BLF
BIGGER LAW FIRM

A magazine for attorneys

SEO IN-DEPTH
Learn strategies for using internal linking to boost your firm's SEO efforts.

MESSAGING
Cultivate client relationships with the right plan and the right tools.

ROCK YOUR MARKETING MIX

There is no formula for the perfect marketing mix. Adopting a singular, one-size-fits-all approach to marketing would mean ignoring the fact that no two law firms are the same.

VIRTUAL IMPRESSION
It is time for a website redesign? Evaluate your needs before jumping in.

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BLF BIGGER LAW FIRM
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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.

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SEO
OBITER DICTA

In a world where seemingly everyone has to be a content producer, your ability to find interesting sources can set your work apart, and give it a leg up.

No matter how good you and your team are at brainstorming and thinking creatively, there is a good chance that someone else has already written about the topics you will be writing about. Every business — and individual — is under tremendous pressure to satiate Google's desire for continuously new or updated content. This is not to say that you should abandon attempts to generate one-of-a-kind topic ideas. It is simply an acknowledgement that there is a lot of content out there — much of it bad and repetitive — and to avoid wasting time and money, you have to do better.

Here are some sources you can explore to help you produce content that is noticeably different from the myriad of articles available on any topic.

1. Sources outside the legal industry. Get the opinions of business leaders who are not in the legal industry to gain a new perspective on a topic. This will give your content a different spin from the articles your competitors may be writing. It also gives you the chance to quote a professional who is not commonly quoted regarding a specific matter.

2. Scholarly publications and peer reviewed literature. Many blog posts and online articles simply quote or reference other blogs when sourcing content. In some way, this makes sense. Linking to pages and sites that are contextually relevant increases your chance of building quality backlinks.

Unfortunately, this practice also produces a lot of articles that cover the same ideas pulled from the same people. Scholarly publications are used less often for inspiration because they tend to be dense, and reading them is time consuming. This is precisely what makes them good sources for new ideas. And, referencing peer reviewed literature gives your content more weight and authority. Google Scholar is a good place to start when looking for academic publications.

3. Client feedback and questions. Your clients — and the leads you may have lost — are excellent resources. For every client who asks a question, there are likely hundreds of potential leads who are wondering the same thing. You can also tap into the insight of your competitors' clients by reading the frequently asked questions on their websites, and by reading FAQs on large legal sites. Avvo, for example, has a section titled "Browse Questions From Others."

4. Data. Data, reports and white papers contain interesting insights that can be used as the basis for content pieces. Increasingly, people are going online to research their legal issue before making the decision to hire a lawyer. If your website can provide data-backed and unique information, these researchers are more likely to find it, read it and trust it.

Research papers, reports and data are also often hidden behind subscription walls, or available only to people who are willing to sign up to receive them. Therefore, it is less likely your visitors will have read your source reports than, for example, a competitors' blog post. When using data, be sure it comes from a study that is recent and relevant.

5. Interviews. Doing your own investigative research and interviewing experts guarantees you access to exclusive content. Many people, especially those who are simply focused on churning out as much content as possible, will not take the time to get their own sources. When interviewing your expert, try to ask questions that are not commonly answered online. Ask your expert what they wish they were more often asked, and let them tell you what you do not know. To get the most out of your interview, ask the expert if you can reference the interview for future pieces, and get permission to post the transcript online.

6. Books. Yes, books. The kind written on paper or downloaded to an e-reader. While you cannot read a whole book before producing every piece of content, you should make a habit of reading books about marketing, business development and any other topics you find interesting. Books, like scholarly publications, provide an in-depth look at a topic and are more likely to inspire unique ideas than are short blog entries. Reading regularly also makes you a better writer, as you are exposed to writing methods, ideas and vocabulary with which you are not already familiar.

Producing original content takes time. But focusing on quality rather than quantity can yield rewards in terms of rankings and conversions.

- Kristen Friend

Creating An Internal Linking Strategy

The primary reasons a law firm creates and maintains a website is to inform users of their practice areas and give prospective clients an opportunity to contact them about their accident or injury. In order to inform users effectively, quality content is needed. This could come in the form of blogs, FAQs or pages.

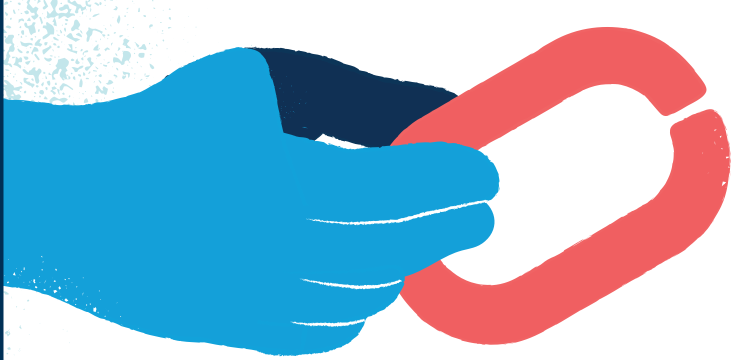
To go deeper into educating people who visit your site, and to help keep them on your pages longer, law firms can use internal linking. This gives visitors additional ways to navigate to relevant content that is not included in the main navigation menu. Having a website that is accurately and thoroughly internally linked can help give potential clients the confidence they need to go with you as their lawyer.

What are internal links?

Internal links are hyperlinks that take a user from one page to another within the same domain. For example, there could be links on your homepage that takes the user to the "About Me" page, the "Practice Area" page or the "Contact Us" page.

Internal links differ from external links, as external links will take the user from the website they are on to another website. Internal links will take you to another page on the same website.

Internal links can be placed in navigation menus, recommended link menus or within the page copy. However, having too many internal links can be a distraction. The right amount can keep visitors engaged and give Google context about how pages on your site relate to each other.



Why are internal links important?

Internal links are important to the success of your website due to two reasons: navigation and link equity.

Navigation
If your website does not internally link well, or at all, the user will eventually get stuck on a page. Once they finish reading the content on the page, there is no other place for them to go without internal links. This could be disastrous for achieving conversions. If someone is reading a blog or FAQ on your website, and there is no option to contact your firm, you have lost any chance to gain a client.

Ideally, a well-designed website will have relevant internal links on every page of their site. Relevance is of understated importance.

Keep your users engrossed on the subject they have shown interest in. This will increase the likelihood they will contact you. If someone is on your personal injury practice area page, have an internal link that leads to a page that could show what kind of injuries are prevalent in personal injury cases. On a car accident page, link to another page on your website detailing why the reader needs a car accident lawyer after an accident.

Having an internal link on every page that gives the user an opportunity to contact you is essential. Generally, a call-to-action linked to your contact page above the fold, and in the last paragraph of your content, is a smart way to give your users a chance to reach out to your firm.

Link equity
Another reason internal linking is so important to the overall health of your website is link equity. Search engines take into account the strength of your entire website and of each individual page on your website

when deciding the search engine rankings. When a page gets internally linked, it passes on some of its strength to the page it is linked to. This is link equity.

