BLF
BIGGER LAW FIRM
A magazine for attorneys

SEO IN-DEPTH
Why off-page SEO tactics are a welcome supplement to on-site efforts.

MESSAGING
What is micro-content, and how can your firm use it to your advantage?

VIRTUAL IMPRESSION
Reoptomize your older content to gain new and improved SEO benefits.

THE COMPLETE WEBSITE LAUNCH ASSEMBLY GUIDE

With all the moving parts in a website project, it is easy to miss important steps at launch. Avoid the mistakes that countless developers have learned the hard way by following an established checklist.

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The Complete Website Launch Assembly Guide

If your firm has taken on a website redesign project, you have likely invested a considerable amount of time and money into the effort.

You need your new site to be an effective introduction to your firm and a productive first touch point for visitors who may need legal services. After all of the hard work, you do not want missed, critical details to undermine your launch. Who better to take advice from than developers who have taken on countless launches first-hand.

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BLF BIGGER LAW FIRM *A magazine for attorneys*

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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A Guide to Off-Page SEO

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a range of strategies aimed at making your site appear near the top of results to relevant searches on Google and other search engines.

The majority of SEO is on-page SEO. That is the optimization of the content, code, design, and configuration of the site and pages.

The part of SEO you may not think about so much is off-page SEO. Off-page SEO is anything you do to improve your search rankings that is not part of the site itself. This includes information you control, such as a business listing, as well as information you do not control, but can influence, such as links to and mentions of your business on other sites.

Link Building

Link building aims to maximize the number of links to your site from other sites. These are called backlinks, and the ones that matter most are those on high-quality, authoritative, reputable websites.

Link building is a longstanding foundational element of SEO, mainly because of a Google algorithm called PageRank. This was the first and is still the best-known algorithm Google uses to rank sites in search results. PageRank is a measure of the number of backlinks to a page and the authority of sites containing those links.

When Google was a young company, PageRank was everything. Today, it is just one of the hundreds of signals Google uses. The company has not officially updated the PageRank algorithm in years and no longer publishes PageRank scores. Some take this as evidence that PageRank, and even backlink portfolios, no longer matter to SEO.

But Google has been clear that PageRank still matters, and for good reason: high-quality, high-authority sites tend to link only to other high-quality, high-authority sites, and such links should boost the search rankings of the target sites.

Backlink Factors

Here are the main factors that determine the makeup of your backlink portfolio.

Number of referring domains. The total number of backlinks is important. A more meaningful measure is the number of referring domains. In other words, the number of unique top-level sites with links to a given page on your website.

Link authority. A link from a high-authority site boosts a webpage more than one from a low-authority site. How do you know a site's authority? Google no longer publishes PageRank scores, which was an easy shorthand for authority. But other tools are available, including Website Authority Checker by Moz, and URL Rating (UR) by ahrefs.

Nofollow. Nofollow is an attribute that can be assigned to a link. When assigned, the linking site's PageRank is not "transferred" to the linked site. In other words, the linking site's authority does not boost the linked site's rank.

No-follow links still have value but identifying them allows you to prioritize your link building efforts.

Relevance. The relevance of a linking site to your business influences the weight its links carry for your page rankings. A link from a law firm, such as in a guest blog post, is more important than a link from the local bakery you might have represented in litigation.

Several high-quality tools for analyzing backlinks are available. They are often called a "site explorer" or "link explorer."

Many comprehensive guides to link building strategies are also easily found.

Local Citiations

Local citations are also called NAP citations because they are any online mention of your business's name, address and phone number (NAP). They are one of the top-ranking factors for local searches. In other words, if Google thinks a search intends to find local businesses, the ones with the most local citations will tend to rise to the top.

You can manually find your local citations (and your competitors') by searching for street addresses. Use the "intext:" search operator to make sure the search term is in the text of the page. For example, googling "acme law firm intext:123 main -acmelawfirm.com" returns pages mentioning the law firm and its address on Main Street, excluding results from the firm's website.

SEO-specific tools offer more robust and easier ways of managing local citations. They allow you to explore existing citations, build new ones and find leads by cross-referencing your citations against your competitors'. Whitespark is perhaps the best-known, with Moz, ahrefs and others offering comparable tools.

Brand Mentions

Brand mentions are mentions of your firm that are not accompanied by links. They are also called implied links, in contrast with express links, which are mentions of your firm that link to your site.

Brand mentions are valuable and often built by outreach such as guest blog posts and podcast appearances. However, linked mentions are more desirable, so another strategy is to find brand mentions and attempt to convert them to links. This may be easier said than done, but guides and tools are available for both of these strategies.

Brand mentions are valuable and often built by outreach such as guest blog posts and podcast appearances. However, linked mentions are more desirable, so another strategy is to find brand mentions and attempt to convert them to links.

Google My Business

Google My Business (GMB) is a service by which firms can claim and manage the business listing that appears in Google web and map searches. Claiming and verifying your GMB listing is essential. To optimize the listing, you can include keywords, add photos and respond to reviews.

Reviews

Reviews are another critical part of off-page SEO, whether they appear in your GMB listing or elsewhere. Positive reviews from actual clients will help your search rankings, and negative reviews will do the opposite.

Nothing Good Comes Easy

By now, it is clear that off-page SEO is not always easy and straightforward. That is because you rarely have full control over it. And that, in turn, is exactly why it matters. Links, mentions and other elements of your off-site online footprint are reliable indicators of quality because they are not easy to obtain. Now is the time to expand your SEO strategy beyond your site.

- Ryan Conley

MICRO-CONTENT
WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT IS RIGHT
FOR YOUR FIRM

Law firms can use micro-content to speak instantly and directly to potential clients.

Micro-content is any short content that provides stand-alone information. Micro-content is an easily scannable, small element that quickly distills the larger message of a web page or article.

Micro-content can be any piece of short media, like a headline, a single sentence, a short video, an image or an answer to a question. The intent behind micro-content is to provide content that viewers or readers can quickly consume to get the broader message your firm is trying to convey. More specifically, the goal of micro-content is to create a written message or imagery that people can absorb in 10 to 30 seconds or less.

Examples of micro-content include:

- Infographics and memes
- Short video clips
- Images and illustrations
- Graphs, tables or charts
- Email subjects
- Brief email copy
- Webpage titles
- Snippets

One advantage of micro-content is its ability to give a complete answer or explanation within itself. As a condensed version of much longer content, micro-content can be agile and accessible, helping hold visitors' attention and clarify complex ideas.

How to use micro-content

Online communications, and social media specifically, have changed the way people interact with information. Internet users have short attention spans. Some estimates say that businesses have from one or two seconds to less than a second to grab a visitor's attention. Readers scan pages rather than read paragraph to paragraph, top of the page to bottom. Marketers are constantly looking for ways to grab attention in a saturated media landscape.

