

BLF

BIGGER LAW FIRM

A magazine for attorneys

SEO IN-DEPTH

Groupwise scoring and the future of Google's algorithm updates.

MESSAGING

Big results for big firms: Marketing for large firms presents a unique set of considerations.

Scroll

MYTHS

— debunked

Do Users Still Scroll?

There is an age-old myth that scrolling is bad user experience. People do not like to scroll. Users simply do not scroll past “the fold” of a website. With this notion in mind, designers try to keep web pages short. However, this myth no longer rings true.

VIRTUAL IMPRESSION

Out-of-the box inspiration
for lawyers looking to leave
their mark online.





The Myth of Scrolling

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Building Client Relationships

Establishing, building and retaining relationships with clients and potential leads should be a main concern for any law firm. Technology is here to help, with various client relationship management software.



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The SEO Hierarchy of Needs

Just as Maslow so neatly organized our human needs in an ascending order, with the most basic and critical at the bottom of a pyramid, SEO has its own hierarchy of needs. Understanding this order of importance will help demystify SEO.

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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

How Facebook's new political ad guidelines are affecting lawyer advertising.

After the Cambridge Analytica scandal that opened the nation's eyes to data privacy and put into perspective the power social media platforms can have in influencing a presidential election, Facebook had to make drastic changes to how its political ads were created and distributed.

Facebook updated its advertising policy to reflect an updated stance on what can be considered political advertising and who is allowed to post political ads. Facebook's definition of political advertising is broad, basically encompassing "any national issues of public interest."

This change has affected many lawyers' abilities to advertise on Facebook. Many controversial political topics today can share an inherent relationship with a lawyer's practice area. For example, the issue of gun safety laws and criminal defense, state and federal tax laws with bankruptcy, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) arrests with immigration law, labor union legislation or disputes with employment law, and the opioid epidemic with medical malpractice law. No practice area is completely safe.

Another issue is the fact that there are tens of thousands of ads being created on Facebook every day. It is just not feasible to have humans look at each and every one of them. This is why algorithms are used to determine whether an ad upholds its policy guidelines. The problem is that these algorithms are not nuanced enough to decipher context as well as humans.

An additional problem lawyers face is that many legal ads use the same keywords and phrases as a political ad would. Keywords such as "law," "legal," "legalization," "advocacy," "crime" and "discrimination" can be found in both legal and political ads. Sometimes algorithms cannot discern between the two.

Another factor in a legal ad being disapproved is audience targeting: if you are using multiple targeting factors to isolate a specific demographic or group of people, such as income and political affiliation, Facebook will probably reject your ad.

If your ad does get rejected, what changes can you make? You will need to demonstrate to Facebook that you are a



legal advertiser and not a political one. You can adjust your ad text to make it less politically-charged, and make the ad clear that it is for legal advertising.

If you believe your ad is not violating Facebook's ad policies, use Facebook's appeal process. Often a human will review the ad, rather than an algorithm, giving you a higher chance of approval. If your ad is still rejected after going through the appeal process, a different strategy might be best. You may need to rewrite your ad entirely to avoid any keywords or phrases that can be misconstrued as political.

Facebook is not done changing its advertising landscape. It is pushing toward first-party data sets, data you personally give Facebook, such as age, gender and location, and away from third-party data sets for audience targeting.

Third-party data sets are what got them in trouble with Cambridge Analytica. If your social media distribution strategy consists of just organic postings, then you do not need to adhere to these new changes. These rules only apply once you decide to spend money on Facebook.

Ultimately, if your advertising strategy involves spending money on social media platforms, Facebook is still one of the best sources for advertising. It has no real competitors that do what it does, and it still has more than a billion users. You and your law firm will need to be flexible and be able to adapt to the rapid changes in the social media advertising landscape.

- Dexter Tam

HOW TO BUILD BETTER CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

BLF's January/February issue discussed methods for growing and managing client relationships. Here, we will discuss some technical aspects of client relationship management.

Establishing, building and retaining relationships with clients and potential leads should be a main concern for any law firm. Numerous client relationship building and managing strategies exist. Law firms can take steps to improve their skills in client relationship management. Technology is here to help too, with various client relationship management (CRM) software.

Here are steps law firms can take to encourage, develop and keep better relationships with clients.

It helps your client's case if you understand the situation. And, a touch of personal sharing my help strengthen relationships.

Understand clients and their needs

In order to build relationships, you must be able to understand your clients and their needs. To accomplish this, ask questions. Get to know your clients outside of their legal issues. Understand what they need from you and where they are coming from.

Effective, consistent communication throughout a case and after it is completed, increases client satisfaction.

Show appreciation and tell clients they matter. Treat them like human beings. Simple gestures count, such as remembering client names, keeping promises and being interested in their lives.

Share your knowledge

Your insight is one of your best marketing assets. Increasingly, people are going online to look for information about their issues before deciding whether to hire a lawyer. If you can provide them with some answers, you have already begun to build trust before you meet the prospective client.

Sharing knowledge also helps you maintain relationships. Something as little as a tip to help a client with their business goes a long way to keeping that individual coming back.

Communicate consistently

Maintaining contact is key to building relationships with clients. When interacting with clients, aim to not just meet client expectations, but to exceed them with exemplary work and communication. A satisfied client, will likely bring in repeat business or new clients for your law firm.

Be forthcoming about costs

Be honest and open with clients about costs and fees. Keep them updated on costs as they arise during their case and keep invoicing simple and clear. If you make a mistake, own up to it. It does not matter how it happened, just sincerely apologize and move on.

Create a partnership

Avoid just doing the work and moving on to another file, another client. Treat each client you serve as a partner in

an ongoing partnership, one that is mutually beneficial to both of you. This builds and sustains relationships for the long term. Also, ensure you have a clear contract with your client. Make sure your clients understand your role in helping them resolve their legal issue.

Know when to say "No"

Say no when you need to. You cannot and should not do everything a client asks you to do. Learning boundaries is important for any service provider, especially one working with clients who may be in distress. It is also important that you establish realistic goals and expectations because failing to do so will lead to a disappointed client and potentially negative public feedback. Deliver what you say you are going to deliver. It builds credibility.

Conversely, willingly say yes when asked to do things within your capabilities, even if the matter is complex. Be a problem solver. Examine a clients' issues from all angles. Each case is different and knowing more makes for creative solutions. Clients appreciate that and are more likely to talk about you to friends and family.