Generally, your homepage and primary practice area pages will always be the strongest pages on your website. This is because these pages are the oldest, and they had time and opportunity to acquire the most backlinks. When you create a new blog post, including an internal link from your homepage or a relevant practice area page will give that blog post a boost, and increase the probability it shows up on search engines.

What are some strategies for using internal linking to boost SEO efforts?

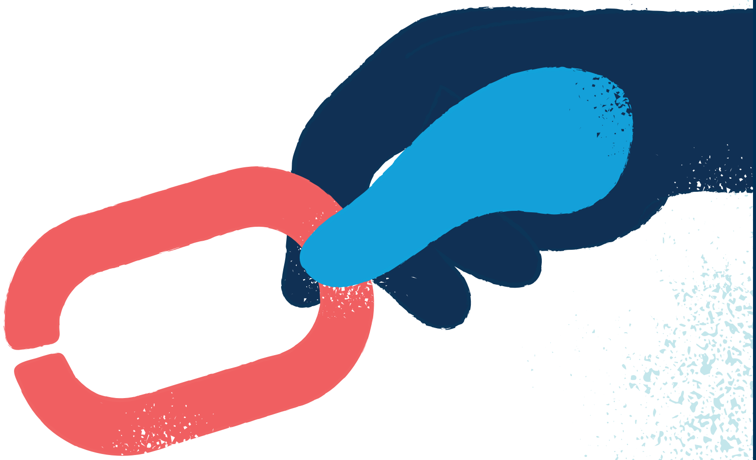
Two internal linking strategies that can boost your search engine rankings are: clear, solid link hierarchy and relevant, natural anchor texts.

You can imagine a link hierarchy like a pyramid, with the homepage being the tip of your pyramid. As you go down, you will have your practice area pages, sub-practice area pages, relevant content pages and content posts like blogs. This pyramid will help you determine which pages are the most important and need to contain internal links to less frequently trafficked pages.

A concise link hierarchy also makes it easier for search engines to determine which pages you value the most. You would not want your main search terms to show an irrelevant page instead of directing visitors to the homepage or relevant practice area page.

Anchor text contains the actual words that are hyperlinked on a page. Anchor text should be relevant to the page to which it is linking. This helps users determine whether that particular link will take them to a page of interest.

Ideally, anchor text should be keywords or search terms relating to the page. However, it is important to remember to not be overzealous in using keywords as your anchor text. Google's algorithms have advanced far in determining what is considered spammy and what is considered organic. You could be penalized harshly if your link portfolio shows an abundance of the same anchor text, without any variations. Thus, a good practice is to avoid specifically adding keywords into your page as your anchor text, but rather to find natural opportunities within your content to internally link to. It is not necessary to always have an anchor text of "[practice area] lawyer." Having



free-flowing, almost conversational phrases as your anchor text can benefit you just as well.

How does Google's Mobile First Indexing affect internal linking strategies?

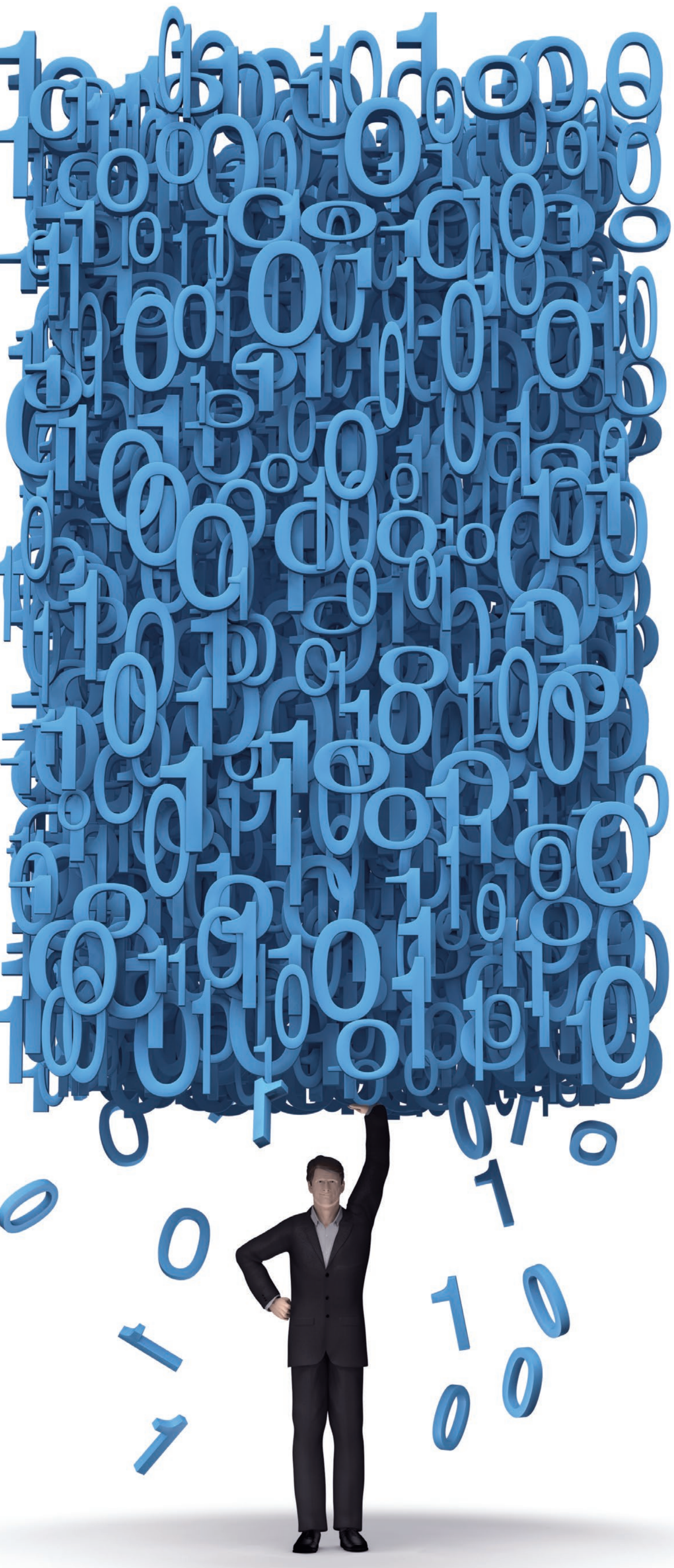
Mobile use is the future and the present. Google knows this, and has stated that your mobile site and everything it encompasses determines your place in its search listings, regardless of whether a user is on a mobile, desktop or tablet device. Google will always index the mobile version of content, if one is available. Google started its mobile-first indexing last year, and has claimed to have already implemented this mobile-first strategy on about half the websites it has indexed.

