.

To see where your users come from, go to "Acquisition," and click on

"Channels." There you will find whether your users came from "Organic Search," "Paid Search," "Social" and "Direct." If you have used tracking codes in your URLs, "Source/Medium" will tell you exactly which domain brought the user to you. Examples of sources would be: "google / organic," "bing / organic," "facebook.com / referral," etc.

With Analytics, you can also see how your website traffic performs on devices, such as desktop and mobile. Going to "Audience," then "Mobile." "Overview" will allow you to see how many users came to your site with either their desktop, mobile or tablet.

How can you correct course if trouble does show up in your data?
Now that you know how to access the sources of your traffic, you can successfully compare the date range from when your website traffic was performing well to when it started to decline. Next, you can cross-examine to see which device or channel has seen a decrease, and can focus your solutions on the respective issue.

For example, if you notice your mobile traffic has slipped, perhaps optimizing your mobile site speed will give you a boost in rankings. Figuring out why a source was previously successful could ensure you relieve your current traffic woes. If you recognize through Google Analytics that traffic from Facebook has dropped significantly, perhaps it is because you have not posted in awhile, or that your recent posts have not resonated with your users as much as previously.

If you see that your organic search traffic has been systematically dipping, check marketing news outlets to see if a new Google algorithm update was introduced. Google updates its algorithm frequently, and your traffic could take a hit if an update decides to devalue any of your SEO modifications.

Another proactive strategy is to check on what your competitors have been doing. If your search position has been steadily declining while your competitors' positions are improving, taking a page from their playbooks could help alleviate your traffic losses.

- Dexter Tam

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

No one thinks it will happen. Floods, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, fires — we tend to think that these disasters happen to other people. But when it happens to you, it can be devastating.

I know. In 2011, I lost my house and my law firm in a flood caused by tropical storm Lee. Luckily, I had disaster proofed my personal injury practice. Following is a primer on disaster recovery based upon my own experience, what I did before the flood, and some things I would have changed.

People in my small town knew there was a potential for flooding from the storm, but experts said it would be small, maybe a foot at most. The town prepared for this forecast.

After staying up most of the night before the storm helping fill sandbags, I slept for a few hours. I woke up around 6:00 a.m. to sirens, and when I looked out onto my street, I could see water flooding into the neighborhood. I live close to my office, so I quickly packed a bag with essentials, rushed to the office, and started loading my car with the most important part of the my practice, the hard files.

I had about seven minutes to do all of this. By the time I was driving to high ground, the water was halfway up the side of my vehicle. All told, over 500 homes were flooded, including all of the buildings in the business district.

It took only minutes from the first sight of water to full flooding. By the end of the day, there were 10 feet of water in my house, and the one story office building that contained my law office was mostly covered.

It took three months to get things back to normal. Over those three months, my staff worked from their homes, and I worked out of any restaurant, hotel lobby or diner that had Wi-Fi and allowed me to set up shop.

Prepare for Disaster

The first thing that I wish I had done before the flood was develop a disaster recovery plan. Even as a relatively small firm, I should have had a plan written down and easily accessible.

A comprehensive disaster plan should cover everything from data protection, employee contingencies, and safety and communications to maintaining the confidentiality of your client's information. I lived and worked in Northeast Pennsylvania where we do not get earthquakes, tornados or huge forest fires. However, my town sits between two rivers and I should have understood at least the potential. If your law practice is in a region that is prone to natural disasters, it is imperative to have a disaster preparedness plan.

The following are some of things you and your firm can work on before disaster strikes:

1. Create a crisis response team that meets regularly.
This team should be responsible for researching and writing the disaster recovery plan. The team should regularly review and revise the plan based on changing environments and changing needs of the firm. As a

A good first step in preparing your firm for the unexpected is to read the American Bar Association's free paper on creating disaster recovery plans for law firms of all sizes. While not everything in the paper will apply to you, it is a great source for what items should be considered.

blfmag.com/aba-disaster-recovery

natural disaster approaches or when one occurs unexpectedly, this team should be tasked with taking the lead and implementing the plan.

2. Make sure the staff and attorneys have enough time to prepare their own homes and families.
In cases where evacuations are necessary, it can take time to figure out where to go and what items are needed for daily survival in a new area. In the rush to get out, people can forget many important things.

3. Pre-position important staff and supplies outside the affected area.
This will ensure the continuity of the practice for critical matters during the disaster and the recovery process. These pre-positioned supplies and staff can also be tasked to help the employees of the firm or clients with any needs during the evacuation period. Think of how much good your firm will do by helping your employees and offering support and guidance to the firm's clients.

4. Have critical staff cross-trained in emergency communications and IT data safety and recovery.
Do not rely upon one person to perform a critical task. Make sure there is someone else that can step in and is trained to take up the responsibility for a critical recovery task.

5. Compile a list of contact information for every employee.
Make sure to include emergency contacts for each employee, preferably someone outside of the employee's immediate family. Make sure you have digital and hard copies, as power may be out and computer systems unreachable. Again, do not allow just one person to be responsible for such a critical area. Also, consider developing a call chain so information can be dispersed quickly.