While it is true that people consume web pages and social media differently from print media, the rumors of a disappearing attention span are greatly exaggerated. If content is well-constructed and interesting, people will take the time to read or watch it. Average YouTube video lengths have steadily grown since 2012, with content creators recommending ideal lengths of over 10 minutes and up to 20.

Long articles can help build trust and provide prospective clients with the reasons they need to contact your firm. Google also tends to reward long content if it gives quality answers to users' questions.

The intersection between attention-grabbing and attention-holding is where micro-content is at its best. It distills

Micro-content can give a complete answer or explanation within itself.

information and creates easily scannable content that can supplement longer pieces or clarify sophisticated ideas. Micro-content is most prevalent on social media. Platforms like Twitter and Instagram use micro-content almost exclusively to provide information to users and followers.

Twitter: Twitter was one of the first platforms geared toward the sole use of micro-content as a communication tool. With a limit of 280 words or less, tweets force you to condense what you are trying to say. Ideally, this compels you to be creative. In addition to words, tweets can attach photos, videos and web links to provide additional content to support or explain the tweet.

Instagram: Instagram is a social media platform created for posting and sharing micro-content through images and videos. Instagram was not immediately useful to attorneys. However, the platform has become much more than a place to share pictures. Instagram has expanded users' ability to post interactive content like slideshows, which can be the perfect way to showcase infographics or even short videos. Images posted on Instagram can come in many different forms, including photographs, gifs, posts with words and slideshows.

Micro-content on social media

Law firm websites have moved beyond the traditional, static online brochure that dominated the industry ten years ago. In the social media age, branding and advertising can be three-dimensional and engaging, creative and entertaining.

Social media can be a tool to connect with potential clients in a personal, authentic way. Followers can feel like firms are speaking directly to them and their needs.

Photographs on social media can serve as digital print ads for your law firm. Many apps help you design and edit images to make creative posts to advertise your law firm. Infogram, Piktochart and Easel.ly offer resources for creating infographics and presentations. Canva and Pixlr both have online photo editing tools.

Micro-content video, 30 seconds or less, is a great way to communicate with followers. Many people have legal

Hiring a lawyer has a gravitas that is not always encapsulated on social media.

questions that fall within the realm of common questions that can be answered quickly. Also, many people are not aware that certain situations have legal consequences.

Short social media videos that answer legal questions or concisely educate people about legal issues are great ways for your law firm to advertise its knowledge and experience. You can also create and post commercials or social media segments that help to brand your law firm. Businesses that have recognizable images and styles are the ones that consumers remember when they need a particular service.

Social media is also a hashtag-rich environment. The hashtag mark (#) is used in front of keywords and phrases to make these phrases show up in searches. Your firm can create unique hashtags to promote on your social media accounts, business cards and website. You can also piggyback off of popular hashtags to get your firm in the spotlight — if it can be done in a tasteful, on-brand way. The more people know about your hashtags, the more opportunity you have to reach a wider audience of fans who may become clients of your law firm.

Micro-content is also great for sharing. Creating content that is informative, interesting and entertaining may influence people to share the post with others. This is the equivalent of "word-of-mouth" advertising of the past. It is free advertising that can increase the volume of clients as well as your revenue.

Micro-content on your law firm website

The ubiquitousness of social media can lead people to believe that everyone is using it. However, plenty of people do not have any social media accounts and others visit their accounts rarely. Additionally, social media platforms offer fewer options for educating users about complicated issues. People looking for a lawyer often perform extensive research before making a hiring decision. These people are using search engines to find law firm websites. For them, micro-content on your law firm website is necessary.

Most people on law firm websites do not have a legal background. Placing long content on your site with too much legal jargon that is unsupported by shorter content bits can turn a potential client away.

Your site can utilize the same types of micro-content you post on social media. The goal is to give users the most information in the shortest time. Infographics, short videos explaining legal topics, or question and answer segments are good options. You can also create interactive slideshows that give small pieces of micro-content slide-by-slide.

Word-based micro-content helps readers scan your pages. Headlines and subheads break up text and explain the topics of subsequent paragraphs. Pull-quotes and callouts highlight short ideas. You can even highlight content using a plugin that encourages users to share it on Twitter. Breaking up long pages with micro-content will help users understand your pages and stay on your website longer.

Why your law firm needs micro-content

Micro-content carries significant impact in a small package. It delivers clear messaging that people can understand in seconds. You can be creative with your wording and imagery because you know your goal is to grab readers' attention. Your choice of presentation and design of your micro-content will allow you to catch viewers' eyes as they scroll through feeds or down long web pages.

Finally, and most importantly, your micro-content can be shared with an infinite number of people. With a simple click and share, your law firm reached potential customers that you probably would not encounter in real-life.

- Chyrra Greene

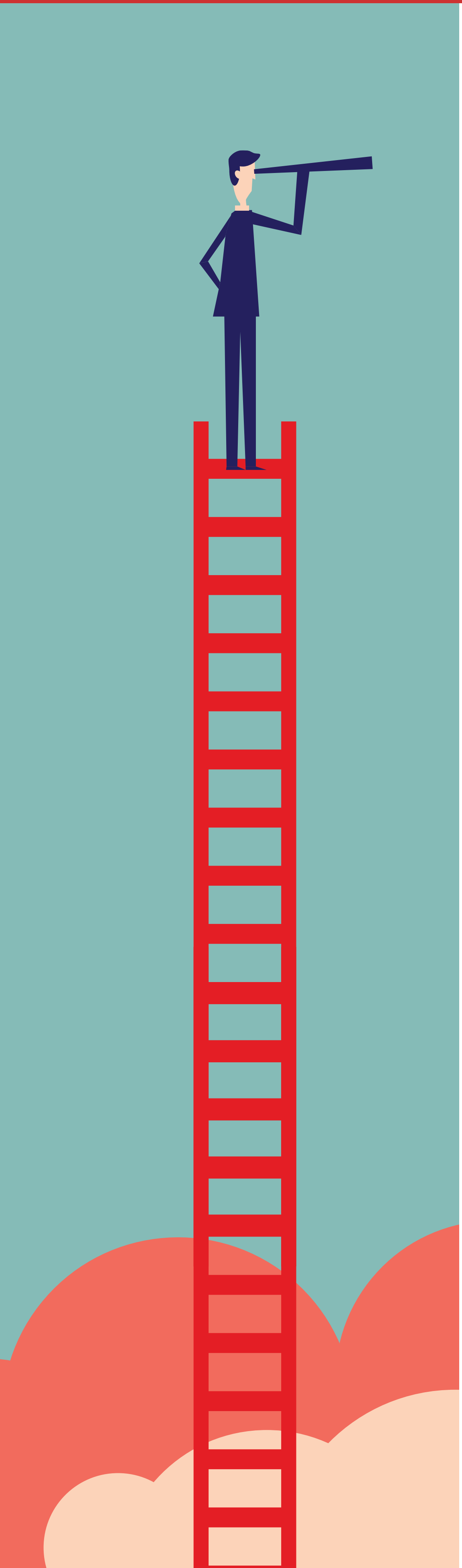
SEIZE THE MOMENT

How Law Firms Can Capitalize on Unanticipated Business Opportunities

Attorney referrals are nothing new in the practice of law. However, traditionally, the referring firm takes a hands-off approach after transferring a client to another practice. Through strategic collaboration with specialized practices, law firms can maximize the value of each client interaction, even when the client's issues are beyond the firm's areas of practice. These well-planned, case-by-case partnerships can create lasting relationships with specialty firms while better serving clients and leaving little on the table.