How will this affect internal linking strategies? Foremost, most digital marketers work on desktops or laptops. A desktop version of a website can vary compared to its mobile counterpart. You have less real-estate for content and clickable elements on a phone compared to a desktop. You might have to omit some functionalities that contain internal links on the mobile version of your website because those functionalities are too data-dependent. This will cause your mobile site to lose some of its link strength.

One way you can fix this on mobile is to employ drop-downs and tabs. Having internal links come from drop-down menus can supplement the links you have lost if you had to discard certain elements on your mobile site.

Additionally, plan your content strategy so that critical page links are contained within text that will be displayed across all devices. As Google's algorithms continue to learn and reward user- and mobile-friendly websites, careful planning of both content and layout will only become more important.

- Dexter Tam



Data Driven Law

The legal industry, like many others, is experiencing significant disruption due to transformative technology. One technology that is rapidly gaining traction is data analysis.

Data analysis is the gathering, inspecting and modeling of data to gain insight into how real-world processes work and make predictions and decisions about them accordingly. Data analysis is rapidly taking hold in many industries as a way to make more objective measurements and gain valuable insight into the true nature of human-driven systems.

As with many technological advances, the legal industry has been slow to adopt data analysis, compared with other industries. This is partly because attorneys are risk-averse. But it also has to do with the nature of legal data.

The most readily analyzed and modeled data is highly quantitative in nature — think of the natural sciences. Science itself is data analysis in its broadest sense, and has been around for hundreds of years.

In the modern context, however, data analysis usually refers to applying these techniques to more qualitative data, especially of social and economic systems for commercial or governmental purposes. One example is “sabermetrics,” the analysis of baseball statistics that helped the Oakland Athletics win 20 games in a row in 2002 and the subject of the film Moneyball. Although analysis of any human action is somewhat qualitative, sports stats are still largely quantitative, and therefore somewhat low-hanging fruit. Legal data analysis pushes the envelope much further.

Like the hard sciences, legal data analysis has been possible for as long as law has been practiced. Modern technology simply makes it more practical. One can imagine a lawyer poring over books of court records, painstakingly quantifying every relevant case for every client; now, data about cases is recorded digitally, making it more accessible. A gifted lawyer whose hobbies include statistical modeling might develop a rudimentary algorithm for applying that data; today, trained data scientists are developing such algorithms for commercial enterprises every day.

Benefits of Data Analysis

In order to judge the likely outcome of a case, or the best strategy to pursue, attorneys often rely on the sum of their individual experiences and perhaps those of the other attorneys in their firm. Call this anecdotal evidence, intuition or, less charitably, a hunch.

It goes without saying that intuition and hunches, while useful, are subjective and flawed. They also rely on data sets that are quite limited. Any one attorney, no matter how experienced, has a body of direct knowledge that is utterly dwarfed by the universe of available legal data. How can attorneys and firms begin to capitalize on this data and the cutting-edge work being done by data scientists?

First and foremost, law firms can use legal data analysis to win cases and secure good outcomes for their clients. Robust analytics can uncover patterns in how certain courts, or even certain judges, have ruled in past cases that are similar to your clients. It can also give more precise insight into how long a case might last. Best of all, analytics can give you intelligence about your opposing counsel. How much experience do they have with similar cases? How many open cases do they have right now?

Attracting clients is another benefit of data analysis. Firms can use it to quantify their experience relative to their competitors, their performance in specific courts or before certain judges, and the bandwidth available to new clients. Firms can also better inform clients as to what to expect from their case, from time to conclusion to an expected settlement or judgment amount.

Larger firms can even use data analysis to better understand their own operations. For example, deployment of resources and cost controls are increasingly important as firms tend to shift away from the traditional billable-hour model. Recording, modeling and analyzing operational data allows decision-makers to act quickly and effectively.

Legal Data Analysis Products

The market for legal data analysis products, like the technology itself, is rapidly evolving. Here are just a few key players and the products they offer.

Lex Machina by Lexis Nexis is a powerhouse in legal data analysis. Firms can use the platform for marketing purposes by quantifying their experience in various ways — expertise with matters similar to a client's case, history with opposing counsel and performance before specific judges. Intelligence about opposing counsel and judges can help win cases, too. Litigants can use Lex Machina to understand trends in how judges rule on various types of motions, how long similar cases last, and the experience and case load of other firms.

E-discovery, with its need to search potentially vast amounts of data for certain information, is a ripe target for data analysis. Proofpoint is one product capitalizing on the space. It promises to dramatically reduce the time required to complete a comprehensive and defensible discovery using large or small data sets. Its tools allow teams to analyze and visualize data from various perspectives, including key custodians, topic clustering and timelines.

LAW FIRMS CAN USE LEGAL DATA ANALYSIS TO WIN CASES.

Robust analytics can uncover patterns in how certain courts, or even certain judges, have ruled in past cases that are similar to your clients.

Law firms need to know that legal data analysis helps not just lawyers, but clients, too. Your potential clients are increasingly able to compare you with your competition. Premonition is an online service that helps litigants choose a lawyer. It includes vital stats such as win rate, hourly rate and average case length, as well as performance before a given judge.

Another legal analytics product may even help clients avoid lawsuits in the first place. Intraspexion promises to assist companies and their in-house counsel to uncover potential litigation risks. By scouring email and other documents for keywords indicating legal issues such as allegations of discrimination or noncompliance, and cross-referencing those against ever-evolving algorithms, the product can alert leaders to nascent issues so that they can be addressed early and head off lawsuits.

Like many emerging technologies, data analysis is just beginning to have a significant impact on the practice of law. With the right tools and an appreciation of the future potential, early adopters can gain an edge on competitors and make an impact on clients.

- Ryan Conley

SAFELY & EFFECTIVELY

Maximize Your Case Management Budget

Since the early 1990's, case management software has steadily increased its market share year over year. As the practice of law became more complex, using tools to manage this complexity has become a necessity for big and small firms alike.

In the early days of adoption, the cost of proper case management software was prohibitive for small firms. Large firms needed robust and multifaceted programs that handled a variety of practice areas and were able to collect data on every type of law a large firm handled. However, even firms that specialized in one area of the law still needed software that could handle niche markets.

Therefore, it is not surprising that over the years case management software programs have become leaner and cheaper, and accessible to one and two attorney firms. This article will review the options for small firms to safely and effectively maximize their case management budget in order to compete with big firms for market share.

Server-based vs. Cloud-based solutions

The first decision you will have to make is whether you will use server-based or cloud-based software. With server-based case management software, a server, often on-site, runs the program. All of the data is kept on that server and can be accessed by everyone.

A cloud-based case management software program is one where the program, as well as your data, can be accessed by connecting to the internet. The website you use to interact with the data is the program, and the data is kept on another companies' computers, far away from you. Currently, most high-end case management software offer both cloud and server-based options. Most of the less costly case management software is only cloud-based. What are the benefits to either?