The most important task following a natural disaster is to make sure all employees are safe. Have the disaster recovery team account for everyone. Also, make sure that everyone has whatever they to survive and care for themselves and their families.

6. Engage with clients and make them part of your firm's plan.
This will let them know that you take the continuity of representation seriously. Also, it might spur your clients to start this process in their own companies. Give your clients emergency contact numbers for key players in the firm so that if needed, they can contact one of their lawyers. Also, get emergency contact information from your clients so there can be two way communications.

The Aftermath
The most important thing after a natural disaster is making sure all employees are safe. Have the disaster recovery team account for everyone. Also, make sure that everyone has whatever is needed to survive. Here are some other things to think about after the disaster is over.

Check in with the disaster response lead to confirm that you are OK and that you do not need anything.

Determine whether any team member has special needs and work to cover those needs, relying first upon firm employees and then government assistance.

Check in with clients to see if the firm can help in any way possible.

Designate a media relations person who can talk to the media about how the firm is handling the disaster. For a position this important, make sure to have a backup media relations specialist.

Continue to stay in periodic communication with the staff and lawyers to give updates on the status of the law firm's building(s). Determine a return to work date so that employees can start to plan to return and work on any contingencies that are necessary to get back to work. Also, make sure employees understand the firm's policy on what should happen if they cannot make it back to work on the set day.

If necessary, set up remote working facilities so people can get back to work, even if it is limited in ability. This will increase good will with your clients.

Help Your Local Community
Have a plan in place to help your community if possible. This is the right thing to do, and it will enhance your reputation. Does your firm

have generators that can be used to keep people's refrigerators cold? Do you have access to showers and running water? Do you have access to electricity so people can come in and power their cell phones? These small things go a long way in an emergency.

Law firms can also set up pro bono clinics to help with disaster-related legal issues. I decided to offer a law clinic at my local FEMA relief shelter. Every night I would sit down to answer people's questions and help them if I could. Victims of the flood had issues with FEMA relief. They had issues with property insurance. Many people had landlord/tenant issues. There were many landlords that refused to return paid rents and security deposits even though apartments were unlivable. I helped well over 100 people over the several weeks I held the clinics.

Disaster Preparedness & Technology
One of the most important issues to tackle prior to a disaster is protecting your most valuable assets: client information, files and documents.

One of the greatest disruptions to a law firm a disaster can cause is the loss, damage or destruction of important firm documents or client files. If this is allowed to happen, it could put you out of business. If clients learn that your law firm did not have emergency plans in place or that it did not protect the client's files properly, those clients would justifiably seek other counsel.

I accidentally prepared for a disaster because I am a tech nerd, and I wanted my practice set up so that I could work easily from home or any place with an internet connection. I was already having my staff scan and upload every document generated by the firm and every document that came into the firm from the outside. Also, I had been

using case management software that was cloud-based, not server-based. Therefore, when disaster stuck, l had remote access to all of my case files and all of the data stored in my case management system.

Scanning Documents
With the level of technology available, there is no excuse for not scanning documents and storing them in the cloud. Most modest printer/copiers have robust scanning ability.

When I had my staff start scanning of documents, people complained that it would take too much time — time that could be used working. However, the brief time that it took to scan the documents, label them and put them in the proper electronic file is made up by reducing the time that it takes to find a specific file among a pile of others. Most document storing databases have searching ability and can find a specific document within seconds.

Server-based vs. Cloud-based
If you want to protect data from destruction, a cloud-based solution is the best way to go. Using servers you purchase to store data can be dangerous, particularly if the server is kept at your office. Off-site servers are an option, but again, how far off-site are they? If your law firm's data is being stored across the city and your entire city is affected, then those servers are also threatened.

There are many cloud-based storage options available. Some basic solutions include Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive, Mega and iCloud, which offer various services, storage amounts and price ranges. I personally used Dropbox and could not be happier with it. It was very easy to upload documents and easy to navigate. I could access every document in every file wherever I had access to the internet.

From keeping track of statutes of limitations and calendaring and court deadlines, to tracking case trends and firm outcomes, case management software is a huge help. However, as with physical documents, having your case management data subject to a natural disaster is hazardous. The best practice is to keep the data stored on the cloud.

Practice Management Software
Firms that do not use some sort of case management software are falling behind the times. This behavior can be dangerous, so it is best to examine your options. Most law practice management software has the ability to concisely and cohesively retain every bit of data about a case and can recall that data at the click of a mouse.

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

Some case management systems that can help with preparedness:

AMICUS ATTORNEY

Amicus Attorney is a good fit for firms that need a wide range of features and that want the option to work from the cloud or a desktop. However, it is probably not a good fit for those looking for templates that help streamline your workflow.

CLIO

Clio is a powerful, innovative, cloud-based, user-friendly platform that offers firms an array of options for adding functionality through its extensive App Directory and open API.

ROCKET MATTER

Rocket Matter is robust, cloud-based, productivity-focused software that works well for solos and small firms. Rocket Matter helps you organize client and firm information. But more than most law practice management software, Rocket Matter is focused on helping you get things done.

SMARTADVOCATE

SmartAdvocate was developed by a litigator for high-volume personal injury firms. It is a powerful and customizable practice management software available in two versions: a server version, where you install the software on your own server; and a hosted version, available through the cloud and maintained by SmartAdvocate on its servers.