Ask for feedback and reviews

Always follow up with clients, even after their cases have concluded. This keeps your name and firm top of mind and in a positive light. After a successful case remember to ask clients for feedback. A happy client will be more likely to submit a positive review and mention your firm to others. Make sure there is a process in place that allows for seamless review and feedback submissions.

Additionally, have a plan for addressing negative feedback. You should always be able to address any criticisms or concerns, rectify them and work to ensure future clients do not have the same complaints.



The more time attorneys put into working with clients, the more positively clients tend to respond, and that is really what any law firm wants – happy, repeat clients and new clients who are pleased with the service they receive.

Lawyers need to be aware of their clients in order to get a good grasp of issues involved, concerns they may have and the depth of their legal problems. This builds trust, triggering the possibility of consistent repeat and referral business. If you can make a small shift in focus from the matter at hand and take an interest in the whole client, the empathy expended benefits everyone.

Client Relationship Management (CRM) Software

A law firm CRM system can be many things. Primarily, it stores contact information, previous interactions, biographical information and legal needs. It is a ready reference for lawyers needing information on a client. It can also be set up to automatically generate follow-ups, or to remind lawyers that a follow-up is due. These systems may also include automatic consultation scheduling.

There are a number of CRMs on the market. Here are a few you may wish to explore.

Hubspot CRM: A cloud-based free CRM that tracks and manages interactions between you, potential clients and current clients. Hubspot allows you to track email. It informs you when prospective clients have seen your messages. This feature allows you to follow-up at ideal moments, catching leads while you know they are thinking about your firm.

Hubspot also provides calendaring services. Potential clients can simply click on a link and choose a time to be added to your meeting calendar, preventing timely back-and-forth. Hubspot also offers paid plans for firms that may need an advanced suite of services.

Infusionsoft: An automated marketing, sales and CRM software for small businesses and law firms to help better manage emails and client interactions.

Intake123: A drag and drop form creation tool with a diverse collection of intake questions. This allows you to create easy-to-use forms for different types of intake and communication.

Law Ruler: An AI-powered cloud-based CRM and client intake software exclusively for attorneys and law firms. Law Ruler includes a form builder, text messaging, email templates, HIPPA-compliant records requesting and lead tracking.

Lawmatics: A law firm focused CRM featuring automated intake processes, custom emails for drip campaigns, custom fields and reporting.

Lexicata: A cloud-based CRM software that helps automate intake workflows. Lexicata also offers intake forms, email management and contact management. Its analytics and reports help you track and monitor your efforts, so modifications can be made as needed.

Pipeliner: A powerful sales/contact management software featuring automated workflows and intuitive interface to help generate more clients.

What does the future hold for law firms that become more client-centered? It is a good bet that law firms will do well if they invest the time into client relationships. It is not just about the law, it about the human face of law.

- Kerrie Spencer

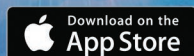


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Groupwise

How Google Might Harness Comparisons

Groupwise scoring functions using deep neural networks: New Google experiment may change the way webpages are ranked.

Deciphering Google's search algorithms so clients' sites can perform well on search engine results pages (SERPs) has always been at the heart of a search marketer's job. However, this is easier said than done. Google never formally announces its ranking factors; it only outlines factors that contribute to a website's success.

Components that affect page rankings include content, links and on-site search engine optimization (SEO) techniques, such as header tags and meta descriptions.



In the past, Google allowed transparency. PageRank (PR), the first algorithm Google used to rank webpages for its SERPs, was public; you were able to see yours and your competitors' PRs.

With PageRank, your website was given a score between one to 10, with 10 being the best, based on Google's ranking factors. This allowed search marketers to see tangible changes when they make adjustments to a website. Such transparency, while valued, led to a wide range of manipulations that involved black-hat SEO, or optimization techniques deemed by Google to be unethical, in order to get the best PR score. As a result, Google decided to make PageRank private.

Now, SEO marketers can only make educated guesses about what drives Google's algorithm and use best practices to ensure their clients' websites are performing as well as they can by Google's standards.

How Groupwise might affect rankings

A recently published Google research paper titled: *Groupwise Scoring Functions Using Deep Neural Networks* may shift everything we know about search ranking and give us better insight about how Google scores websites on its SERPs. Historically, and possibly currently, Google's machine-learning algorithm graded each webpage in a vacuum, using its ranking factors. It then evaluated the webpage in comparison with its competitors to determine which page is most relevant to the search query. This is known as pointwise scoring function (PSF).

The paper argues that there are limitations to PSF. The example given is a user searching for "Calvin Harris;" most of the search results are tour date information and the latest news.

HISTORICALLY, AND POSSIBLY CURRENTLY, GOOGLE'S MACHINE-LEARNING ALGORITHM GRADED EACH WEBPAGE IN A VACUUM, USING ITS RANKING FACTORS.

With Groupwise, you would be contending against your competitors, using a score that is based on all websites together as a baseline.

Another user is searching for "Frank Sinatra;" most of the search results are biographies and discographies.

Since Calvin Harris is a relatively new artist, current information is prevalent in SERPs. So if you have an in-depth webpage about Calvin Harris' life before his fame, chances are you will not show up on the first page. The second example used in the paper, based on previous research, shows that users generally compare the results of the search page before clicking, not just choosing the top result always. This gives credence to the scoring function the authors suggests below, the basis for the research paper.

The authors believe there is a more optimal way of assessing webpages, through an evaluation system called groupwise scoring function (GSF). The authors describe how GSF works by stating, "the relevance score of a document is determined jointly by groups of documents in the list."

"A GSF takes multiple documents as input and scores them together by leveraging a joint set of features of these documents. It outputs a relative relevance score of a document with respect to the other documents in a group, and the final score of each document is computed by aggregating all the relative relevance scores in a voting mechanism."

Deep neural networks (DNNs), a subset of artificial intelligence, and in the same family as machine learning, is used as the scoring function. Deep neural networks are capable of rapidly recognizing patterns within large datasets.

Here is an example of how GSF would work to determine SERP positions. Google's SERP usually allows 10 organic listings per page. GSF takes these 10 listings, and the DNN scores them as one group, using Google's ranking factors. The score the DNN produces would be used as the benchmark. Then, the DNN would score each listing individually against the group score and establish each listing's position.

Using Microsoft Learning to Rank Dataset as the input function, the authors determined that GSF attained considerable performance improvements compared to PSF. Why would GSF perform so well in comparison?