If you want to protect data from destruction due to a natural disaster, a cloud-based solution is the best way to go. The use of servers to store the data can be dangerous, particularly if that server is kept at your office. Off-site servers are an option, but again, how far away from your office should they be? If your law firm's data is being stored across the city in a server farm and your entire city is affected by a disaster, then your data is still at risk.

There are many cloud-based options that allow you to store documents, pictures, spreadsheets and other data. These are not actually case management software. However, some of them, such as Dropbox, can integrate with cloud-based case management programs.

Some basic online storage options are Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive, Mega and iCloud, which offer various services and price ranges for the amount of storage needed. With all of these companies, you can access every file wherever there is access to the internet.

Cloud-based practice management software

Many law firms are recognizing the benefits of implementing some sort of case management software. Case management software can save time and help firms avoid costly mistakes. 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.

From keeping track of statute of limitations and calendaring of appointments and court deadlines, to tracking case trends and firm outcomes, case management software is an asset. However, as with choosing where to store scanned documents, having your case management data subject to a natural disaster is dangerous. The best practice is to keep the data on the cloud where it can be accessed regardless of circumstances.

If you want to protect data from destruction due to a natural disaster, a cloud-based solution is the best way to go. The use of servers to store the data can be dangerous, particularly if that server is kept at your office.

How to Choose Law Practice Management Software

There are many options, offering an array of services, with a large range of pricing — from tens of thousands of dollars to hundreds of dollars. Some software is practice specific, meaning that it is designed to work with a particular area of legal practice, for example, personal injury law or bankruptcy. But many options can be tailored to any kind of practice or 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: Will Outlook, Gmail or your email solution integrate with the software? Or will the software provide its own email client? Also, check to see whether the software will provide its own calendaring system or sync with Outlook or Google's calendar systems (or both).

Case/matter management: This is the heart of most law practice management systems. The ability to track every aspect of the case is why you pay for this type of software. However, every system is different, offering a different level of management options depending upon your needs and budget.

Task management: Being able to create a daily, weekly or monthly task list with the ability to add due dates, attach items to cases or matters, and to assign tasks to other members of your team is a must.

Conflict checking: Some law firms have thousands of past and current clients at any one time. Being able to quickly and accurately check for conflicts of interests makes taking on new work painless and streamlined.

HOW TO

LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE OPTIONS

The following examples are not an exhaustive list of practice management software options on the market today. The options listed below have cloud-based features and are geared toward helping small to medium sized firms. The list also focuses upon less expensive models.

AMICUS ATTORNEY

Amicus Attorney offers a wide range of functions and features, including calendering, matter management, document management, time management, a client portal and billing. It is a good fit for firms that want to be able to work from the cloud or a desktop. Firms looking for templates to streamline workflow may want to consider a sister product, AbicusLaw, which allows firms to customize solutions for service areas.

CLIO

Clio is a cloud-based and user-friendly law practice platform that offers a range of options for adding functionality for law firms. Clio offers time tracking, billing, client management and various mobile apps needed to manage and organize your law firm.

ROCKET MATTER

Rocket Matter is a cloud-based productivity-focused law practice management software designed for solo and small firms. Rocket Matter helps organize information about your clients and firm by offering time management and billing software. Rocket Matter integrates with Office 365, QuickBooks Online, Evernote, ScanSnap Cloud, Ruby Receptionists, Box, Dropbox, LexCharge and other applications.

SMARTADVOCATE

SmartAdvocate, developed by a litigator, is law practice management software meant for high-volume personal injury law firms. SmartAdvocate has two versions available: 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 own servers. SmartAdvocate also offers document storage, reports and email integration.

TRIALWORKS

TrialWorks offers case management software intended for use by litigation attorneys and staff within law firms of any size. TrialWorks has an intuitive dashboard interface and offers calendar management and scheduling of trial dates, deadlines and more. This software also offers a settlement calculator, billable hour tracking and general accounting.

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

Time keeping & 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 helps you have a seamless and efficient practice.

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

Before you decide on one product, make sure to spend a lot of time playing with your top contenders. Also spend time with the company sales reps and ask for demonstrations. Point out to the sales person what aspects of cloud-based law firm management you are looking for. This will help you find a good fit for your law firm to be successful.

- Jim Carrol

ROCK YOUR MARKETING MIX

Law firms vary by location, practice areas, types of clients, experience and many other aspects. Each added variable makes the marketing needs of each firm that much more different and specific. Nevertheless, all of them are united by the reality of having to operate in the hyper-competitive environment of today's legal industry.

According to the American Bar Association, there are more than 1.3 million attorneys in the United States. A law firm looking to the future must employ effective marketing strategies to build a consistent, persistent presence that ensures they stand out from the competition.

Lawyers are bombarded with a lot of different — sometimes conflicting — advice from various sources that makes it challenging to figure out the right marketing approach for their law firm. Tactics that work for one law firm may not work for another, and vice versa. Additionally, what was effective one quarter for a firm may need to be modified the next. So what can lawyers do to determine their ideal marketing strategy for success in 2019?

FEATURE

Most lawyers understand the importance of having a good marketing plan. But what many may not realize is that there is no formula for the perfect marketing mix guaranteed to work for all law firms. Adopting a singular, one-size-fits-all approach to marketing would mean ignoring the fact that no two law firms are the same.

Certain marketing channels will be more relevant than others, simply because of your ideal client's behaviors. For example, a law firm that targets younger clients who actively use smartphones may find online marketing strategies like social media and videos to be the most effective. Pay-Per-Click advertising may prove more useful for attracting potential clients facing urgent court dates or jail time. Because they are inclined to act quickly, the precise targeting capabilities of such ads can help your law firm be the first to appear in the individual's search results.

Identifying target clients, goals & budget

To figure out your best marketing mix, start with a comprehensive review of existing efforts to determine what is working and what is not. This includes identifying a target audience. There is no point in implementing a marketing strategy if it is not reaching the right people.

Develop specific profiles including characteristics that define an ideal client, the legal services they seek and where they are searching for them. The more deeply lawyers understand who their potential clients are, the easier it is to develop targeted marketing processes that meet their specific needs and deliver results.

Additionally, create a set of goals, whether it is increasing revenue or attracting new clients in a particular area. Many lawyers fall into the trap of experimenting with different tactics before establishing an overall strategy. Focusing on the "why" will help you choose the right marketing channels. Otherwise, your marketing efforts will lack direction, and there will be no way to determine whether they are paying off.

Budget is another crucial factor. How much can you invest in marketing this year? Do you need to raise last year's budget to get better results? Which marketing channel is going to produce the highest return on investment (ROI) based on who you are trying to reach and what action you want them to take? Various factors, such as how competitive your space is, will affect the amount you need to spend to reap the benefits of a particular marketing channel.

Mixing offline with online

Gone are the days prospective clients relied only on TV commercials or phone directories. Today, people are searching for lawyers both offline and online. This means law firms have multiple tactics to choose from when developing their marketing strategy. Every firm needs a good mix of marketing channels, but the combinations they choose will vary according to their target clients, goals and budget, among other factors. A multinational corporate law firm is going to have different requirements than a smaller niche practice. A criminal defense lawyer in New York will have a different target audience than a personal injury attorney in Florida.