Many practice management software options exist, with an array of services and pricing. Some software is practice specific, designed specifically to work with a particular area of legal practice like personal injury law or bankruptcy. But many of them can be tailored to any kind of practice or to many different practice areas at the same time.

Here are some things to consider when searching for the right fit in a law practice management software:

Email integration
Determine whether Outlook or Gmail will integrate with the software, or whether the software will provide its own email client. The same goes for whether the software will provide its own calendaring system or use Outlook or Google's calendar systems.

Case and matter management
This is the heart of most law practice management systems. The ability to track every aspect of the case is why you are buying this type of software. However, every system is different, offering a different level of options depending upon the need and the amount you want to spend.

Task management
Being able to create a task list on a daily, weekly or monthly basis with the ability to add due dates, attach items to cases or matters, and to assign them to other members of your team is necessary to run a fast-paced law practice.

Conflict checking
Firms can have thousands of past and current clients at any time. Being able to quickly and accurately check for conflicts of interests makes taking on new work painless and easily streamlined.

Document management
Some case management software platforms offer scanned document management with the ability to attach them to cases and matters. Also, some allow for integration with outside document management websites such a Dropbox or Google Drive.

Time keeping and billing
Depending upon the type of practice you have, time keeping and billing is very important. Having the ability to easily input time on a particular matter and to easily generate invoices based upon those inputs is necessary to have a seamless and efficient practice.

Trust accounting and basic bookkeeping. Again, you may be interested in a complete package type of law practice management system that does everything from A to Z, including the firm's books.

Choosing Practice Management Software

There are dozens of law practice management software options on the market today. We have narrowed our focus to four: Amicus Attorney, Clio, Rocket Matter and SmartAdvocate. A brief description of each can be seen in the sidebar on the left.

While this is by no means an exhaustive list, the intent here is to highlight options that will help in enhancing disaster preparedness and that are relatively less expensive than some of the alternatives. Fortunately, there are some very robust platforms available. For example, Needles is a program that offers everything; however, it costs thousands of dollars to fully implement. This outlay may be unnecessary for your firm.

While the information in this article might seem overwhelming, it does not have to be. If you take away one thing from this article it is that you should try do something that will help your law firm be prepared for a disaster.

- Jim Carroll

Design
WITH
SEO IN MIND

Design and SEO must support each other for a website to function at maximum effectiveness.

Any law firm hoping to generate leads online must have a well-optimized website. At the same time, once visitors arrive on a site, they should find attractive pages, intuitive navigation, engaging visuals and useful content. Looks matter to first-time visitors, who make judgements about a firm's professionalism within seconds.

Too often, design and SEO are seen as separate steps in the development process. Firms will decide they need a new site, have it built, then contact an SEO company about marketing. Unfortunately, any firm will start out at a marketing disadvantage if SEO is not baked in to the design process.

Many of the same features that drive conversions, create good user experience and build solid SEO can also enhance paid search and other inbound marketing efforts. Building a sturdy foundation puts your firm in a good position to adapt to changes in the market and create effective campaigns far into the future.

To begin, you should first understand what makes a website look good to search engines and humans.

SEO: Search engines use web crawlers to evaluate and index a site. A web crawler is an automated software application that regularly browses the internet and gathers information about pages and links, which it uses to create a search index. Web crawlers may also be called spiders, or bots. The Googlebot, for example, creates Google's index of pages and helps ensure information about the pages is up-to-date.

An SEO-friendly website is one that search engines can easily see and understand. Google's web crawler, will be able to identify the content on all pages; locate firm-related information like a phone number or address; find links and understand page hierarchy on a site that is well-optimized.

Lead-generation: A lead-generation website is one that focuses on triggering consumer interest and prompting people to take action, usually to contact the firm about its services. Most law firm websites aim to be lead-generation sites that collect visitor information before a visitor clicks away.

Building a search-friendly website that generates leads and produces clients requires structural planning from the start. Technical considerations must work hand-in-hand with content organization, keyword planning, design and writing. Your firm must determine how you want your services to be represented and develop a website plan that adequately describes these services and provides a compelling, differentiating reason to contact you.

Build a solid foundation
A website that is easy for search engines and people to navigate starts with a good URL and solid information

In order for a website to successfully generate leads, it must be designed in a way that highlights important calls to action and prompts visitors to complete form inquiries. Visitors must also be able to find the appropriate landing pages through organic or paid search.

architecture. Before starting on a design, determine your URL structure and organize your sitemap. Begin by choosing your site's URL.

Generally, it is best to keep an established domain name, especially if your firm has owned it for some time. However, there may be situations in which a change is warranted. When deciding whether to change your URL, ask yourself:

- How old is your current domain? Old domains carry more authority.

- How long is the URL? Short URLs are easier to remember.

- Does the URL match your firm name?

- Has your firm name changed?

- How does the URL sound when spoken out loud?

- How does the URL look when written? Are there repeated characters, hidden words or strange letter combinations?

If you decide to change your URL, have a plan for handling redirects to ensure you do not lose domain authority.