When a prospective client approaches a law practice with an issue that is beyond the firm's areas of practice, firm management has an important decision to make. How the firm's management handles these unanticipated opportunities can turn what may have been a one-time referral fee into something much larger and more important.

Ideally, when a client emails, calls or visits to discuss their issue, an attorney at the firm has the necessary experience to tackle the client's problem. However, owners and partners at small and medium law firms understand that they may not be able to help every potential client. In large part, this is because law firms have grown increasingly specialized.



Over the past several decades, the practice of law has changed dramatically. While it used to be that any attorney with solid analytical skills could learn to solve even the most complex legal issues, that is not necessarily the case in today's environment.

The concern is not that the law is any more complicated or difficult to understand than it used to be. By and large, the legal framework that judges and juries use to resolve cases remains essentially unchanged. What changed the practice of law is that today's legal questions often require a very specialized base of knowledge.

Scientific, technological and medical advancements affect almost every area of the law. For example, in personal injury cases, doctors today have a much better grasp of what can cause certain symptoms and illnesses. Similarly, in DUI cases, scientists have a greater understanding of how the human body metabolizes drugs and alcohol.

While both of these issues would typically necessitate an expert witness, an expert is only as good as the attorney conducting direct examination. Thus, attorneys who handle complex cases must command a knowledge of the underlying subject to best handle the case. Only certain attorneys can devote the time and energy necessary to develop true mastery of these niche practice areas.

Many law firms choose to serve a niche clientele. Of course, running a boutique practice allows attorneys to become well-respected experts in that area.

Doing so is also time-consuming, and typically requires either extensive experience or a foundational education. Thus, the barriers to entry into niche practice areas tend to be high. Moreover, firms that cultivate a boutique image may be artificially limiting their client base.

More commonly, law firms cast a wide net, offering a range of services that clients frequently require. This wide-net theory values volume over depth of knowledge in any one practice area. These firms can handle a wide range of legal issues. However, occasionally, a client brings a case that, while tangentially related to a firm's practice area, is not something that the firm has extensive experience handling. Here is where the firm has an important decision to make.

Traditionally, law firms choose between one of two options when approached by a potential client that presents an unfamiliar legal issue. The firm can put in the work necessary to learn that area of law or the client can be referred to another law firm (potentially for a referral fee).

However, a third, hybrid option is increasing in popularity. By strategically collaborating with highly specialized practices, law firms with a more general area of practice can monetize a broad range of opportunities, while simultaneously forging valuable relationships and offering an exceptional level service to the client.

Option #1: Learning the new area or sub-area of the law

"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." Benjamin Franklin's assessment of the value of personal growth is as accurate today as it ever was.

However, in the context of managing a law practice, this piece of wisdom could be refined or clarified. Considering the amount of effort needed to get up to speed in a specialized practice area, and the low frequency with which these cases may

> **Through strategic collaboration with specialized practices, law firms can maximize the value of each client interaction, even when the client's issues are beyond the firm's areas of practice.**

come through the door, it may not be worth an attorney's time to learn an unfamiliar area of law. Niche practices offer services catered to a small, specialized section of the population. If a niche gets overcrowded, it may be a long wait in between clients.

Option #2: The traditional hands-off referral of the client to another firm

Most practices have relationships with other firms in their city and may have an agreement to receive a fee when a client is referred. Referring a client to a talented colleague who can help resolve their issue often results in the client developing a deep sense of trust in the referring attorney. At the same time, an attorney may be able to make a small percentage of the legal fees.

Of course, referral fees are governed by local rules of professional conduct and are not permissible in every area of practice. But generally, a one-time referral fee is available. However, in most cases, after the referring attorney introduces their client to the firm that will be handling the case, the referring attorney's involvement in the case ends.

While referrals monetize potential clients, who may otherwise be lost, referring a client to another attorney leaves potential profit on the table. Rather than investing in knowledge of a new practice area or referring a client to another law firm and stepping aside, firms may maximize their returns by investing in a different type of knowledge.

By researching and fostering relationships with the top national firms in specialized practice areas, local practitioners can form invaluable partnerships and may also earn a greater share of any potential award. Additionally, this may be an opportunity for the local firm to gain insight into a very specialized area of the law.

Collaboration at work: *Philadelphia personal injury law firm assists in $80 million product liability lawsuit*

A recent example of how a law firm can capitalize on an unanticipated opportunity is a product liability case handled by MyPhillyLawyer and another Philadelphia personal injury law firm.

The case involved a woman who suffered multiple injuries after the erosion of an Ethicon Prolift transvaginal mesh implant she received in 2008 to treat organ prolapse. The woman approached MyPhillyLawyer, explaining that she suffered severe injury as a result of a defective medical product. The firm's attorneys took the case and immediately began gathering all the necessary information and ensuring the critical evidence was preserved.

After MyPhillyLawyer had put a considerable amount of work into the case, the firm decided to partner with Kline & Specter, the country's premier litigation firm for transvaginal mesh litigation. Partners of each firm met regularly and worked together throughout the pre-trial and trial process. At the culmination of the six-week trial, the jury awarded their client $80 million in damages.

The Philadelphia transvaginal mesh case is just one example of a situation in which a smaller, well-respected law firm was able to benefit from collaborating with a nationally recognized firm that had specialized knowledge and experience that was necessary to the client's case.

Examples of these opportunities are common and will be more easily identifiable once a firm opens up to the idea. As the practice of law continues to change, a law firm's ability to maximize the value of every potential client will be crucial to the firm's bottom line.

Strategic collaboration is one way to fully monetize each case while maintaining a focus on attorney development, the firm's goodwill and on providing the client with an exceptional level of service.

- Tony Chiaramonte

THE COMPLETE WEBSITE LAUNCH ASSEMBLY GUIDE

A successful website launch is critical for your firm's business development, and with all the moving parts, it is easy to miss important steps. Avoid the mistakes that countless developers have learned the hard way by following an established checklist.