Online legal marketing is a universe comprised of search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, social media, content marketing, pay-per-click (PPC) ads, directory services and more. Certain tactics, such as having a regularly updated website, are considered mandatory. For millions of people, the first step in finding a lawyer is a Google search. As a result, SEO has become integral to online marketing. Due to the intense competition for visibility on the web, marketers use SEO to increase reach and prominence on search engine results pages.

Branding is another inherent part of marketing for just about any law firm. When people think of brands, big names like Amazon or Apple immediately come to mind. But branding is just as essential for law firms as it is for multinational corporations. It is more than a logo or visual style. Branding involves crafting an image and message that lawyers want to convey to the world, including what sets their firm apart from competitors.

Once a law firm's branding is established, it should be incorporated consistently across all offline and online marketing channels, whether it is the law firm website, Facebook page, business cards or other published materials. Branding allows lawyers a measure of control over how their firm is presented to their current and prospective clients.

Types of marketing channels

Networking
A lot of modern-day communication occurs online via email and social networks like Twitter and Facebook. However, this does not diminish the significance of real-

> Law firm marketing is not limited to the web. SEO and other online tactics must work harmoniously with offline marketing channels like advertising and networking to help establish a law firm as a trustworthy authority. In an era geared toward online communication, offline advertising still has value.

world networking. Clients still form their primary impressions of lawyers through face-to-face meetings, and word of mouth remains a powerful force of advertising for law firms.

Offline relationships, like networking with colleagues, can serve as a rich source of business. When lawyers join professional associations and attend conferences, they encounter people who can refer clients to them, for example someone looking for legal representation in a practice area different to theirs.

Pay-per-click advertising remains one of the most effective ways to market services online. The benefit of paid ads is that they are shown to people at the exact moment they are searching for your legal services.

Referrals

In a 2018 Thomson Reuters survey, small law firms identified increasing referrals from existing clients as the top factor that drove firm revenue over the past year, followed closely by growing relationships with current clients. Referrals play a crucial role in new client acquisition for many lawyers, especially for smaller law firms that may not have thousands of marketing dollars to spend on more costly lead generation tactics such as SEO or PPC advertising campaigns.

These firms are likely to benefit from leveraging their existing network of relationships that hold potential for driving referrals and repeat business. A prospective client looking for legal advice is more likely to trust an attorney with whom a friend, coworker or acquaintance has had a positive experience. In addition, the cost of acquisition for referrals is typically much less than a client acquired through other means, even when referral-generating tactics such as email newsletters or social media marketing are used.

Email marketing

While email marketing may conjure up images of spam clogging up inboxes and unwanted messages destined straight for the trash, people continue to find businesses through marketing emails every day. When used correctly, email marketing serves as an effective trust-building tool for law firms.

Lawyers can benefit from having an email newsletter that goes out to their entire network on a regular basis. Make sure to provide engaging content in the emails, whether it is highlighting a new legal service being offered, or sharing the successful outcome of a recent case. By offering value to the email recipient, you increase the chances of them remaining a long-term loyal subscriber and supporter of your firm.

Social media

Law firms sometimes dismiss social media as gimmicky or frivolous. However, it is impossible to ignore the fact that it has become inextricably woven into our daily lives. Just as with email marketing, the trick is to provide high-quality content that your target audience will value. The challenge lies in finding out which social media platforms they prefer and how they use them. Remember, not all platforms lend themselves well to the objectives of every law firm.

An active presence on major platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter gives law firms the ability to quickly and easily engage with their network and connect with potential clients. It is the virtual equivalent of shaking hands with your followers. Additionally, lawyers can use advertising services available on some social media platforms.

Pay Per Click

Pay-per-click advertising remains one of the most effective ways for firms to market services online in 2019. The benefit of paid online ads is that they are shown to people at the exact moment they are searching for legal services online. Google Ads provide visibility to law firms that offer services people are searching for.

Ultimately, search engines care about meeting the needs of their users. Your ads should be helpful, acquire quality leads for your firm and not exceed your earmarked cost per lead. However while paid ads can deliver results, they can be costly and have become increasingly competitive.

Law firms can keep their ad relevance high and cost per click low by using dedicated landing pages on their website. If your site is well-structured and geared toward people who need your services, every click through is a potential conversion that maximizes the value you receive from investing in such ad campaigns. Lawyers should also take advantage of remarketing, a technique that involves targeting prospects who have visited your site in the past.

Content marketing
Content marketing involves creating informative, engaging content that appeals to both current and prospective clients. More and more law firms are using it to differentiate themselves from their competitors and establish themselves as authorities in the legal field.

Although content marketing is often thought to be synonymous with written material, it is actually an umbrella term for a variety of mediums including videos and podcasts. A comprehensive marketing strategy will consider the value of using different types of content to attract prospects.

Video is set to enjoy growing popularity in 2019. According to Cisco, 80 percent of all online traffic will consist of video by the end of this year. Law firms can use videos to introduce attorneys or offer actionable information on various legal subjects, to name a few ideas. For example, a personal injury attorney can discuss key things to remember after a car accident.

Videos can be shared across multiple platforms including a law firm's own website, social media and YouTube for maximum exposure, depending on where the target audience spends the most time. They are especially useful for law firms looking to engage and attract a younger clientele.

Some law firms may also want to add podcasting to their content marketing mix to really stand out. Edison Research and Triton Digital found that more than 25 percent of Americans are monthly podcast listeners. With audiences continuing to grow, podcasting can be a cost-effective way of expanding your reach to potential clients and other audiences.

Blogging, perhaps the most dominant form of content marketing, remains a reliable way to draw in new clients and earn organic traffic. Whether it is answering frequently asked questions or addressing changes in laws, a website's blog content presents a great opportunity for SEO as long as you refrain from practices like keyword stuffing. With the right mix of content, law firms can attract traffic, boost search engine rankings and reinforce their unique brand.

Legal directory services
Online legal directories can help law firms enhance branding efforts and build name recognition within the legal industry. Some well-known legal directories include Avvo, Lawyers.com, Martindale, FindLaw and Yelp.

Law firms should make sure their listings across all these websites are uniform and correct. List the firm's name, contact information, website and business hours so that potential clients can find you easily. The more places lawyers can have an online presence, especially one that is locally targeted, the better.

Analyzing marketing efforts

Developing a marketing strategy involves measuring the success of a law firm's various choices so that time and money are not wasted on marketing efforts that are ineffective. Marketing strategies need to be constantly refined using real data to determine what messages resonate with clients and through which channels they should be delivered.