A word on keyword stuffing
Keyword stuffing in domain names became a trend several years ago, and it is one that should not be followed. In 2012, Google's Matt Cutts announced that Google would start lowering the placement of low-quality, exact-match spammy domain names. A domain name that matches your firm's name will be easier for people to remember and search for, and it will

help reinforce your firm's identity in the minds of searchers. Adding keywords to the domain name will unnecessarily lengthen the URL, muddle your firm's brand and confuse users.

Manage your content
A content management system (CMS) is a must for a business website. Without one, you will not be able to easily manage your site, edit content or post updates. WordPress is one of the most widely supported and popular CMS options, and it works well for lawyers. It makes managing pages, posts, meta data and URL structure easy, and it can be enhanced with developer plugins.

Whatever your choice of CMS, make sure it is one that suits your firm, not your hosting or marketing company. Some companies use proprietary software that can make moving your site difficult. Make sure your site will be easy to transfer should you choose to use a different host or marketing company.

Help search engines index your pages
A search engine can only understand a page if crawlers can read its content. This means the bulk of your site content should be text-based. No keywords or phone numbers in images. There are enough web fonts available, including free Google Fonts, that any design effect can be created with text.

Videos, images and other media have a place on a site, also. However, they should be marked up in a way that allows Google to discover and interpret them. When planning content, be sure to create a balance, with your most important information spelled out in text.

Build a site architecture

Organizing your content in a structured, logical manner from the beginning is good for SEO and your sanity. An established structure will help you know easily where to add pages within your architecture as you grow your site, and it will make linking to new pages easy and logical.

File structure begins at the top level: your website. From there, you can add categories, subcategories and pages. An overview of this structure may look like this:

> Home
> – Top category
> – – Subcategory
> – – – Individual page
>
> Home
> – Practice Areas
> – – Personal Injury
> – – – Car Accidents

Posts, FAQs, videos and all other content should also follow a planned structure. Your categories and subcategories help provide context for search engines and make it easier for them to learn the intent of your site. Information architecture may be deep, with many subcategories, or wide, with many top-level categories. The structure you choose should be logical to you based on your firm's services.

Naming pages

URL structure is another way for you to give search engines and humans valuable context. Assume, for this example, that your firm's name is Spring Law Group, and your URL is www.springlawgroup.com. Attorneys may be a category under this domain, and individual attorneys pages within that category. The respective URL, then, will be similar to:

www.springlawgroup.com/attorneys/jane-smith/

You may have come across websites where the page naming convention looks more nonsensical, without an easy to follow categorization, for example:

www.springlawgroup.com/531/?p=1462

In this case, the content management system is showing the default page structure, which categorizes pages by a numbered ids. This type of naming convention is almost impossible for humans to remember and should be replaced with a more logical one.

Mobile-first indexing

In the spring of 2018, Google began rolling out mobile-first indexing. Instead of looking at the information on the desktop version of a page, Google looks at the information on the mobile version to create its index. If a site has separate versions of a page for desktop and mobile users, Google indexes the content on the mobile version.

Mobile-first indexing makes it critical for firms to carefully consider content before jumping into design. If your site contains features designed exclusively for large devices, an effort should be made to incorporate that content gracefully into a responsive layout, giving visitors a consistent experience across all devices.

Getting content right

Content is your website's performance engine. It is what search engines see and index, and it is what will convince your visitors to become leads. Because content plays a central role in your site's success, it should be planned and organized. Writers and designers too often work separately on a website project. Content and design should be integrated, with both teams working together to ensure that a design is a showcase for great content.

Quality: The first item Google lists in its guide to creating a Google-friendly site is to "give visitors what they want" by providing "high-quality content on your pages." Both Google and your readers want pages that answer questions, educate or entertain them.
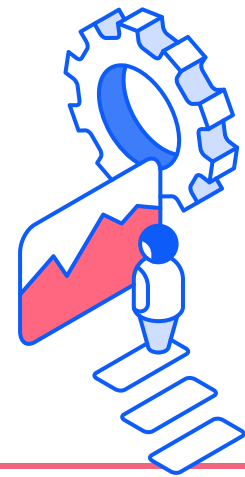
In 2016, more people began to access websites with smartphones and tablets than on desktop machines. Now, even more people reach for their smartphones first when going online. Statistics like this, while true, can be deceptive. Your firm should look at data to learn how users access your site. People in need of legal services often take in-depth looks at legal topics and perform research on machines with larger screens conducive to deliberation.

Scanning: When visitors land on a web page, they immediately begin scanning, looking for highlights that tell them whether the page is relevant before digging deeper. To design for the way people browse, write and organize content into short, digestible pieces. Then use design elements and typography — white space, headings, graphics and color — to group the content into scannable sections.

Organizing calls to action

Your website should have more than one call to action. You should be giving visitors who are in different places in the decision making process different ways to contact you. Some people may be looking for information but not yet ready to commit. They could benefit from white papers, case studies, informational guides or other downloads. Others will be ready to hire an attorney and willing to fill out an intake form or make a phone call immediately.

Additionally, you may want calls to action that are designed to keep people on your site. Links to recommended articles or videos, for example, can serve as important calls to action. The more time people spend on your site, the more likely they are to remember you and eventually become leads.