In a PSF, there is no outside or competitor influence shaping the result. It is simply your website against the ranking factors. An appropriate sports analogy is golf. A golfer is playing with other people to win first place, similar to how your website is competing for the top positions on the SERP with other websites. However, in a PSF, other websites — or golfers in this analogy — cannot help or hurt your

SCORING FUNCTIONS AND AN EVOLVING GOOGLE ALGORITHM

Google's algorithm has progressively become less transparent over the past decade. Transparency, unfortunately, led to various Black Hat SEO practices and hacks. How has Google's algorithm changed?

PAGERANK

PageRank was named after its creator, Larry Page, one of Google's founders. PageRank is a way of evaluating the relevance of pages to a query, largely based on the number and quality of links a page receives. The theory behind PageRank is that the more quality links a page receives, the more helpful it will be for searchers, as other humans have determined the page is worthy of earning links.

With PageRank, your website was given a score between one to 10, with 10 being the best, based on Google's ranking factors. It is possible PageRank is still used by Google, but scores are no longer shared.

POINTWISE SCORING FUNCTION

Google most likely uses pointwise scoring function currently. This means that each webpage is ranked in a vacuum, according to a complex system of factors. Once factors are considered and a page is scored, it is then evaluated in comparison with its competitors to determine which page is most relevant to the search query.

DEEP NEURAL NETWORKS

A Deep Neural Network, also known as Deep Learning is a subset of machine learning, in which a network is able to learn by analyzing unstructured data. Deep neural networks are capable of rapidly recognizing patterns within large datasets. Deep Learning is the basis of the Groupwise Scoring Function.

GROUPWISE

Groupwise is a potential new method for scoring pages. Google does not currently use a groupwise scoring function (GSF) system, a recently published Google research paper titled: *Groupwise Scoring Functions Using Deep Neural Networks*, shows the direction Google may be heading. This could shift everything we know about search ranking and give us better insight about how Google scores websites on its SERPs. With a GSF system, you are contending against your competitors, using a score that is based on all websites together as a baseline.

score. You are essentially playing against yourself, with the ranking factors being akin to the par scores in a golf course.

In a GSF you are contending against your competitors, using a score that is based on all websites together as a baseline. This will give better results in terms of relevancy. It also makes the SERP positions more transparent and fair. It is important to disclose that the authors note their intention for the research paper was to show that GSF could improve relevance in search results, not diversity.

This research paper is significant. If it influences Google's algorithm, search marketers might have a peek into how the algorithm works. Although Google never publicly goes into detail about its updates; a Google-sponsored research paper stating that its results led to increased performance could mean it has already implemented GSF into its search algorithms. A few search marketing journalists share this sentiment; they believe Google would be prudent to consider implementation, if their own researchers claim GSF can enhance performance.

If GSF is indeed embedded into Google's search algorithm, the impact it can have in affecting the SERPs for lawyers is significant. Competitor research will be even more important moving forward.

If GSF is indeed used in determining SERP, what can attorneys and their search marketers do to adapt? Go through your target keywords, and see who is ranking on the first page for those terms. What do these sites have in common? How do your competitor's websites differ from yours? If you find that your website is performing poorly for certain keywords, and can determine a correlation between your competitors' websites, modifying certain functionalities to mirror your competitors may be beneficial.

- Dexter Tam

Scroll MYTHS

— *debunked* —



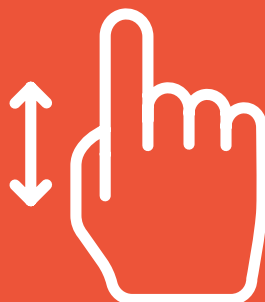
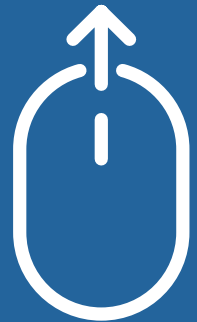
Do Users Still Scroll?

There is an age-old myth that scrolling is bad user experience. People do not like to scroll. Users simply do not scroll past “the fold” of a website. With this notion in mind, designers try to keep web pages short. However, this myth no longer rings true. In fact, it is completely natural for users to scroll through a website.



FEATURE

The internet has greatly evolved and so have its users. People are much more accustomed to reading long pages and are no longer limited to one screen size. Once smartphones and tablets were introduced into the market, the old concept of the “fold” became obsolete — the dimensions of the digital “fold” were now inconsistent across devices.



Where did this “users don’t scroll” myth come from? The concept that people do not scroll was initially borrowed from the newspaper print industry. In order to spark the interest of potential readers, newspapers would place their most attention-grabbing headline story, photo or graphic “above the fold.”

This same “fold” concept was then adapted for the web in the nineties. In the early days of the internet, users were limited to small desktop computers and one screen size, and they were generally clueless about the technicalities of web browsing. Back then, popular websites like AOL crammed nearly everything above the digital fold of their web pages. As a result, users became accustomed to viewing content “above the fold” and clicking buttons and links to view new pages of content.

Fast forward to today’s current technological environment, and much has changed. The internet has greatly evolved and so have its users. People are much more accustomed to reading long pages and are no longer limited to one screen size.

Mobile use has surpassed the desktop use with nearly 60 percent of online searches coming from mobile devices. Once smartphones and tablets were introduced into the market, the old concept of the “fold” became obsolete — the dimensions of the digital “fold” were now inconsistent across devices.

The growth of responsive design was another big factor in normalizing scrolling as a user behavior. With the introduction of touch-screen technology, the average mobile user was able to seamlessly scroll through websites. As touch-screen technology dominated the market, people naturally scrolled on these devices, and those browsing behavioral habits transferred onto desktop use.

The design agency Huge conducted various tests for usability and found that “participants almost always scrolled

regardless of how they were cued to do so.” ClickTale, a data analytics provider, discovered that “people used the scrollbar on 76 percent of all pages, with 22 percent scrolling all the way to the bottom” after analyzing 10,000 page views.

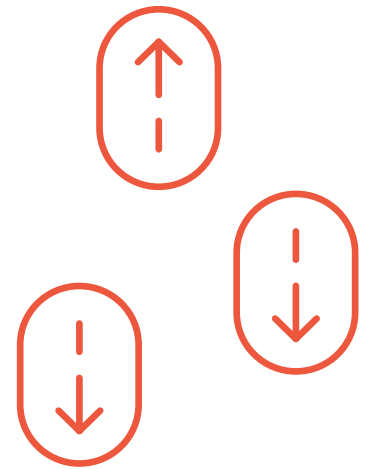
Even Apple recognized how much people were scrolling and chose to remove the scroll bar from their Mac OS X in July 2011. So, yes people do scroll. What does this mean for the modern web designer?