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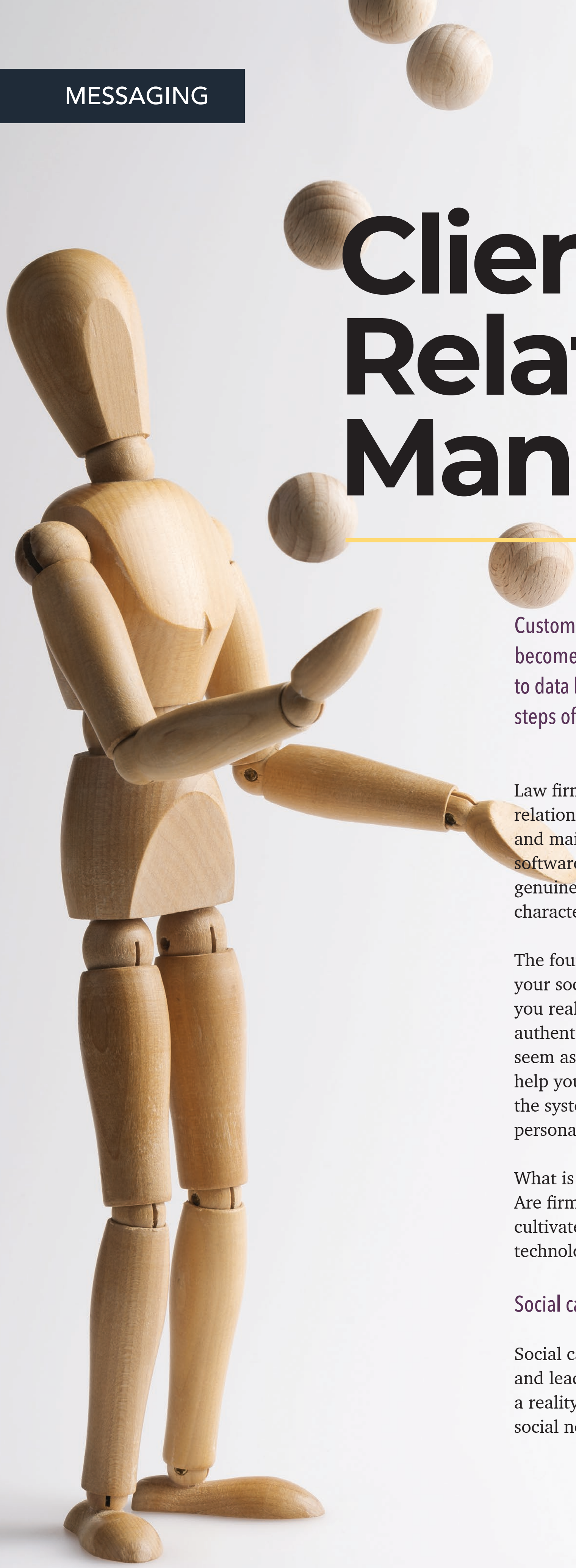
Lawyers have at their disposal various tools across different platforms that provide insight into the returns on their marketing investments, as well as metrics like customer acquisition cost and cost per lead. Since Google is the dominant search engine on the market, lawyers can use a number of free Google services — like Google Analytics and Google Search Console — to track their site traffic across the web.

Social media sites also have their own analytics to measure engagement and help lawyers understand the value of their efforts. Additionally, firms using podcasts and videos can track performance statistics such as the number of downloads or subscribers.

Effective marketing is a process that involves figuring out how to convey the desired message to the right audience at the right time. Once law firms have identified a marketing strategy in which all these aspects align, they are positioned for success and growth. The key is to remember that marketing strategies are not stagnant. They must adapt as expectations and requirements change over time.

- Dipal Parmar



Client Relationship Management

Customer relationship management (CRM) strategies have steadily become integral to businesses around the world, as increased access to data has given companies the ability to analyze and manage all steps of the customer acquisition and retention process.

Law firms are also coming to recognize the value of client relationship management, and how it can support a firm in gaining and maintaining clients. While client relationship management software is heavily data-driven, the crux of building and maintaining genuine connections lies in successfully marketing your firm, its character and personality, and its expertise.

The foundation of client relationship management is working with your social capital, meaning you and what you offer to clients. Once you realize that building and maintaining relationships is based in authenticity and an understanding of the value you offer, it does not seem as intimidating. It also follows that if you use technology to help you keep up with the demands of marketing and client intake, the systems must be set up to accurately reflect your firm's brand, personality and natural methods of interaction.

What is client relationship management and why is it important? Are firms effectively managing relationships? How do firms cultivate positive relationships with clients and leads — and is there technology that can help?

Social capital

Social capital is best explained by Keith Ferrazzi, a collaboration and leadership expert who suggests, "Your network is your destiny, a reality backed up by many studies in the newly emergent fields of social networking and social contagion theory."

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS HELPS YOU BUILD CRITICAL SOCIAL CAPITAL.

Knowing how to cultivate social capital promotes long-term relationships and higher returns on investment.

Increased competition in a saturated legal market, coupled with the rise of online do-it-yourself legal products, has brought the subject of business development to the forefront in many firms. In the absence of a marketing and intake strategy, this competition can either lead to a rush to the bottom in terms of pricing, an increase in the cost of signing each client, or both.

In this reality, social capital becomes gold. Existing, former or repeat clients can provide valuable word-of-mouth-marketing and referral business. Before the era of online marketing, many firms relied almost exclusively on referrals and networking, and in that sense legal marketing has not changed. What has changed is a firm's ability to use technology to hone its efforts, build networks, target optimal demographics and stay in touch with everyone in its professional circles.

Who in the firm should be designated to network, participate in organizations relevant to the firm and go to various events to establish a presence? While larger firms may need to establish a marketing lead, everyone at the firm should be working to establish and maintain relationships with valuable connections.

However, lawyers are more inclined to dig into a tantalizing legal question on behalf of a client than actively put themselves out there, seeking publicity and soliciting allies.

According to Jason P. Grunfeld, head of business development at Kleinberg, Kapal, Wolff & Cohen P.C., "For most lawyers, the two primary obstacles to business development are fear and lack of time. The fear comes when lawyers are asked to step outside of their comfort zones and engage in new activities. Lack of time causes lawyers to push business development to the back burner, never giving it the chance to mature into a habit."

To be successful, you need both motivation and the right tools — tools that will help you manage client intake at every stage.

Client relationship management

Stephen Fairly, founder and CEO of The Rainmaker Institute believes in the importance of client relationship management software. Lawyers already have to manage complicated schedules and keep track of critical case dates. Adding the burden of remembering to follow up with every lead — and send a targeted message — at every stage of the input process can be time-prohibitive.

According to Fairly, "You really need to have a software system for keeping track of all these incoming leads and where the leads are in the sales cycle. Has the prospect been contacted? Has an appointment been set? Did they come in for a consultation? Did they sign up?"

Client management software (CRM) often allows mobile access to input names and details anytime, anywhere, creating a detailed snapshot of a client. The information mined is then saved and provides client histories that may be accessed should any attorney leave the firm.

If having a CRM and a designated marketing lead seems a bit much and you wonder whether you really need such a system, consider these important things that may indicate you do.