Before creating a final design, prioritize all the actions you want visitors to take. Primary calls to action will be large, highlighted and easy to see. Lower-level calls to action may be smaller, farther down on the page, or featured on secondary pages.

Creating a good user experience

All of your careful planning should come together naturally to produce a good user experience. A good user experience is one in which the visitor is not asked to do too much. Important elements have prominence. Content is

easy to scan. Design is on-brand, tells a story and leads people to action.

Consistency is also key to a good user experience. As pages are designed, think about how elements will be reused across all pages to create predictable outcomes for visitors. In a global sense, menus should always function in the same way and be in the same place on every page. On a micro level, headings, colors, buttons, hovers and micro-interactions should be constant, so visitors will be able to identify these items easily site-wide.

Technical considerations

Careful planning throughout the design process will set your team up to successfully complete necessary on-site SEO elements. However, if designers do not understand what will happen to the site once they hand it off, problems can arise. Here are some SEO basics, as well as common issues, that web designers should be aware of.

Title tags: The title tag specifies the headline that will appear in search engine results. The title tag is the only meta property that can directly influence search results. As a marketing team works on content and brand development, they should be aware of how messaging and keywords will come together to create this tag.

Meta descriptions: Meta descriptions appear under the title in search results. The meta description does not directly influence rankings. However, descriptions are still important because they serve as a short advertisement that influences whether people will click on your search results. Messaging also plays a role in good description development.

Image optimization: Page speed and load time can affect both rankings and user experience. Big images are

Even though Google has long emphasized the correlation between content quality and rankings, some people still resort to outmoded tactics like keyword stuffing. In reality, Google ranks pages with too many keywords and too few connecting words poorly.

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one way load time can be slowed. To prepare images for upload, crop them to the smallest possible size for their application, and optimize them for web. This will reduce the file size as much as possible.

Additionally, provide title and alt tags for images. The title should name the image, and the alt tag should describe it. Alt tags give people who cannot see the image a way to know what it is.

Orphaned pages: Orphaned pages exist on a server but are not linked to internally or through a menu. Without a link, Google cannot see these pages. On a large site, some amount of orphaned pages are probably inevitable. A sitemap is a counter measure that can help Google and visitors find orphaned pages. Google, specifically is looking for an xml sitemap. An xml sitemap is a roadmap for Google to find all your URLs.

Keyword cannibalization: Keyword cannibalization is a situation in which too many pages are targeting the same keywords. Good information architecture and content planning should prevent this issue.

SEO cannot be an afterthought; it should be an integral part of a website design. Designers, writers and developers should be aware of SEO throughout the process and work together to work good SEO into a site from the start.

- Kristen Friend

CHATBOTS & LEGAL AI

YOUR COMPETITORS & PARTNERS

Chatbots on websites are proliferating rapidly. As the artificial intelligence (AI) behind modern chatbots matures, the virtual agents become viable for an increasing number of use cases.

Chatbots allow routine work to be automated even when that work involves interacting with customers. They support existing customers, recruit new ones, and even create valuable products.

Chatbots and other forms of AI are disrupting many industries. Already, a wide variety of automated legal products are available, potentially threatening law firm revenues. Are law firms condemned to trying to outthink and outclass a rapidly evolving competitor? Or can they embrace chatbots for their own purposes?

Common Tongue

One key field within AI is natural language processing (NLP). Chatbots use NLP to understand and respond to a range of questions on a given topic. While most computer applications require input to be very specifically formatted, NLP allows the user to act more like they are talking to a person.

This is not the artificial intelligence of science fiction that can have a convincingly human conversation on a wide array of topics. However, the sophistication of AI and the helpfulness of chatbots has advanced to the point where companies in many industries, from health care to finance, are beginning to employ them to free up humans for more demanding work.

As is often the case with new technology, the legal industry is a comparatively late adopter. The usual reasons apply: tradition, risk aversion and the sway of the old guard. Thus, the multitude of AI-based legal services today are not law firms, by and large. They offer a product, but not representation, and therefore minimize the inherent risk of a cutting-edge, automated legal service.

As is often the case with developing technologies, chatbots and AI are disrupting a series of industries. For the nimble and growing firm, chatbots present an opportunity to get ahead of the competition, save time on repetitive tasks, and diversify and increase revenue.

Neither chatbots nor even the most sophisticated AI can offer legal representation. But attorneys can use AI and chatbots to expand their capabilities, offerings and revenue.

Legal chatbots for consumers and businesses

If the idea of a chatbot generating truly useful work and revenue leaves you skeptical, you are not alone. A quick survey of the legal offerings currently available is illuminating.

In some cases, customers of these services are unlikely to hire a lawyer in any case. A chatbot or other automated legal service gives them extra information and a better chance at success. In other cases, they truly do eat away at the margins of law firms' revenues. And they are the precursors of ever more sophisticated offerings.

You may already have heard of a chatbot called DoNotPay. In 2015, British teen Joshua Browder created the website and chatbot after receiving a number of parking tickets and noticing the formulaic way in which they could be appealed. The site quickly got thousands of users' tickets dismissed. This year, Browder expanded the tool's capabilities to allow users to appeal other fines, initiate disputes with retailers and even file lawsuits.