Is the digital “fold” still relevant?

Gone are the days where web page designers would squeeze as much content into the top of a website as they could. But that is not to say that the space above the fold is not important. According to a study conducted by the Nielsen Norman Group, “people do scroll vertically more than they used to, but new eye tracking data shows that [users] will still look more above the page fold than below it”.

Based on their data, about 57 percent of users’ page-viewing time was spent above the fold, and 74 percent of viewing time was spent in the first two screenfuls, up to 2160 px. People still spend a good amount of attention and viewing-time above the fold. If you want to get the results you want, such as improved conversion rates or more impressions, you need to utilize the fold wisely.

Based on its data, the Nielsen Norman Group realized that the closer a piece of content is to the top of a web page, the more likely it will be read. On a web page with ill-structured content, users tended to browse a website in an F-pattern shape. Users would thoroughly pay more attention to text placed close to the top of a web page, and paid less time and attention to information lower on the page. People are scanners by nature and desire to exert less mental effort to reach the information they view as important. By that logic, placing key content closer to the top of the page



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and comprehensive visual cues that encourage scrolling is a great way to optimize above the fold.

SEO and the importance of scrolling

As a marketing tool, long-form content has been used for years by content marketers to help boost search engine optimization (SEO) efforts. The benefits of long-form web pages are numerous — high visibility online, more social sharing, better link building, boosts in conversion and advances in website authority.

Since long-form content pages are by definition lengthy, designers should use visual cues that encourage seamless scrolling based on the content and overall design. Does the content feature block text, images or video? How do the visual cues integrate with existing design elements? All these variables will affect the optimum placement and effectiveness of scrolling cues. Here are some design tips to encourage user scrolling:

Create a clear message with good headlines and sub headings. You want to start off your web page strong with a good introduction to your brand. Offer some immediate insight and place strong visual clues that give visitors a reason to keep reading.

Reserve the top of the page for high-priority content. Since people give most of their attention to content near the top of a web page, save that space for your most compelling points. Use this space for branding, a main navigation menu and primary content, like key firm and user goals.

Use images, subtle animation and white space to keep users engaged and attentive. People's attention spans are increasingly shorter, leading

to a tendency to scan through web pages. White space allows users to acquire information much more quickly by adding visual separation to different topics. Images and animation are a great way to highlight important content throughout a website, slow down scanning speed and encourage users to further browse to find the information they seek.

Design and write your content for scanning. People scan. This is unavoidable. Use this to your advantage by incorporating good visual hierarchy. Use appropriate font styling to attract attention to valuable content. Experiment with typography by finding combinations of boldface, italics, underlining and font sizes that work best to lead users through the page. Break up content with lists and bullets, and divide long paragraphs into shorter ones.

Beware of false floors. False floors can fool your users into thinking there is no additional content below the fold of your website. To correct this problem simply place a small amount of content in a grid or card-based system that cuts off above the fold. This will clue in the user to scroll to view the remaining content.

Use navigation tricks. Users can sometimes be frustrated with having to scroll up and down to find content. Using sticky navigation that is always visible is one way to help negate this

As a marketing tool, long-form content has been used for years by content marketers to help boost search engine optimization efforts. The benefits of long-form web pages are numerous — high visibility online, more social sharing, better link building, boosts in conversion and advances in website authority.

frustration. Another tactic is having multiple navigation menus such as sidebar page menus or buttons/dots that navigate for the user.

Test your design with a focus group. Adding design elements to encourage scrolling is great, but you want to be sure the users you are targeting are positively receptive to your design. So, test your design frequently.

Conclusion – scrolling myth debunked

Thanks to mobile devices and long-form content, scrolling is no longer taboo. It is true that content above the fold is still significant, but the overall user experience throughout the web page is more important.

With appropriate visual cues, intuitive responsive design and consistent conventional design features, users are more than happy to scroll through a web page, if that action will help them find what they are looking for. User scrolling also allows a designer to explore a plethora of different design techniques to create visual interest.

Ultimately, user experience design is all about understanding user behavior and designing solutions to help make their digital lives easier. Try applying these scrolling cues to your next web design project.

- Jessylyn Los Banos



Outside the Box: Non-Standard Lawyer Website Inspiration

Where can you get ideas that will set your website apart from those of other law firms in your market?

Web designers in all industries must avoid the repetition trap: finding a formula for design that works and duplicating it, without giving enough thought to individual business needs or relevant technological developments.

Attorney websites can be particularly susceptible to repetition. Visitors expect to find certain information on an attorney website, like service descriptions and attorney profiles, a firm would be foolish not to include these things. However, including them without thought as to what might be done differently — and more effectively — can lead to a string of unremarkable websites.

To save time, some law firm marketing agencies use one template to build all client sites. Colors, fonts and graphics may change, but the basic formula remains the same. In some ways this approach could satisfy the natural human instinct toward comfort with the familiar. However, the greater risk is a body of work that is neither memorable nor genuinely reflective of each firm's individuality and value to clients.

“

The real puzzle lawyers must solve is how to achieve a balance between unconventional, stand-out design and time-tested layout formulas that drive new conversions.

In website design, there is such a thing as negative attention. Visitors who cannot understand a site's navigation structure, cannot find what they need, or simply find a site unprofessional will leave with a negative impression that can be difficult to repair.

How can lawyers solve this puzzle? One way is to look outside of the legal industry for inspiration.

Start with a plan

Never jump straight into a design without considering the why. If your goal is to create a unique and successful website, you must first define success. Your website should be one piece of an overarching marketing strategy. It should align with your firm's personality and speak to your potential clients.

Begin by asking yourself what success looks like. What do you want your website to do? Do not just think in the abstract; make a list. Some answers could include:

- Generate a certain number of trackable calls or form conversions
- Create buzz around an interesting design or layout feature
- Reinforce your firm's brand, professionalism and personality

- Build authority
- Showcase achievements
- Build an email list and generate downloads of resources
- Generate sign-ups for seminars or other events
- Serve as a B2B referral generator

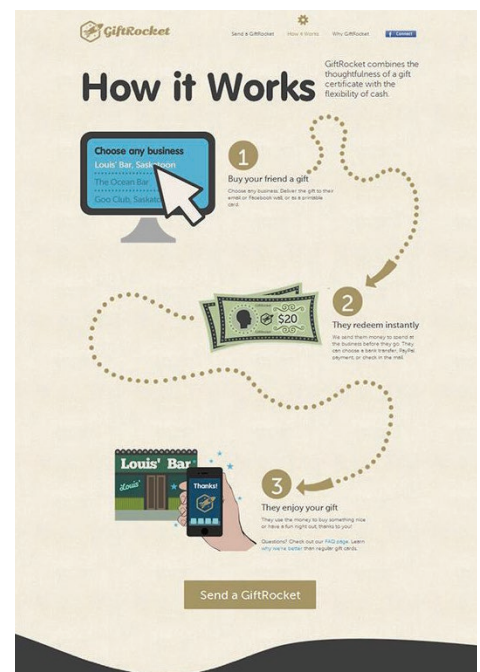
After you have defined success, ask yourself who is making this success possible. What kind of people will be interested in your firm and the resources your website has to offer? What questions will they want answered?