If your firm has taken on a website redesign project, you have likely invested a considerable amount of time and money into the effort. You have carefully considered how your site can serve your potential clients and your business development goals.

You need your new site to be an effective introduction to your firm and a productive first touch point for visitors who may need legal services. After all of the hard work, you do not want missed, critical details to undermine your launch. Who better to take advice from than developers who have taken on countless launches first-hand. The following checklist will help your firm answer the question:

How do we put all the pieces together?

CONTENT

Content is one of the few ranking factors Google openly discusses and for which it provides concrete advice in its Webmaster Guidelines. Google looks, among other things, for quality content when deciding whether a page is relevant to a given search query. A page will suffer if content is not helpful, clearly written, unique and free of errors. Before launching a site, always:

Check for typos. Even if copy has already been edited, it must be edited again thoroughly before launch. Typos can be missed in initial edits or introduced during page building. And a single typo can unnecessarily tarnish any firm's credibility.

> Whatever your view on the Oxford Comma, stick to your established internal rules about its treatment site-wide – either use it or do not.

Check for consistency in grammar and voice. Pick a set of guidelines: AP, Chicago Style or a combination of your own, and use them faithfully. Whatever your view on the Oxford Comma, stick to your established internal rules about its treatment site-wide — either use it or do not.

Make sure the you are using first, second and third person consistently. This is especially true if more then one writer has been working on your website copy. Finally, look for regularity in capitalization, particularly in headlines and sub heads, and in words, like US vs. U.S. or Website vs. web site.

Remove test copy and images. Sometimes programmers upload placeholder content to test layout elements. Make sure all test copy has been replaced with the approved version.

ON-SITE SEO

Some SEO tactics like link-building and press outreach occur off-site. Others involve adjustments to on-page elements and site code. Ensure you have a strong foundation for all types of ongoing SEO efforts by checking your on-site SEO before launch.

Write title and description tags. Your page title displays as the heading in your search result listing, and the meta description is the text that shows directly underneath this title heading. Your title and description should be unique and relevant to each page. If you are using WordPress, popular plugins like All in One SEO Pack will ensure each page has a title and description even if you do not manually enter one.

Even if you choose to use a plugin, take the time to optimize the title and description tags for your most important pages yourself.

> Image tags provide information for users and search engines. Every image on your site should have relevant alt and title tags.

Check image tags. Alt and title attributes help optimize images and increase page accessibility. Image tags are used to display pictures online, and the image tag can be given attributes. A simple example would look like this:

```
<img src=“photo.jpg” alt=“photo
description” title=“tooltip text”>
```

Or, fully filled out:

```
<img src=“BLF_Magazine.jpg”
alt=“Bigger Law Firm Magazine
August 2019 | ISSN 2163-2464
59” title=“Cover of August 2019
Bigger Law Firm Magazine”>
```

A screen reader will read the copy contained within the quotations of the alt tag. And a tooltip will display the text contained within the quotations after the title tag when a user hovers over the image. Both tags provide helpful information to users and search engines. Every image on your site should have relevant alt and title tags.

Check schema markup. Schema markup is code that tells search engines what type of information is being displayed, and it helps them display rich result listings. Schema, for example, can identify reviews, schedules and contact information, among many other things. When you see a search listing with, for example, five stars under the title, a date listed for an event or even a series of step-by-step instructions, the additional information in those listings is being displayed because it is marked up correctly using Schema code.

Make sure that you are using schema where necessary and test for errors to ensure it is being read correctly. An engaging rich result can encourage a higher click-through rate.

Verify NAP visibility and accuracy. NAP stands for name, address and phone number. Google looks at NAP information to help confirm your site's trustworthiness, and visitors need this information to contact you. Your firm's NAP should be visible and consistent on all pages, and it should always be the same on external websites and profile listings as well.

Check calls to action. Using effective calls to action is both an SEO tactic and a conversion booster. First, test to ensure all call to action links are working. Then, make sure your calls to action are varied. Some may be calls to contact the firm while others might be suggested reading or downloads. These types of internal links help keep readers engaged and on your site, and they provide useful context for search engines.

Calls to action can both encourage visitors to contact you and provide suggested internal links to help keep them on your pages and build trust and authority.

Test page speed. Google has a page speed testing tool, which both gives your site a speed score and offers suggestions about how to speed up load times. Use it, and follow its recommendations. Slow page loads are bad for SEO and for users.

TRACKING AND FORMS

The only way to know whether your website is performing the way you need it to is through careful monitoring. You should know, for example, whether your pages are moving up or down in search results, and for which queries. You also need to be able to track visitors and evaluate whether those visitors are completing any goals you have set for them. Looking at raw data about your pages will help you get ahead of any issues and adjust your tactics before you lose too much traffic or see a sharp drop in website conversions.

Install Analytics code. Google Analytics is the most ubiquitous and arguably the most useful tracking tool currently available. Once you have a Google Analytics account, your development team can install a piece of tracking code onto each page template, which allows Google to see data for each page and summarize that data in dashboard reports.

Google Analytics also lets you track the performance of pay-per-click campaigns, showing you which landing pages are performing and what ad language is working, as well as tracking your bid costs ad cost per conversion.

Remember, there are no secret tricks to SEO. Your team should make all of your data available to you and should be open about answering questions about website performance.

Unfortunately, there can be a steep learning curve with Analytics. It is worth the investment to hire a marketing company to help monitor your website results and make recommendations based on tracking data. Remember: there are no secret tricks to SEO. Your team should make all of your data available to you and be open about answering questions about site performance.

Test your forms. There are several reasons a visitor might abandon a form. Users may feel the form is asking for too much information they are not yet comfortable sharing. Or, the form may have non-obvious formatting requirements for input like phone numbers, leading to unnecessary and frustrating error messages. Test all forms to ensure that:

- Error messages are obvious and errors are easy to fix
- Correct formatting for inputs is clearly stated
- The form submits successfully and to correct email addresses
- The user is taken to a thank you page that encourages further reading and explains what to expect from your firm

People also expect immediate confirmation that something has happened after submitting a form. You may not be able to respond minutes after a submission, therefore you should have an autoresponder set so that users understand their form submission was successful.

Consider installing a live chat. An online chat can provide helpful user data in addition to connecting you with potential clients. A live chat can tell you when people are most likely to contact you and what types of questions they are asking.

You may find that some valuable leads as unexpected questions about topics you could include in your SEO strategy. Conversely, you may also find that your live chat is attracting non-viable leads, in which case an adjustment in marketing strategy may be in order.

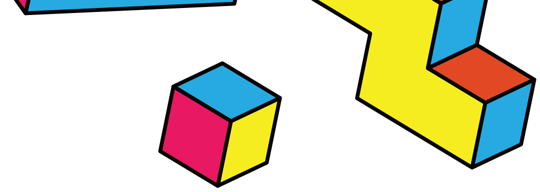
LINKS

A broken link will shut down a potential client's progress immediately. Broken links are frustrating, and they negatively affect a site's reputation.