LawGeex offers automation of contract review for businesses. The service reads proposed contracts, highlights potential problems and suggests edits based on a company's pre-defined policies. LawGeex promises to relieve in-house counsel of a tedious task to do higher value work. Lawbot similarly automates contracts review.

Legaliboo, from Spain, drafts legal documents based purely on Facebook Messenger interviews with customers. Lexi, a chatbot from LawPath, generates privacy policies and non-disclosure agreements for free.

Legal chatbots for attorneys

If chatbots can create marketable legal products — and clearly they can — many law firms can surely find value in the virtual agents as well.

One high-profile example is Convey Law, a leading conveyance firm in the United Kingdom, which launched a chatbot in 2017. The so-called "Conveybot" allows clients to obtain conveyancing quotes quickly and at any time of day or night. When it cannot answer a question, it brings in a staff member and learns from the answers they provide.

Law firms can acquire chatbots in one of three ways:

**Use ready-made customizable bots.** Chatbots programmed for specific tasks are available from a number of companies. They often include a certain, limited amount of customization for a firm's unique needs.

Contract for the creation of a bot. The same programmers who designed the off-the-shelf chatbots are often available to create custom-tailored bots with advanced skills. Many companies offer both of these first two services.

Create your own bot. Platforms exist to create your own chatbot. While they do not require any true programming skills, it helps to have a techy skillset and a desire to tinker

Chatbots employ an increasing variety of skills, but fundamentally, they can only excel at fairly repetitive tasks that do not require creativity. Here are a few of the most common chatbot skills:

Visitor reception: Reception chatbots are common because they are simple. Their purpose is to generate leads from website visitors, and so they have a fairly limited range.
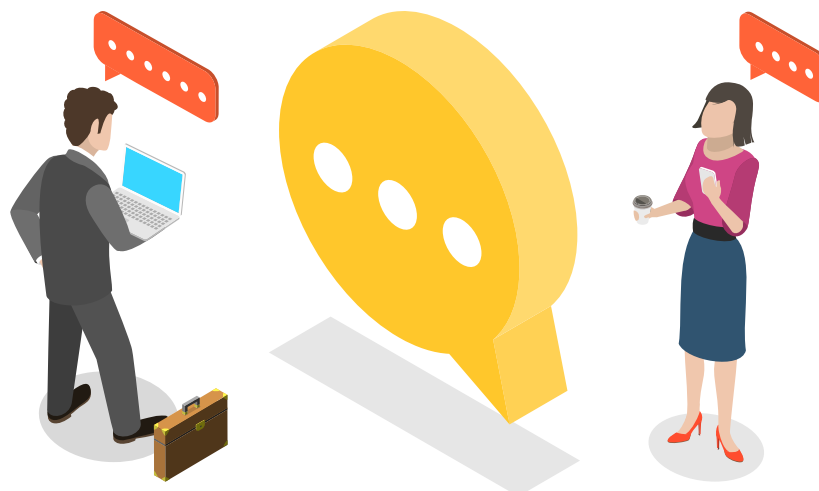
Client intake: Client intake can be a time sink. It may entail a drawn out effort to collect information and documentation which does not generate many billable hours. Chatbots are able to reduce the human time spent on these activities and increase efficiency and revenue.

Document creation: The same chatbots that threaten transactional attorneys' revenues can help expand and bolster those firms. An automatically-generated document that is reviewed by an actual attorney can give extra peace of mind and differentiate such a service from similar non-attorney services, which are themselves significant revenue generators.

As with most cutting-edge tech spaces, chatbots and companies offering them rise and fall rapidly. Here are a few of the current leaders in the marketplace.

LawDroid began as a bot that helped users incorporate businesses in California. The company now offers a series of bots for law firms. A reception bot converts visitors into leads, a paralegal bot handles intake and client management, and a legal health check bot diagnoses legal issues.

Docubot works through a firm's existing site to produce documents and also perform client intake.

Chatbots employ an increasing variety of skills, but fundamentally, they can only excel at fairly repetitive tasks that do not require creativity.

Automio is an automation service featuring document creation chatbots tailored to law firms. Through the Automio marketplace, law firms can buy and sell chatbots from each other.

Chatfuel allows for the creation of bots that operate via Facebook Messenger. The company claims to power nearly half of all Facebook Messenger bots. You can create a chatbot yourself or pay the company to produce one for you. Chatfuel offers many integrations with third-party services. For example, it can link to your blog posts on WordPress.

FlowXO is a self-serve chatbot creation platform that will appeal to those who want to tinker with their own bot. Users can design working bots for free and upgrade to paid accounts if their bots become very active.

A chatbot can also be a key function of a broader AI-based program. This is the case with ROSS, a virtual legal research assistant available to law firms by subscription. Using natural language questions, attorneys can ask ROSS to research case law and find legal precedent pertaining to the facts of their cases. It also monitors newly published law and automatically notifies attorneys of new information pertaining to their preferences.

As is often the case with developing technologies, chatbots and AI are disrupting a series of industries. The legal industry being what it is, this disruption is somewhat delayed and cushioned for law firms.