Your goals and the outcome of your audience analysis will determine how you define an effective website design. This knowledge will help direct you to where you can take risks and go off the grid, and where you should stick with more traditional layout formulas. They will help you choose colors, fonts and graphic styles, and guide your content's tone. Once you understand success, you can start looking for inspiration.

Get inspiration

According to research performed in classrooms, students learn most effectively when the learning is associated with “a strong positive emotion” in a low-stress environment. The same research also found that novelty helped students retain information.

Your firm can use novelty to its advantage if employed thoughtfully. You can see in this comparison how GiftRocket has taken a simple list and added interest by visually illustrating the process. The two pages contain the same information, but one is more compelling — and more likely to hold a visitor's attention.



The example above illustrates how visual elements can be used to create interest and lead a visitor to take action.

Consider incorporating unexpected shapes, illustrations, pictures, unique typography or infographics to your page designs. Create visual seals for important selling points like a success rate or promise to clients. Look at copy not just as paragraphs on a page, but as a potential design element.

Here are some resources that can help you get ideas from a non-lawyer perspective.

1. Awards and curated website collections. These sites gather well-regarded and award-winning websites into one place. Sites are generally listed by date, with the most recently posted examples first. However, some also let you filter by industry or website type. These sites showcase new design thinking and website technology.

Web Design Inspiration
www.webdesign-inspiration.com

Awwwards
www.awwwards.com/websites

CSS Nectar
cssnectar.com

2. Color palette tools. Colors can carry strong emotional associations. Colors can excite or calm, aggravate or soothe. The colors on your website should accurately reflect your firm's personality. These color picker tools can help get you thinking about colors in new, creative ways.

Canva
www.canva.com/colors/
Create color palettes based on an image

Khroma
khroma.co/generator/
Pick your favorite colors, and Khroma creates palettes from them

colors.co
Generate color schemes or browse pre-generated schemes

3. Content inspiration. Your website must speak to the needs of clients. One of the best ways to do this is focus on benefits rather than features. A feature is a descriptive statement, for example, "Attorney Jane Smith graduated with honors from Columbia University." A benefit statement is client-centered, such as, "Attorney Jane Smith developed a deep interest in workers'

“

Once you understand success, you can start looking for inspiration.

rights during her time at Columbia University, which drives her efforts on behalf of people who have been treated unfairly by employers.”

Here are some content inspiration sources, some legal, some not.

Client feedback and questions. If a client asks a question, you can assume many other potential clients have wondered the same thing. Tap into this insight. You can also read the frequently asked questions on competitors' websites, or answers provided to questions on large legal sites.

Your own experience. Try writing down one idea every day from your own experience to stay sharp and create a reservoir of topics from which to draw.

The Guardian Datablog
www.theguardian.com/data

Answer the Public
answerthepublic.com
Learn what people are asking about a specific topic.

Beautiful data visualization
www.informationisbeautifulawards.com

4. Font tools. Typography is an easy, lightweight way to distinguish yourself from other firms. Type can be used to create graphic, visual interest, and it uses up much less bandwidth than pixel-based images. Type choices also determine whether your website is easy to read or a strain on users' eyes. Below are some sites that offer typographical inspiration.

Typewolf
www.typewolf.com
What's trending in type, plus suggested type combinations

typ.io
Examples of fonts in action together

Typespiration
typespiration.com
Type design and color palettes

5. Motion effects. How can you hold visitors' attention and keep them on the page? Subtle communications, like microinteractions and animations, indicate how users can interact with the page and help keep them engaged. Interactive elements can be as simple as a button hover effect and as complex as an interactive infographic or data visualization. Quizzes and polls, slideshows and interactive timelines are other ways to keep a user interested. While these effects may require some higher-level programming, you can still look to example sites to stimulate idea generation.

Interactive infographics
www.displayr.com

Polls and quizzes
4screens.net/engageform/

Motion graphics and UX design
fromupnorth.com

Microinteraction gallery
dribbble.com/tags/micro-interaction

While it is important to study your competitors websites, and look to other websites within the legal industry for ideas and inspiration, it is also critical to avoid getting stuck in a formulaic rut. Looking to non-lawyer resources can help jump-start your creative thinking and give your website a competitive edge.

- Kristen Friend

BIG RESULTS

— FOR

BIG LAW FIRMS

Every law firm needs an effective strategy for lead generation and business development.



Law firm marketing plans depend on a variety of factors including the size of a firm, types of clients, practice areas and geographical location. These factors, among others, drive the approach a particular law firm adopts toward marketing efforts.

Marketing for large law firms presents a unique set of considerations. A multi-state firm that handles cases across many practice areas will have a different marketing strategy than a small law firm that takes on personal injury cases in one state. Large practices that maintain a national presence with multiple offices have hundreds, even thousands of attorneys.

While the end goals remain the same for most law firms regardless of size, they must take all aspects of their

practice into consideration when determining which marketing platforms to use as part of a comprehensive law firm marketing strategy. Tools like a website, social media, content, advertising and offline activities are all part of a firm's marketing arsenal.

Size matters

A larger firm means a heftier marketing budget, perhaps even surpassing the annual revenues of some small law firms. Big law firms also have more resources in other forms including talent and technology when compared to small law firms and solo practices.

While the sheer size of multi-state law firms offers financial advantages when it comes to spending on various marketing campaigns, large firms may be somewhat hesitant to use any out-of-the-box tactics. They are generally more constrained by firm culture and organizational structure. As a result, despite having more resources, they can also be conservative in their marketing efforts.

Small law firms, on the other hand, have leeway to be more creative and perhaps take more risks due to fewer organizational hurdles. They also have the ability to make quicker decisions as there are fewer people who are involved in the approval process. The bigger a law firm, the more decision makers there are likely to be.