There is doubt about which leads to connect with resulting in missed client opportunities. A CRM system provides all background on a client at a glance, including time since the last contact.

Marketing and communication campaigns are not effective. Campaigns need to be targeted and contain the right messages. Hit and miss campaigns do not garner leads. A CRM helps target the right clients for specific campaigns.

Growing a law firm is an uphill battle. Smaller and mid-sized law firms lose money because they are not tracking leads and following up on them. A CRM helps manage this data.

TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU NEED BOTH MOTIVATION AND THE RIGHT TOOLS.

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Additional indicators include lack of organization, missed client opportunities and failure to track leads. Without clients your law firm would not be here. Making the effort to reach out and form marketing relationships is key to growing your firm. The more you know about your clients, the better you are able to anticipate their legal needs.

- Kerrie Spencer

Part one in a two part series. Look for the conclusion in our next BLF *edition.*

Keep your firm current with E-LEARNING

It is safe to say in the legal world, nothing stays that same. Change is a constant that law firms must embrace and incorporate to remain effective. Change comes from within, regarding policy changes, staffing changes and other continual changes that impact all law firms. Change also comes from court decisions, legislative actions and other external factors.

E-Learning helps law firms embrace change

With a changing market, law firms must proactively stay ahead of the curve to maintain their competitive edge and grow their practices. Constant change requires vigilance and training to ensure success. Online training systems are a good tool firms can use to ensure experienced attorneys and new-hires understand the implications of industry changes and how to best address them moving forward.

Previously, ongoing professional training for attorneys included hiring high-priced consultants to come to a law firm to impart knowledge and address change. Such an approach is very costly and disrupts the daily workflow within the law firm. It also removes the expert from the premises after their initial consultation.

Law firms have the option of sending experienced attorneys to costly industry events and training sessions to learn about continual changes in the legal industry. That approach requires travel time and costs, and removes an attorney from the law firm for a period of time. That reduces productivity, while increasing operating costs. Worse, it can be difficult to quantify the actual benefits of such training excursions.

Law is an ever-changing profession that requires vigilance, study and training to maintain a high level of expertise and success. Court decisions and legislative actions impact how laws are interpreted and enforced. Those actions can differ greatly from one region, state or locale to another and produce varying impacts on how cases are argued and decided.

Professional development
Law firm e-learning is revolutionizing how legal professionals go about learning and mastering the many changes and subtle nuances they produce within the legal world. When changes occur, from paralegals and legal writers, to new and experienced attorneys, on up to highly experienced law firm partners, uniform changes must be implemented to ensure all work is done properly and in accordance with new requirements.

Custom and standardized training tools enable training and professional enhancements to occur at virtually any time. An attorney, paralegal or other law firm employee simply can complete the online training by a specific date and include the time on the next payroll. Attorneys and other law firm employees can complete their training while at home, during lunch or whenever they find it most convenient.

Legal e-learning tools are available for:

Practice-specific training, which ensures attorneys and support staff are fully adept at the firm's service areas

Business and professional skills training, to ensure support staff are fully capable of providing first-rate service to clients, while making life easier for attorneys

Client training, so clients have realistic expectations of likely case outcomes

The tools can be standardized for those who handle more common cases in areas of practice that are not undergoing significant changes. The e-learning tools also can be customized to address specific practice areas, any changes that impact attorneys, and law firms specializing in particular fields of law or are located in specific areas. When a statutory change impacts law firms and attorneys in a particular locale, it does no good to subject others to training they never would use. Customized law firm e-learning tools ensure law firms obtain the training materials needed to ensure ongoing success.

E-Learning enables professional development at a pace that is comfortable for every participant, which helps to ensure maximum learning retention. Attorneys and staff can benefit from online tools that provide standardized training and ensure understanding of common processes.

E-Learning for support staff
Law firms have constantly rotating staff who need to be brought up to speed with how a particular law firm operates and the types of cases they process. E-Learning tools enable greater retention with videos, slides, games and other interactive learning tools that make it easier to master difficult concepts and retain important information. Increased learning retention adds up to greater return on investment for training materials, while ensuring law firm attorneys and support staff are fully capable of completing the tasks necessary for continued and improved success.

Some common e-learning tools firms find useful for support staff include:

- Processes and Firm Initiatives
- Business Development
- HR and Compliance
- Recruiting and Interviewing
- New-Hires and Orientations

SkillBurst approach enhances e-learning outcomes
The Law Firm E-Learning module utilizes a proprietary SkillBurst approach to enhance attorney and support staff training. SkillBurst utilizes engaging, interactive and bite-size learning modules that are brief and targeted to drive home valuable lessons in no more than 15 minutes. Law Firm E-Learning's library of online learning tools enable law firms to instantly utilize standardized training tools as needed.

Customized learning tools also enable law firms to address specific areas of need and ensure continued high-quality service for clients. Whether a law firm is looking to bring new hires up to speed on how things are done, or addressing external changes that impact how cases are argued and won, customized e-learning tools using the SkillBurst system get the job done in less time and for less money than virtually any other method.

Better still, the lessons are more engaging and fun, which makes it easier to learn and master important new concepts. The Law Firm E-Leaning platform is the best tool for ensuring satisfied clients and continued success in the ever-changing legal world.

- Mike Heuer

IS IT TIME FOR A WEBSITE REDESIGN?

The time has come. You are ready to take the plunge and redesign your website. However, redesigning a website requires a lot of people's time, money and effort. Before you start your website redesign journey, you will need to evaluate your reasons for redesigning your website and your needs for the new site.

Set SMART Goals

Before diving into the redesign process you will need to assess your reasons and identify your goals. Ask yourself, "Do I really need a redesign?" Vague and subjective reasons such as, simply not liking your current website or because your competitor changed their website are not strong reasons to pursue a redesign. Here are a few good reasons to redesign your website:

The website is outdated or not on brand. If your website is not keeping up with the times and looks like it was made five or 10 years ago, it may be time for a refreshed look. Your website does not have to follow the latest trend-of-the-year. However a clean, focused and modern-looking website will elicit positive responses from your users. Also, pay attention to the branding on your website. If your website does not match the branding you have established elsewhere, or if your brand has been updated, visitors are less likely to trust your website, and your online credibility weakens.

The website is not responsive or mobile-friendly. Now that owning a smartphone or digital tablet is the norm, users expect a well-designed website that works on both mediums and is consistent across devices. Users are more likely to search with their phones than on a desktop and can get easily frustrated with websites that are slow, unreadable and unresponsive on mobile devices.

The website does not provide value to visitors. Ultimately, your website is not about you, but the needs of your users. If the user's goal is to schedule a consultation or find the answer to a question, the website needs to be able to solve that issue quickly. If the website does not immediately address users' needs, they will be quick to leave, resulting in a low conversion rate.

Throughout the redesign process think about what your users are looking for on your site, how your users will interact with every webpage, and how their browsing behavior may differ on desktop and mobile platforms.