For the nimble and growing firm, chatbots present an opportunity to get ahead of the competition, save time on repetitive tasks, and diversify and increase revenue.

- Ryan Conley

LAW FIRM CHATBOT OPTIONS

What chatbots are available and applicable to attorneys?

LAWDROID
LawDroid offers a reception bot to help convert visitors to leads, a paralegal bot to handle intake and client management, and a legal health check bot diagnoses legal issues.

DOCUBOT
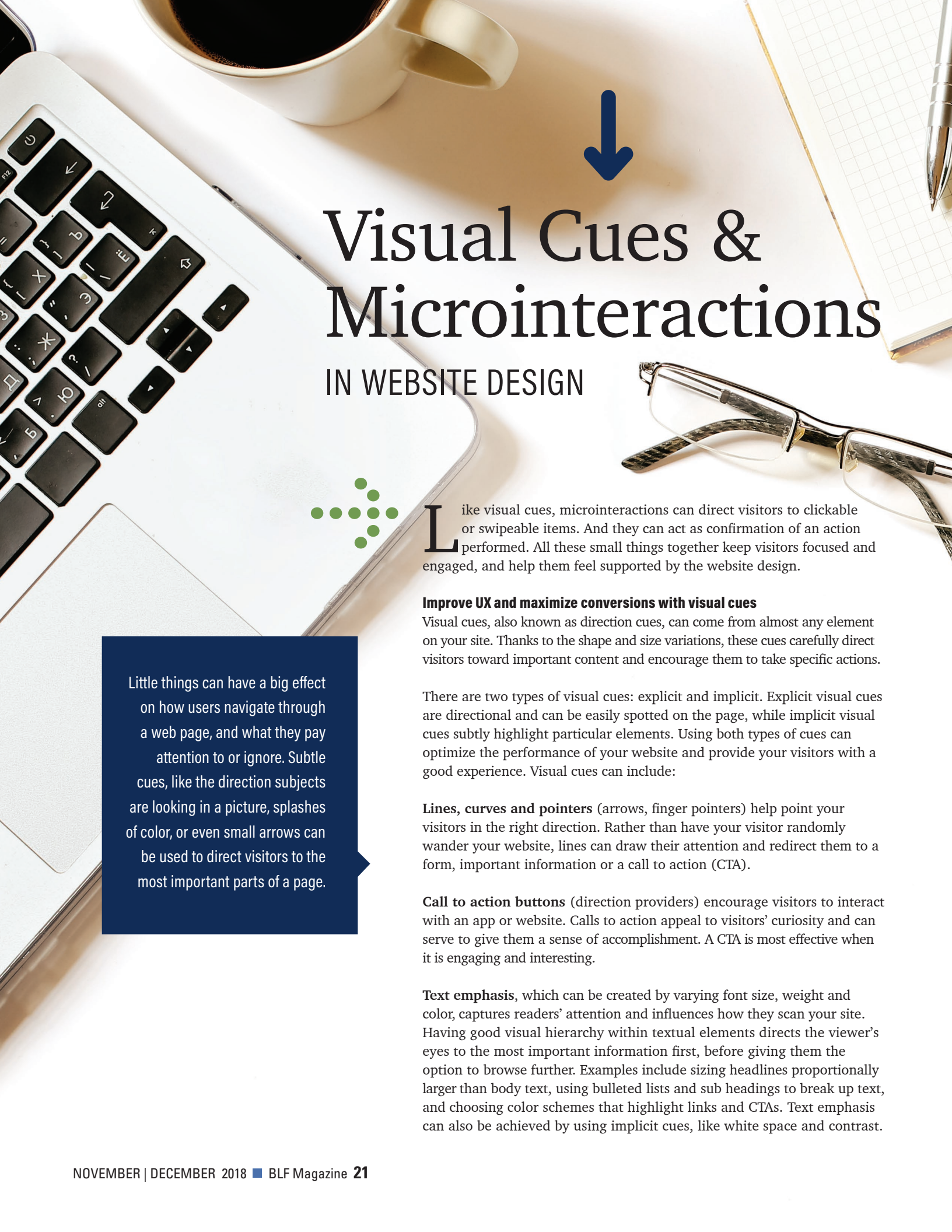As its name implies, Docubot creates documents. It can also help perform client intake.

AUTOMIO
Automio is an automation service featuring document creation chatbots tailored to law firms. Through the Automio marketplace, law firms can buy and sell chatbots from each other.

CHATFUEL
Chatfuel bots operate through Facebook Messenger. Chatfuel claims to power almost half of all Facebook Messenger bots. With Chatfuel, you can create your own chatbot, or pay the company to produce one for you.

FLOWXO
FlowXO is a self-serve chatbot creation platform that will appeal to those who want to tinker with their own bot. Users can design working bots for free and upgrade to paid accounts if their bots become very active.

Visual Cues & Microinteractions

IN WEBSITE DESIGN

Little things can have a big effect on how users navigate through a web page, and what they pay attention to or ignore. Subtle cues, like the direction subjects are looking in a picture, splashes of color, or even small arrows can be used to direct visitors to the most important parts of a page.

Like visual cues, microinteractions can direct visitors to clickable or swipeable items. And they can act as confirmation of an action performed. All these small things together keep visitors focused and engaged, and help them feel supported by the website design.