Scour for broken links. All links must be working, both in the sense that they take the user to another page and that the information on that page is relevant.

Good internal linking is essential to a positive user experience, and internal links help provide search engines with necessary context to better understand your pages.

If your site uses WordPress, you can install a broken link checker plugin, which will run in the background continuously. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) also provides a tool with which you can enter your site's url to have the pages crawled for link errors.



Make sure links are obvious and clickable on all devices. Important links, like contact or download buttons, should be obvious focal points on your pages. All links, including buttons, should have enough contrast in color between the link and the surrounding text for users to see and know what text is linked.

Finally, take device size and functionality into consideration. Handheld devices do not offer the same hover-state feedback desktop devices can. Textual links can be difficult to see and click on smartphones; therefore your pages should include a mix of in-page textual links and easily clickable buttons.

404 PAGES

Even the most diligent link checking may miss broken links. Time and site updates can also create broken links. Because link perfection is difficult to maintain, always have a fallback in the form of a good 404 page.

> A search function is a must on a 404 page. It encourages the user to continue on your site and proves you want people to find the information they need.

A 404 page can take what would be a frustration and turn it into a way to keep users engaged. A 404 page can offer additional reading, links to popular articles or pages, a search function and a contact function.

A search function is a must on a 404 page. It encourages users to continue on your site and proves you want people to find the information they need. Without a search function, a potential client's journey could come to a premature end.

> A broken link will shut down a potential client's progress immediately. Broken links are frustrating, and they negatively affect a site's reputation.

IMAGES

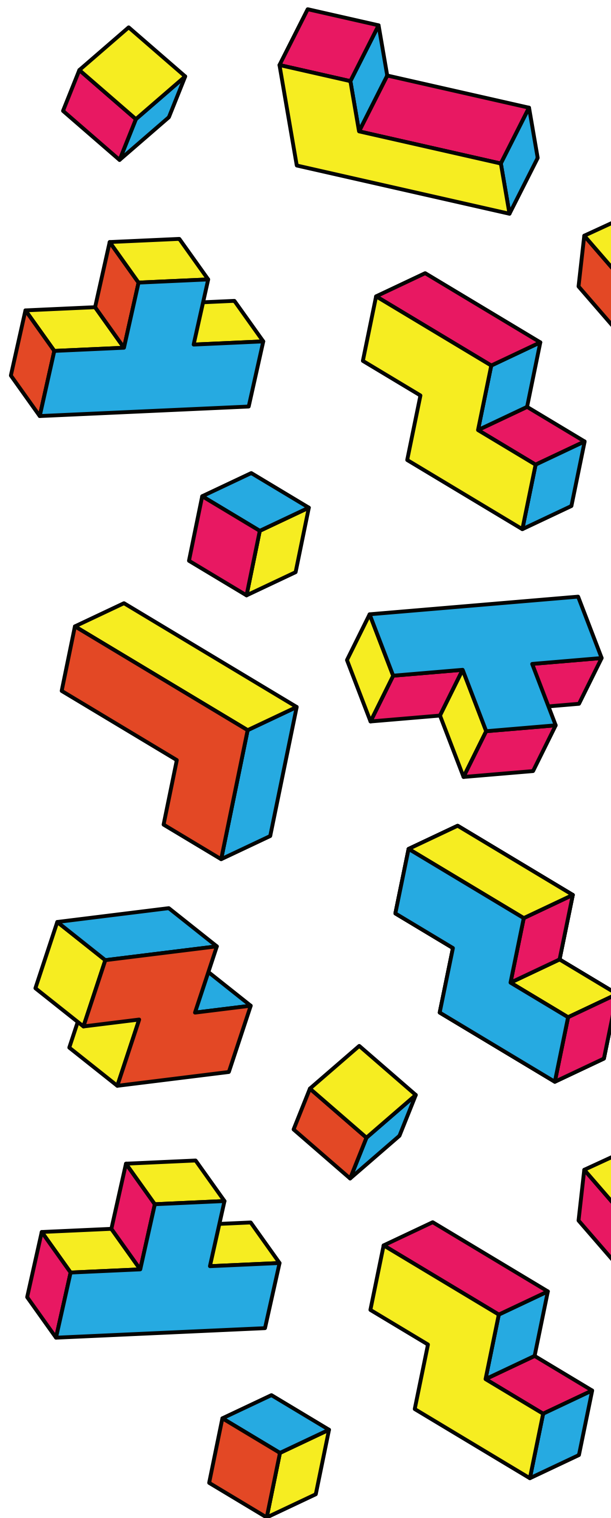
Images show off your team and professionalism, make your website look great and help users connect with you. However, images can also make pages load slowly, causing user frustration and potentially harming SEO. Images should be optimized to use the fewest number of bytes while also looking good on all devices.

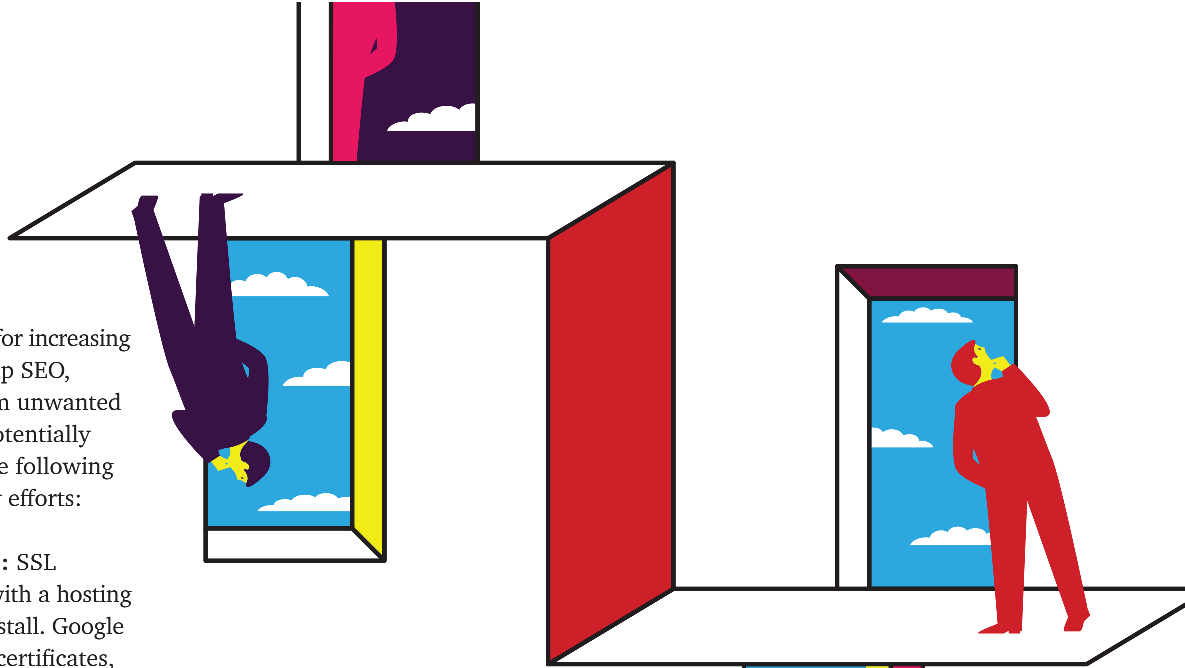
> Blurry, pixelated images reduce your website's credibility, while large images diminish user experience. You are looking for the optimal balance between size and quality.