Implementing a comprehensive marketing strategy for a big law firm requires a lot of time and effort throughout the entire process of planning, execution and analytics. Unlike smaller firms, multi-state law firms have the capacity for an in-house marketing team that can perform many different tasks. Those that do not have the resources to handle everything internally can seek outside help for support. For example, a law firm might handle PR and social media in house while outsourcing website design and SEO to a marketing agency.



Regardless of size, every law firm needs a marketing strategy that delivers results.

Branding lies at the core of any good marketing plan, especially for large law firms with multi-state practices.

Establishing a brand

Your law firm may be among the largest in your market, but it is not the only one that exists in it. Prospective clients seeking legal services are likely to research multiple law firms, including smaller practices. That is where branding comes in. A well-defined, focused brand is essential for marketing success as it clearly differentiates a law firm from its competitors. Yet the power of branding is rarely utilized to its full potential.

A website, logo and stationery are all tangible elements that contribute to building a brand. However, establishing a strong brand for a large firm goes far beyond just business cards and slogans. Branding refers to the packaging of a law firm's legal services, the sharing of its message and a promise of what people can consistently expect it to deliver. This brand identity is what will compel potential clients to contact you instead of your competitors.

Big law firms need to operate as brands with a clear vision for the effective use of both paid and organic marketing. Since they often span across multiple practice areas and geographic markets, their client base is likely to be very broad. Creating a unique brand voice that reaches and resonates with your entire potential market of clients requires careful planning and execution. Your message has to be clear and consistent throughout all elements of your marketing.

Cultivating press and media relations

With today's highly competitive market for legal services combined with relentless news cycles, having a media

Even multi-state firms need to appeal on a local level to the clients they want to reach.

presence is crucial. Large law firms can benefit from both national and local media coverage. While national media can help establish your firm as a thought leader in your practice areas, local media can also play an important role.

Every law firm, regardless of its size, must compete with other firms located in the same city or state. Even multi-state firms need to appeal on a local level to the clients they want to reach. As a result, local media relationships are essential for gaining press coverage, local sponsorships or generating buzz about your firm's community involvement. For example, a lawyer from your firm can be quoted on breaking news or be sought after to comment on a legal issue.

Large firms can find it useful to have a centralized and coordinated media strategy. Marketing professionals can cultivate relationships with journalists and identify media opportunities in national and local news sites, legal industry publications or relevant blogs. A marketing team may also help shape the narrative about any major cases that involve high-profile clients when media coverage is inevitable.

Harnessing the power of online marketing

Large law firms cannot afford to ignore their online presence. A vital part of online marketing involves having a user-friendly, up-to-date website. While big law firm websites of the past have been notorious for walls of text and generic images, the focus is shifting to enhancing functionality and visual appeal.

Since multi-state law firms have the power of name recognition, onsite conversion is key. Law firm websites play a crucial role in a prospective client's decision-making process of why they will choose you over a competitor. Not only can an effective website lead to multimillion-dollar clients, but it can also retain them.

A well-organized, easy to navigate site is especially important for law firms that operate across many states. It serves as a unifying force for all of your local offices and



practice areas. Potential clients will visit a law firm website to find out about the services offered, read attorney bios and obtain contact details. For example, your site may include a searchable database of your lawyers by name, practice area or location, or an interactive map displaying your offices.

Other impactful online content includes video, an informative blog and pages that highlight your firm's media coverage and community involvement. Because a law firm website is also an extension of your brand, it should present a clean, attractive design that reflects your branding.

Big law firms can also benefit from embracing social media, another prolific aspect of online marketing. Although national firms may find it difficult to attract clients through social media, channels like LinkedIn and Twitter offer opportunities for brand building and engaging with prospective clients. Different social media platforms work well for different firms, depending on what they hope to achieve. For example, Facebook might be effective for a small practice looking for new clients, while LinkedIn might be useful for big firms seeking referrals or networking prospects.

Because they practice across state lines, big law firms also have other considerations. Each state's bar association has its own rules of professional conduct for legal advertising. As a result, lawyers need to ensure their online marketing efforts do not overstep various ethical guidelines.

- Dipal Parmar

Verdicts & Settlements

FEBRUARY - APRIL | 2019

\$

**3.85
MILLION**

**STEINBERG
LAW FIRM**

WORKERS' COMPENSATION SETTLEMENT

Steinberg Law Firm attorneys Catie Meehan and David Pearlman recently settled a difficult, complicated workers' compensation case for \$3.85 million. The claim was initially denied because their client had allegedly used marijuana before his accident. "The defense put up a very strong intoxication defense, but we were able to reach a resolution," said Meehan. "I was very proud to reach this settlement for my client with the help of my partner."

\$

**23.5
MILLION**

**GEOFFREY
FIEGER**

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE JURY AWARD

On March 22, an Illinois jury awarded a \$23.5 million verdict against Presence St. Joseph Hospital on behalf of a brain-damaged child. Attorney Geoffrey Fieger represented the victim and was assisted by Chicago attorneys Matthew Patterson and Jack Beam. The baby had suffered severe damage from lack of oxygen when doctors did not act quickly to perform an emergency C-section. It is one of the largest medical malpractice settlements in Chicago so far this year.

\$

**151.7
MILLION**

**BEASLEY ALLEN
ATTORNEYS WITH
BILL GAMBLE**

PRODUCT LIABILITY JURY AWARD

Beasley Allen lawyers LaBarron Boone, Greg Allen and Kendall Dunson along with Bill Gamble of Gamble, Gamble, Calame and Jones, LLC represented Travaris "Tre" Smith, who was paralyzed in a rollover crash of a 1998 Ford Explorer. The jury found that Ford failed to meet its own safety guidelines and then attempted to cover up the vehicle's defective design, preferring to pay damages rather than fixing the issue.

\$

**30.1
MILLION**

**SWOPE,
RODANTE P.A.**

JURY AWARD IN A CAR ACCIDENT CASE

Randy Willoughby was severely injured when an elderly driver ran a four-way stop sign and T-boned a vehicle on the passenger side where Willoughby was sitting. His injuries included a Grade III diffuse axonal brain injury. GEICO prevented a

settlement and only offered \$147k in past medical expenses. On March 15, a Florida jury awarded Willoughby \$30.1 million including \$7.2 million in economic and over \$22.9 million in non-economic damages.



Does Your Firm Need a Legal Credit Card Processor?