The website provides bad user experience. An unfocused, difficult to navigate website is a tell-tale sign of poor design. When redesigning your website, consider how your user will navigate through it. Some examples of features that provide good user experience are: a simple navigation menu, obvious calls-to-action, appropriate visual cues and microinteractions.

Slow load times. Slow website load times provide a bad user experience. If it takes ages for your user to see your homepage, you have a big problem. It is recommended that your pages load in less than three seconds. And even three seconds is a long time. Sit and, look at your blank phone and count to three. It is an eternity. With website load times that take more than three seconds, your users are likely to leave frustrated before they view your site.

The website is difficult to manage and update. The back-end of your website is just as important as the front-end design. Your website should always be updated with content that is current and relevant. Building your website on software that makes updating your website painless and easy is valuable and cost-effective.

Once you have assessed your reasons for wanting a redesign, the next step is to ask yourself this important question, "Does my current website help me reach my goals?"

When deciding on your goals, be sure they are measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. A.K.A, SMART goals. The more specific the goals are, the better. This way, the redesign process will be smooth and efficient with minimal confusion among your team and the agency you are working with.

Set realistic benchmarks and timelines Once you have your goals mapped out, include a realistic timeline and the benchmark steps necessary to reach those goals. Setting deadlines that are too tight will always result in decreased quality.

At minimum, you can plan on spending 3 hours every week on the website. This includes dedicating time for design feedback, progress meetings and content creation. You can expect the typical redesign to take two to five months. Of course, that timeline can increase if there are more pages and advanced functionality on the website.

Who should be involved in the redesign process?

Now that you have your SMART goals defined and timeline set, you will need to communicate those goals to everyone working on the project. In order to keep your project on track, it is important to include key decision makers in the process. This could include your marketing team and high-level executives, or any other management personnel.

Keep your team small and include individuals from different departments, as that will ensure that the website is being built with the user in mind, rather than personal preference. Good people to consider are employees in client-facing roles, members of your marketing team, higher-level executives and long-time employees. Appoint one person to have the ultimate approval power during the entire design process (like a CEO). Do not appoint more than one person to have approval power, as this can lead to conflicts and delays in the process.

Always refer to your user personas and data

To ensure that your redesign project will hit all your goals, you will need to reference your user personas throughout the entire process. Once the redesigned website is live, looking back at this information will help you gain insight into what is or is not working, as well as what pages that can be further optimized.

When creating user personas, consider:

- How each persona will interact with every page on your site
- What your ideal personas would look for on your site
- How would your personas behave on a desktop v. mobile device

Keep track of metrics

Now it is launch day and your new, redesigned website is live. At this time it is crucial to gather, track and analyze your data. This will help with reaching

your initial SMART goals, increase your conversions and better engage with your visitors. It will also let you assess any problems hitting your goals and guide you to making positive changes.

These three website redesign metrics will help you gain actionable insight:

Traffic & traffic sources. Increasing traffic to your site gives you a better chance of converting those visitors into clients. Tools like Google Analytics and Hubspot can help you identify your traffic sources. This information shows where your site performs well and areas that are underperforming, and allows you to apply changes accordingly.

What to include in your website.

Now onto the fun part, designing your website. When moving into the design phase, it is crucial to prioritize functionality over the aesthetics of your redesign. Your redesign should look good, but it must function well with the user in mind.

Here are examples of things to include in your redesign:

1. Simple Navigation

Your navigation should be simple, easy-to-use and identifiable. Keep your navigation slim and have the content within it well organized.

2. White Space

White space, or negative space, is the blank space between graphics, columns, images, text, margins and other elements. White space is not always white and can be filled with background color or texture as long as there are no elements in it. Utilizing white space helps with flow and readability.

3. Calls-to-action (CTAs)

CTAs can be buttons or textual links that direct your users to take specific actions. These actions should give users a sense of accomplishment, such as scheduling a consultation, downloading an eBook or signing-up for a webinar. CTA buttons can be placed anywhere on your website as long as the actions content and placement are relevant to the page it is on.

Focus on these traffic sources:

Direct Traffic. Visitors that arrive to your website via typing your URL.

Search Traffic. Visitors that arrive to your website by clicking a search engine listing result.

Referral Traffic. Visitors referred by links on other websites.

Paid Traffic. Visitors from paid sources such as CPC, CPM, display and PPC.

Social Traffic. Visitors who arrive to find your website through social media links.

Visitor engagement. Once your site is up and running, it is important to monitor how users interact with the site. What do they do when visiting specific pages? Is that the action you want them to take? Some things to keep track of are: first time visitors with unique IP addresses, the sites from which users are accessing pages, how long visitors stay on your site and where they are exiting.

Visitor lead conversion rate. Having a large volume of visitors is great, but not so great if you have a low conversion rate. A conversion is a general term for when a user completes a site goal. There are two kinds of conversions: macro-conversions and micro-conversions.

Macro-conversions include signing up for a consultation, signing up for a webinar and calling your firm

Micro-conversions include navigating to different pages, viewing videos and engaging with a live chat.

To measure your conversion rate, divide the total number of conversions by the total number of sessions (the number of unique times a user came to your site).

(Conversions/Sessions)*100 = Conversion Rate

At first, aim for a two to three percent overall conversion rate, then identify the best performing pages and begin optimizing website pages from there.

Conclusion

Taking the time to invest in a website redesign can both be exciting and daunting. Analyzing your reasons for a redesign, having SMART goals and focusing on the user experience from the get-go can make the whole redesign process go smoothly and efficiently.

- Jessylyn Los Banos

4. Great, high-quality visuals

Visuals are a fantastic way to catch the attention of your user and to direct them to specific parts of your website. Original photography is highly recommended and, if possible, limit or avoid the use of stock photography. The imagery you choose to use sets the tone of your website. By displaying real photos of your law firm and staff, users will have an easier time trusting your firm. It is easier to connect when they can identify the people behind the service.

5. A value proposition

Your value as a law firm should immediately be identifiable on your homepage. Do you handle bankruptcy? Is your specialty elder law? Write your value proposition as clearly and concisely as you can. If you can explain how you can solve the users' problems and improve their situation, then users are more likely to continue and browse the rest of your website.

6. About us and attorney bio pages.

These are some of your site's most essential pages. The about us page offers prime real estate to feature your firm's mission, team and credentials. Analytics data also reveals it is consistently a highly visited page. There is no magic formula for how to create an about page. You can be simple and straightforward, or you can be creative and go big. The key is to tell your story by being transparent about your firm, who you are and what motivates you, and to give users a reason to hire you.

7. Client testimonials.

Real testimonials from clients are a must have for law firm websites. Testimonials are a way to show potential clients that your firm has a trustworthy reputation and a proven service that works. For the testimonial page, avoid using photography. Gathering images from every client you have ever worked with can be difficult. Instead, let the words from satisfied clients do all the talking.