What is image optimization?
Image optimization reduces file sizes without sacrificing quality. Images should be cropped to an appropriate size before upload and exported from Photoshop for web use. Even properly exported images can use more bandwidth than necessary. Online tools like Compressor.io can significantly reduce the size of already optimized images.

STYLE

More than one person may update your site, and everyone should use the same style conventions. Check that you have a stylesheet that defines header tags, blockquote styles, styles for bulleted lists and other recurring elements. A thorough style guide will set the best foundation for future work.





SECURITY

A secure website is a must for increasing user confidence, shoring up SEO, preventing headaches from unwanted intrusions and stopping potentially harmful breaches. Take the following steps to maximize security efforts:

Install an SSL certificate: SSL certificates are often free with a hosting package and are easy to install. Google also favors sites with SSL certificates, and having one will prevent users from seeing frightening security errors.

Install security plugins: WordPress is used widely enough that several well-supported security plugins are available, like Wordfence and Malcare.

Protect against spam: Comment spam is a nuisance, and bad actors can use unprotected comments to inject unwanted code. Install an anti-spam program like Askimet to monitor comments.

Secure passwords: Database and website logins should all be encrypted and stored in a secure location.

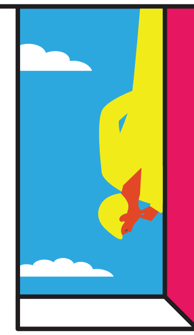
REVIEW THE BASICS

Immediately before launch, make sure to review easily missed items that can derail website success. These include:

Ensure pages are being indexed. Google has to be able to see a page in order to crawl it. Most developers will disable indexing during website development so that Google does not index incomplete pages or test pages. It is easy to miss the step of enabling indexing and preventing Google from being able to see and rank your pages.

Check sitemaps. You should have a public sitemap page for users and an XML sitemap for search engines.

> Some people will take the time to click around and find what they are looking for and others will abandon a site in frustration.



Install a broken link checker. Find a broken link plugin that will notify you when links are no longer valid.

Test website search function. A robust search is a critical user experience tool. Some people will take the time to click around and find what they are looking for and others will abandon a site in frustration if they are not immediately served. Search should be easy to find on every page and should return relevant results.

Install a favicon image. The favicon is the small image that appears to the left of the url at the top of a webpage. A favicon is not critical to a website's function, however it adds a touch of authority and professionalism and reinforces your firm's branding.

Update admin email. Make sure notifications are being sent to the correct email address.

Check URL structure. A content management system will usually name pages with a series of numbers, which represent a page ID. These urls are difficult for users to remember, and they tell Google nothing about the information on the page. Change the url structure so that it is descriptive.

Backup your site. Always backup immediately before launch.

TEST, TEST AND TEST

Testing should begin during development, continue through pre-launch and extend indefinitely once a site is live. Test your site across as many devices as possible. At this point, new sites should be developed using responsive design. Google has been recommending responsive design as its preferred method for cross-platform compatibility for several years.

People make checklists for all sorts of things that are far less important than a website launch. More care should be given to this process than you would the ritual of grocery shopping. Follow a plan to ensure your launch goes well and your stress levels stay low.

- Kristen Friend

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

JULY - SEPTEMBER | 2019

$

280 MILLION

BUTLER WOOTEN & PEAK

AUGUST 2019

JURY AWARD IN WRONGFUL DEATH CASE

In a recent accident case involving the deaths of five people, a jury returned a verdict of $280 million after about only 45 minutes of deliberation.

Specifically, the case involved the death of Judy Madere, who was sitting in the back seat of the car when a tractor-trailer entered their lane, causing a head-on collision. The award included $150 million for the life of Judy Madere, plus $30 million for her pain and suffering. It included an additional $100 million in punitive damages and $65,000 in attorney fees.

The at-fault driver worked for the Georgia-based trucking company Schnitzer Southeast, which admitted liability for the driver's negligence. Schnitzer Southeast's parent company, Schnitzer Steel Industries of Portland would not admit responsibility.

Attorney Brandon Peak believes, "the verdict was a reflection of the quality of our client as much as the mean spirited nature of the defense. Not a single time did the defense apologize for the wreck or for taking Judy Madere's life. Not a single time."

$

4.1 MILLION

JAVERBAUM WURGAFT HICKS KAHN WIKSTROM & SININS

AUGUST 2019

SETTLEMENT IN BUS ACCIDENT CASE

A paraplegic man was hit by a bus while beginning to cross an Atlantic City street on a green light. The plaintiff, Eder Francisco Urbina-Mejia, was going in the same direction as the commercial bus, and both were stopped at a red light. When the light turned green, Urbina-Mejia took his right of way and began crossing the street, when the bus took a left turn, hitting him.

Urbina-Mejia spent six weeks in two different hospitals while recovering from the accident. He had been visiting New Jersey, and spend the last four weeks of his hospitalization at University of Wisconsin Medical Center after returning home.

The suit named the driver, Gaskill, as negligent along with Starr Transit Co., his employer and owner of the bus.

Ultimately, the claims against Starr Transit were dismissed as part of the settlement. Urbina-Mejia and Gaskill underwent mediation proceedings, which culminated in the $4.1 million settlement. Urbina-Mejia will be paid by Starr Transit's insurance carrier.

USE FORM & CHAT *DATA TO* IMPROVE SEO

Data collected by Chatbots can be helpful. The information can help enhance marketing campaigns and be used to improve search engine optimization (SEO) efforts. Cooperation and collaboration between the groups performing these functions can result in more effective marketing, culminating in more clients.

Bringing in new clients and keeping existing clients is essential to the survival of a law firm. Law firms handle the process in different ways:

1) Traditional methods of having a receptionist field incoming calls, answer simple questions, and transfer callers to a particular attorney or legal assistant for more information.

2) Hiring a company to conduct an SEO campaign to get more traffic to the firm's website by improving the firm's ranking on a search engine results page (SERP).