Any attorneys who want to grow their businesses need to accept online credit card payments. Many clients are able and willing to pay only by credit card, whether for payment flexibility, consumer protection or other reasons. Further, they are more likely to pay, and pay quickly, if they receive a bill they can pay online. But attorneys have unique demands when it comes to processing payments. They have strict rules to follow with trust accounts and cannot risk non-compliance due to complications of technology.

This has opened the door to processors specializing in payments to law firms. The biggest player in the legal payment processing game is LawPay, a product of AffiniPay, a company which claims some 20 percent of all U.S. law firms as clients.

Is a specialized legal payment solution a must-have for your firm? In this article we will analyze LawPay's offering and explain the other options competing for your business.

LawPay Features

The features which distinguish a payments processor specializing in law firms from any other are actually few in number, though they are significant.

LawPay's most important feature for many lawyers is the careful attention paid to trust accounts. Trust accounts and operating accounts are strictly segregated, and trust accounts are isolated from processing fees. LawPay's trust accounts are fully IOLTA (Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts) compliant. It is easy to generate invoices for each account.

LawPay customers can also benefit from a product strategy that was built from the ground up to be useful to law firms. The company works with state bars and the ABA to ensure compliance and stay abreast of issues specific to attorneys. The actual payment mechanisms and processes, however, are fairly similar across major providers.

LawPay integrates with major practice management software systems, including Clio and Rocket Matter. By doing so, you can create a very easy end-to-end process: you can log your time, generate an invoice, send it to a client, receive payment and record payment, all without having to manually copy any information from one system to another.

Payment Processes

How do payments work? With LawPay (and any modern payment processor), you can accept credit cards in person or online. All transactions occur either on LawPay's site or in their mobile app.

The most common avenue of payment is a link sent to a client via email. The links direct clients to a specific invoice which, while hosted on LawPay's site, is personalized to your firm and customizable. The invoice, in turn, is unique to the customer and to the amount they owe — the client does not need to proffer credentials or remember what they owe. They complete their payment information in an interface that is familiar to anyone who shops online.

While the payment page is hosted on LawPay's site, it is personalized with your firm's logo and information, and is customizable. The same goes for the emails LawPay sends clients on your behalf. You can edit the text to your liking, upload a custom logo and more.

Alternatively, you can copy the link to a client's individual payment page and send it yourself for a more personal touch. This is especially handy if the payment is overdue, perhaps because the client has a busy inbox. By sending the link yourself, you can ensure it gets the attention it deserves. You can even send the link via text message.

You can also accept credit card payments in person. This functionality is built into the same LawPay apps you use while on the go. The apps

are available for iPhones, iPads, and Android phones and tablets, and they offer two options for inputting payment information.

The first option is to manually enter the client's credit card information. As you know, it can be a bit clumsy and awkward to type all of the required information on a small touchscreen. Alternatively, you can purchase a card "swiper" — a gadget that connects to your phone, tablet or computer and reads card mag-strips and chips. These are available from LawPay for \$25. The client will then sign the phone/tablet screen with their finger or a stylus — again, a bit awkward. But no matter the method, you can secure immediate payment from willing clients. And, for those who may be a bit technology-averse, you can be there to ensure the transaction goes smoothly.

Scheduled payments are a good way to ensure clients who owe on a recurring basis stay paid up, and LawPay makes it easy. The interface is simple and will be familiar if you have ever set a recurring payment on a bank website, with all the expected options for frequency and duration.

A LawPay account costs \$20 per month or \$180 per year. Processing fees are 1.95% + \$0.20 for standard credit cards and 2.95% + \$0.20 for "specialty cards," including American Express. E-check processing is also available at a flat rate of \$2.00 per transaction. Processing fees are debited from your operating account once per month.

Other options

E-commerce is not a cutting edge concept, and as such, you have many options for accepting credit cards in your office and online.

If your expected monthly credit card revenue and number of transactions is low, you could go with an option like PayPal, Square or Stripe. These are called Payment Service Providers. They usually have plans available with no monthly fee. They have top-notch websites and apps and, as industry giants who process enormous numbers of transactions, they have practically become household names. You will miss out on the legal-specific features of LawPay, and your practice management software probably will not integrate with it. But this can be a good option for getting your feet wet if you are just starting out with credit cards.

If you take in a lot of credit card revenue each month, you may want to reduce the percentage rate you pay as far as possible. In this case, you might go with a traditional credit card processing service — one that provides you a unique merchant identification number. You will likely pay a somewhat higher monthly fee, but a lower percentage rate.

And while LawPay likely holds a market edge against its competitors in the legal payments game, its competitors are narrowing the gap, feature-wise. Take a look at competing offerings, including LexCharge and Lex/Actum, and benchmark them against LawPay. You might find that one can offer you a better value or a more compelling user experience. In any case, the time you take to explore LawPay and other options is an investment that may pay rich dividends in revenue and productivity.

- Ryan Conley



HOW TO

The SEO Hierarchy of Needs

THE GUIDE

Think back to your college psychology classes. Remember Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the theory that states our human needs must be met in a certain order? For example, something like being respected by one's peers does not matter if physiological needs like breathing and eating are not being met.

Just as Maslow so neatly organized our human needs in an ascending order, with the most basic and critical at the bottom of a pyramid, SEO has its own hierarchy of needs. Understanding this order of importance will help demystify SEO and get your firm's web content seen.

SEO BASICS

SEO short for "search engine optimization" is the process of maximizing quality website traffic through organic, unpaid search engine results. Search engines want to provide users with information that is relevant, trustworthy and authoritative. Using algorithms that are not entirely known, search engines rank content on the web accordingly.

For example, a Seattle resident who has been involved in a car accident may search online for local attorneys who can help with their case. If they searched for "Seattle accident attorneys" in Google more than 3 million total results would come up, but only around twenty items, including paid advertising, map listings and organic results, show on the first page. Of those items, only ten are organic, unpaid listings.

Every attorney who would like to have a chance to earn that searcher's business is trying to get onto that first page of results. SEO is the way for them to do that.

People click on the organic content in search engine results pages nearly 98 percent of the time over paid advertisements. It appears more credible. People doing research online are looking for genuine information, and they are savvy enough to recognize it.

Users are also not likely to move beyond that first page of their search

results. The first few websites that appear on a results page get 95 percent of clicks. To put it simply, that old real estate adage "location, location, location" is indeed true on the internet too.