Improve UX and maximize conversions with visual cues

Visual cues, also known as direction cues, can come from almost any element on your site. Thanks to the shape and size variations, these cues carefully direct visitors toward important content and encourage them to take specific actions.
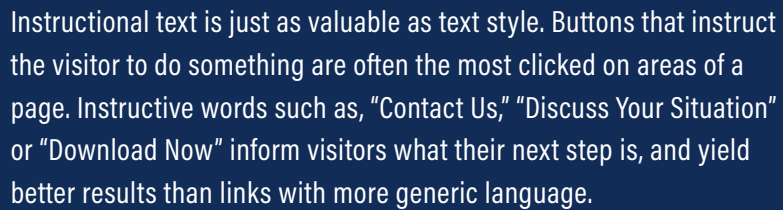
There are two types of visual cues: explicit and implicit. Explicit visual cues are directional and can be easily spotted on the page, while implicit visual cues subtly highlight particular elements. Using both types of cues can optimize the performance of your website and provide your visitors with a good experience. Visual cues can include:

Lines, curves and pointers (arrows, finger pointers) help point your visitors in the right direction. Rather than have your visitor randomly wander your website, lines can draw their attention and redirect them to a form, important information or a call to action (CTA).

Call to action buttons (direction providers) encourage visitors to interact with an app or website. Calls to action appeal to visitors' curiosity and can serve to give them a sense of accomplishment. A CTA is most effective when it is engaging and interesting.

Text emphasis, which can be created by varying font size, weight and color, captures readers' attention and influences how they scan your site. Having good visual hierarchy within textual elements directs the viewer's eyes to the most important information first, before giving them the option to browse further. Examples include sizing headlines proportionally larger than body text, using bulleted lists and sub headings to break up text, and choosing color schemes that highlight links and CTAs. Text emphasis can also be achieved by using implicit cues, like white space and contrast.

Instructional text is just as valuable as text style. Buttons that instruct the visitor to do something are often the most clicked on areas of a page. Instructive words such as, "Contact Us," "Discuss Your Situation" or "Download Now" inform visitors what their next step is, and yield better results than links with more generic language.

Photography is another way to draw your visitors' attention to specific parts of your web pages. Humans are instantly drawn to large photos, colorful photos and photos of human faces. Since monitors are any size between huge and tiny, be mindful of the quality of your photos and how they compress and display on different screen sizes.

Microinteractions: tiny moments matter

Microinteractions are events with a single purpose — to improve the user experience by creating moments that welcome, delight and engage your visitors. Microinteractions are small moments that accomplish one task, and one task only. Examples include, liking a Facebook post, doing an online search, swiping a card, pressing a button and changing a status.

Although they are small elements, microinteractions can distinguish an extraordinary website from an average one. Microinteractions communicate to the visitor whether actions can be or have been performed, and they provide immediate feedback. This teaches visitors which actions are appropriate without frustrating them. Microinteractions are comprised of four parts:

Triggers prompt microinteractions. Triggers can be user-initiated and system initiated. User-initiated triggers requires the visitor to take action, while system initiated triggers occur when the software detects specific criteria.

Rules decide what occurs when a microinteraction is triggered.

Feedback is anything the visitor sees, hears or feels while a microinteraction is taking place.

Loops & Modes determine the meta-rules of the microinteraction when conditions change.

Top microinteractions

Data input is an important element of any app or website. Interactive features can keep a visitor engaged while inputting data such as passwords, or while creating accounts. Inline form validations may not be the most exciting microinteractions, but when they are present, visitors are less likely to be frustrated when filling out forms.

Animations attract the attention of your visitors and highlight features, so important content is not overlooked. For a smooth user experience, you need to consider color, shape, special effects, placement and texture.

Current system status tells your visitors what is happening on the page by displaying feedback. This can be a graphic in the background, loading animation or playing a sound.

Calls to action can function as visual cues and microinteractions. Calls to action are intended to be interactive and encourage the visitor to do something specific.

Tutorials guide and educates visitors by highlighting features and important controls for easy understanding.

Make microinteractions awesome

Now that you know how important microinteractions are, you will want to think about what you want those microinteractions to achieve. Here are some things to consider.

Think like your visitor. By putting yourself in their shoes, you can better know how to make your site a welcoming and positive experience. Think about user experiences that will pique your visitors' interest and encourage conversion.

Quick response time is something that your visitors will expect. Microinteractions need to activate within 0.1 seconds, or otherwise the interaction will be dissociated from the initial action.

Repetition will help the webpage stay in line with your visitors' expectation. Familiar patterns and just a few surprises results in a positive user experience.

Simplicity is essential to avoid confusion for your visitors. Aim to communicate your message as quickly, effectively and concisely as possible.

Considering a website redesign?

A well designed website, with visual cues and microinteractions, provides excellent user experience and can improve your conversion rate. Not only do these elements make your website more aesthetically pleasing, they also have real, logical functionality. The next time you update your website, consider adding them.

- Jessylyn Los Banos

Are you competing against your marketing company?

BRISKMAN BRISKMAN & GREENBERG ISN'T

![Custom Legal Marketing logo]

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™