3) Purching a Chatbot to gather information from potential clients.

4) Including a contact form on the website and inviting potential clients to fill it out with case information.

The information gathered from these sources tells firms about potential clients, how they found them and what types of legal services they need.

Attracting potential clients
From Chabot conversations, live chats and contact forms, you can determine whether those contacting you are potential clients. For example, if a personal injury firm is receiving calls about estate planning and wills, the firm needs to take a serious look at hiring an SEO company to drive the right users and callers to the firm.

An SEO agency can use the information a law firm gets from chats and forms to analyze the effectiveness of its campaign. It can modify keywords to match the language used by potential clients. For example, what words does someone looking for a lawyer to represent them in an accident involving a tractor trailer use? Is it "big rig accident," "18-wheeler crash" or "trucking accident?"

The information gathered by chats and forms can also be incorporated into blogs and practice area pages. The SEO firm can drive more potential clients to the firm's website, so the Chatbot or live person does not interact with callers or internet users that the firm cannot help.

Learn about potential clients
Chatbots can gather insights about a website's users. For example, you can program a Chatbot to track how many site visitors become clients. You can collect information on the types of questions asked and the services sought. You can use this information in determining a marketing strategy, allowing you to manage your budget better.

From the questions asked by callers or taken by Chatbots, you get a good idea of what content is most helpful to clients and potential clients. A personal injury firm may get several calls or inquiries about vehicle recalls or see a spike in a particular type of accident, such as motorcycle crashes. Topical information gathered from chats can be used to expand your SEO efforts. Develop a video to address a popular topic, or create a long-form page on the subject. Place an FAQ page on you website to address questions. Adding blogs and informational pieces to your site will give it authority, helping improve you rankings.

Increase usability
The appearance and utility of your firm's website are important. A high SERP ranking can increase traffic, but a poorly constructed or hard-to-use website can result in the potential client bouncing to another firm's site. The information gained from a Chatbot can alert the firm to a problem with their website. A user may say certain information was hard to find or report that something was not on a site even though it was.

Your website needs to be easy to navigate. If users can locate information quickly, they are less likely to become frustrated and leave the site. The longer the user stays on a site, the more likely they are to convert.

Using client reviews and testimonials
Your can use reviews and testimonials gathered through Chatbots, live chats, emails or other communications to build trust. Good reviews can improve a firm's SERP ranking. Google assumes that it can trust a firm if the majority of the firm's clients rate it highly.

Good client reviews will help Google understand that the firm's clients identify the firm with certain keywords and start ranking the firm's website higher for those as well. The firm's marketing department or outside vendor can place reviews and testimonials on the firm's website or upload videos of satisfied clients. Potential clients react positively to reading or hearing about success stories.

Generate backlinks
Chatbots and live chats can also be used to generate backlinks. By knowing what potential and existing clients are interested in, a law firm can create blogs, FAQs and videos on hot button issues. Bloggers and reporters may reference the firm's informational pieces and include links to the law firm's site. The backlinks create more traffic and help rankings.

Making Chatbots more effective
You can use information from a Chatbot and live conversations to make the Chatbot more effective. For example, you can determine how many people booked a consultation and why or why not. The user may respond that they had inadequate information, a problem you can fix.

> Chatbots gather insights about a website's users. For example, you can program a Chatbot to track how many site visitors become clients. You can collect information on the types of questions asked and the services sought.

Chatbot logs may show a common question that has no scripted answer. To solve this, you can add the answer to the Chatbot script and your website, perhaps on an FAQ page.

Use surveys to get information
You can use Chatbot and other communication sources, like emails, to conduct surveys. Ask multiple-choice questions, like how often the respondent employs a lawyer and what type of legal services they need. You can also conduct client surveys after the representation ends. The firm may get reviews or testimonials to use in its SEO and marketing campaigns.

Mine available information
Phone calls, Chatbots, emails, letters, contact forms and surveys can be useful in marketing and SEO efforts. Mine this information to improve keyword usage in an SEO campaign, to gain reviews and testimonials, and to learn what questions potential and existing clients want answered. Making the best use of this information is just one more way a law firm can attract new clients and retain existing clients.

- Virginia Mayo

LAWYER SPOTLIGHT

Jason Elrich

A person's work forms a big part of their identity. As an employment law attorney with a practice in San Francisco, California, Jason Erlich has a deep understanding of the disruption that work issues can cause to one's life. He has dedicated his legal career to advocating for employees who have suffered injustice and illegal treatment in the workplace.

MR. ERLICH shared his experiences in the legal field in a Q and A with *Bigger Law Firm Magazine (BLF)* — from the latest trends in his practice area to what inspired him to pursue employment law.

Mr. Erlich grew up in Oakland, California. While he is an avid traveler, he has called the Bay Area home for most of his life. From a young age, he was cognizant of the challenges people face in the workplace and how they can feel powerless when their employer engages in wrongdoing. Mr. Erlich's early work experiences shaped the nature of his current law practice at McCormack & Erlich. Before becoming an employment law attorney, he worked as a union organizer who strived to protect the rights of public-sector employees.

Mr. Erlich attended Hastings College of the Law after graduating magna cum laude from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1994. He was admitted to the California Bar in 1999. Mr. Erlich is also a member of the California Employment Lawyers Association. In 2019 he was selected to the Super Lawyers® list.

As a partner and attorney at McCormack & Erlich, Mr. Erlich represents employees in a wide variety of cases, including wrongful termination, sexual harassment, discrimination, and wage and overtime violations, among other types of workplace disputes. Many people who have experienced workplace mistreatment feel helpless due to a lack of control over their circumstances. Mr. Erlich is passionate about helping his clients replace their vulnerability with a sense of empowerment, whether they have lost their job due to whistleblowing or faced disability discrimination.

Mr. Erlich's commitment to protecting the rights of employees is reflected not only in around two decades of experience in the legal industry but also in the work he undertakes in his local community. He volunteers at the nonprofit Legal Aid at Work — Workers' Rights Clinic as well as the Bar Association of San Francisco's Justice & Diversity Center, where he assists low-income tenants who are at risk of eviction. Mr. Erlich also handles pro bono cases as part of the federal court's legal assistance project.

Throughout his legal career, Mr. Erlich has not hesitated in helping employees take on large companies and entities such as the California Highway Patrol. He discusses his recent multimillion-dollar verdict against the law enforcement agency and more with *BLF* here.

Lawyer Spotlight (BLF):
Who or what inspired you to pursue a career in law and employment law in particular?

JASON ERLICH (JE):
My interest in employment law goes back to college when I had a minor emphasis in labor studies. Growing up, I heard many war stories about incredible courtroom battles by Bay Area greats like Charles Garry, Tony Serra and Melvin Belli.

As an attorney who handles cases of workplace mistreatment, what is the most valuable thing you do for your clients?