NOT ALL SEARCH ENGINES ARE CREATED EQUAL

The word "Google" has become another proprietary eponym, a specific brand name that describes an entire category in general, just like Velcro, Band-Aid or Xerox. There are around 30 other search engines beside the web giant, like Bing and Yahoo for example, but Google has the biggest market share.

As far as SEO goes, Google is king. Over 90 percent of web searches occur on Google (including Google Images, Maps, Scholar, etc.) and Google-owned sites like YouTube. Because of this, most SEO energy should be spent on Google for the best return on effort.

The hierarchy of SEO needs
Tweaking small things about your website will make it look better to the search engine algorithms that determine what people see when they conduct a search. The higher you place within the results pages, the easier it is for potential clients to find you.

SEO is a very worthwhile endeavor however, it can be overwhelming.

Therefore breaking SEO up into graduated steps is smart. It gives a starting point. If a firm must prioritize its marketing dollars or if an interested and willing marketing do-it-yourselfer is just jumping into SEO, here is what to focus on first.

Crawlability

The amount of information on the internet is astounding and

THE FIRST FEW WEB PAGE LISTINGS THAT APPEAR ON A RESULTS PAGE GET 95 PERCENT OF THE CLICKS.

Every attorney who would like to have a chance to earn a searcher's business is trying to get onto the first page of results.

continuously growing. Search engines constantly scour the web for new content using bots called crawlers or spiders. Crawlability refers to the process by which the bots find content; this forms the foundation of the SEO hierarchy of needs pyramid.

Crawlers find URLs and move through a website via links. They pick up information along the way to take back to the search engine's servers. URLs are one thing bots use to see what the content is about so they must be short and descriptive in order to be more easily crawlable. Bots and users alike prefer straightforward, clean web addresses. In other words, all those ugly numbers and symbols in a URL are killer for SEO.

Certain content can be hidden from crawlers using a robot.txt file. This asks bots to not crawl certain areas of a site, such as old, duplicate or broken content (e.g. an expired promotional page) and keeps useless content out of search engine results pages to optimize the crawl budget.

The crawl budget is the average number of URLs a bot will crawl before it leaves a site. Although this is a concern mostly for big websites

containing thousands of URLs, blocking the content that does not need to be seen ensures that the crawlers will look at what does.

When a crawler encounters an issue, it does not stay to try and figure it out. If a page or section is obscured by something, like a password or login requirement, that content will not be found on search engine results pages. It is equally important to be sure crawlers can get through a website as it is for them to get to it. Otherwise, they may never move from the homepage and users will not find deeper content.

Although they are always becoming smarter, search engine bots are still in need of a little help to boost crawlability. As the most basic aspect of SEO it is not a place where mistakes can be made. After all, the best, most expensive website on the internet does no good if it cannot be found.

Indexability

Indexability is just a small step beyond crawlability. It is how search engines organize the content brought back to the servers by bots in the crawling process.

The index of a search engine is simply a database of all the information that has been deemed worthy to display to users in a search engine results page. The size of Google's index is hard to imagine. It contains hundreds of billions of webpages and over 100,000,000 gigabytes of information.



Even when a website has been successfully crawled, certain things may prevent it from being indexed. These include:

- More than one version of a site, like a mobile and website version with different content. Mobile versions of sites get preference.
- Duplicate content
- Canonical Declarations
- Redirections

When a more authoritative source for certain information exists, the lesser one will not be indexed. If something is not indexed it will not be able to be found by a search engine.

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to how easy it is to display and use a website. Once content has been crawled and indexed, it needs to be friendly for both bots and users. Sites that perform well and follow the rules of structure are more accessible than those that do not; this lends itself to higher rankings in search engine results pages.

Accessibility is a broad category which includes both technical and human aspects. A few practical features that increase accessibility include:

Responsive design, which automatically adjusts for optimal viewing on different devices.

Server performance and page size, both of which affect load time. Page speed, or how quickly a page loads, is a ranking factor.

Alternative text, or alt text, for pictures that is clear and informative

Descriptive and helpful link text (not just "click here")

Free access to content. Password or login protected pages will not usually be ranked.

Keeping users with physical, visual, cognitive, auditory or other issues in mind when designing content is always best practice. Beside a firm's general responsibility to do so, ignoring this could also be a violation of laws that protect disabled persons, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, and increase possible risk of legal action. At the very least it could result in unhappy users and negative feedback. Being sure that content is compatible with browsers used by the vision impaired, web readers and other supportive tech only makes a website available to more people.

When accessibility suffers so does SEO.

Rankability

Rankability is the one of the two more advanced and technical levels at the top of the SEO hierarchy of needs and the first to do with the true optimization of SEO versus that

which impedes it. This is the practice of using SEO tactics to improve rank in search engine results pages. This goes back to those first few entries getting the most traffic.

One way to increase rank is to use linking. Including links to other content, whether internal or external, will boost crawlability and rank by transferring some importance and traffic from more popular pages to less popular ones. It also keeps content fresh.

Linking can help build content silos too. Content silos are groups of like pages that can rank higher together than they could alone. For example, information on a firm's site concerning car accidents might include blog posts, articles or long-form content and can be organized in a way that is easy for users to find and peruse in turn helping SEO.

Clickability

The final level of the SEO hierarchy is clickability. This is a highly technical element and it involves increasing the likelihood of users to click on and interact with a website. Focusing on this can help get a website's content featured prominently beyond just the typical search engine results page, in image or video search results for example.

Utilizing title tags and keywords well will make content more clickable. Although it may seem obvious, making sure that clickable content looks clickable and unclickable content does not helps too. Incorporating rich, properly tagged elements into a website design such as media, ratings, in-page links, tables or lists helps entice users to stay longer and interact further with a site. Clickability is where technical SEO and human behavior online merge.

PRACTICAL SEO IMPROVEMENTS ARE NOT SCARY

SEO sometimes sounds complicated because it can be. It is especially intimidating to the beginner or the not-so tech savvy but breaking it down into steps is the most helpful way to approach it.

Wasting effort (or marketing dollars) is frustrating. If there is an issue with one of the more basic principles, like crawlability or indexability, efforts to improve higher areas like clickability are ineffective.

SEO may not be simple, but it offers a great opportunity to increase web traffic, public exposure, gain new clients and revenue. Working up the hierarchy will maximize SEO success.

- Mandy Wakely

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ELEMENTS OF THE HIERARCHY



Are you competing against your marketing company?

HAZEN LAW GROUP ISN'T



CUSTOM
LEGAL MARKETING

If your marketing company isn't exclusively working for you, they're helping your competitors. That's why Hazen Law Group 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™