JE:
Give them a voice. The most successful employment plaintiffs want to tell their story and be heard.

Tell us about some of your law firm's recent wins and case highlights.

JE:
In July of this year, we won a jury verdict of **$3.8 million** for a California Highway Patrol officer who was wrongfully terminated after taking medical leave to care for his mentally ill sister. The bottom line was

> [I help] give [my clients] a voice. The most successful employment plaintiffs want to tell their story and be heard.

that he was retaliated against for leaving work on short notice due to a family emergency. He notified his superior, but the nature of the situation did not give him time to fill out all the paperwork. The higher-ups resented him for doing that, but the law allows workers to leave work for an unforeseeable family emergency — as the jury agreed.

We also obtained $1.95 million in a class-action settlement for a group of brand ambassadors against a major multinational beverage company. The company required them to show up early, attend training, report to a warehouse to pick up promotional kits, drive back and forth between events, and did not pay them for any of this extra time.

What is an interesting trend happening right now related to your practice area?

JE:
Employers seem to be using "reorganization" or "budget" as excuses to terminate employees. Many of our clients who have protested illegal behavior, taken protected medical leave or faced discrimination, are being let go under the reorganization or budget cutback excuse. I expect this trend will continue.

For attorneys who have been practicing law for a long time, there is a risk of becoming complacent or losing interest. What keeps you motivated, and how do you maintain a fresh outlook on what you do?

JE:
I feel that employment law is a dynamic field, with new cases and statutory changes constantly happening, especially here in California. Staying up to date with the changing law keeps me motivated and interested in employment law.

The class-action case we handled with the brand ambassadors is a good example. Most employment law is written with traditional 9-to-5 jobs in mind, but the "gig economy" has changed all that, and the law sometimes struggles to keep pace with the changes in our culture.

What tools are essential in helping you achieve success in running your law practice?

JE:
Perspective. Taking the bigger, 30,000-foot view. It is very easy to get into the details or minutiae of cases. Taking a big step back from the microscopic view to take in the overall picture gives me a better and clearer understanding of what is important and what isn't.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

JE:
Find out what the jury wants to know and give it to them.

What is something your clients would be surprised to learn about you?

JE:
I had a minor role in an opera production back in college. Apparently, my legal skills are better than my operatic ability.

Lastly, on a personal note, how do you like to spend your time when you are not practicing law?

JE:
I'm a big outdoor fanatic — biking, hiking, skiing in the winter, anytime I can get outside, I'll do it.

- Dipal Parmar

Stale Content? REOPTIMIZE NOW & BOOST your SEO

As the adage goes, you should work smarter, not harder. Refreshing stale content is one way to do just that.

Anyone interested in SEO knows that no one magic bullet will guarantee high-ranking content and increased traffic. The way users interact with content online and how it is presented to them by Google is always in flux, and it can feel impossible to get ahead of the curve.

It is easy to get overwhelmed with rank when content creation is at an all-time high. The amount of information produced has far surpassed the amount consumed, so it is imperative to stand out.

One way to do that without continually creating new content is to reoptimize your existing content so that it attracts and holds new reader interest. Reoptimization takes a fraction of the amount of work it takes to create something new.

As the adage goes, you should work smarter, not harder. Refreshing stale content is one way to do just that.

Keep things fresh

"Freshness" is one of the many factors that Google uses to determine the quality of content and how high in the search engine results pages (SERPs) a site should rank. What makes content fresh?

Unfortunately, there is no easy way around actually doing the work to freshen content. Google's algorithms and your readers are too smart to be tricked by just changing the date on an old post and nothing else. Improve content noticeably and meaningfully.

Fresh content is relevant and current. It is not just recently, or frequently published content as these are not mutually exclusive and easily confused.

For example, a personal injury law firm could publish a series of blog posts on bicycle safety with posts every day for a week. If all the laws and sources cited in those blog posts are from 1997 though, the content does not qualify as fresh, even if it was published yesterday.

Some topics, such as legal marketing, require less updating than others, like current events, because they are inherently less dynamic. However, it is always important to be mindful of freshness and keep content up to date to maintain topical authority and accuracy.

Do your research

The first step to optimizing old content is to determine what you have to work with and what is worth your attention.

Assess which pages perform well and which do not by taking a deep dive into the analytical data provided by Google and other services. Look at the number of clicks a page gets as well as the click-through rate. You want readers to find your content and read through it to see what it is about, so take note of what content does both.

You should also look at how your content, and your competitor's content, is showing up in search engine results pages from the perspective of potential clients. If you are not in those coveted top spots in the results pages, then who is and why?

Once you see what users prefer, you can determine how to address what they no longer connect with. There are a few types of content on which to focus your optimization efforts, as it is more often successfully updated:

- Content with out-of-date information
- Content with a lot of links and shares on social media
- Content on topics people always care about
- Content on page two of search results

Make content current

Current content is the key to boosting freshness. Examine older content and be sure that it is current, correct and aesthetically pleasing. Update any statistics based on old studies or outdated references.

If there is newer research or information available on the subject, use it and note the change. This shows both your readers and Google that you have taken the time to stay on top of things.

While you are working on the information itself, take care of technical updating too.

Correct any wayward spelling and grammar mistakes. Remove broken links (use free tools like brokenlinkcheck.com to find them). Switch out old pictures for new ones that are also up to date. Diversify the media elements by including audio and video elements where appropriate. Rewrite the title to reflect your message better.

REUSE, RENEW REOPTIMIZE

Refreshing old content saves time and money while producing definitive results for your SEO efforts.

MOVE UP

The first five results on Google get 68 percent of clicks. This may sound hopeless, there is good news. When content is on page two, it likely only needs to improve slightly to move up onto page one.

BACKLINKS RULE

When you update your content to reflect the most current information available and put it out to subscribers, you are establishing yourself as an authority on the subject and generating new interest and shares.

FRESHNESS MATTERS

"Freshness" is one of the many factors that Google uses to determine the quality of content and how high in the search engine results pages (SERPs) a site should rank. Fresh content is relevant, current and updated.

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Unfortunately, there is no easy way around actually doing the work to freshen content. Google's algorithms and your readers are too smart to be tricked by just changing the date on an old post and nothing else. Improve content noticeably and meaningfully. Then share it as if it were new.

Everything links back to backlinks
Backlinks heavily influence rank. The number of links a page has will stick with it even after it is refreshed, so working with something that had a lot of splash when it was initially posted gives it some SEO heft.

When you update your content to reflect the most current information available and put it out to subscribers, you are establishing yourself as an authority on the subject and generating new interest and shares. The more links you get, the higher the content ranks. Increased organic traffic to your content naturally follows.

Keywords are key
Another way to improve content based on research is to discover other frequently searched keywords related to your content and then use them to your advantage. A tool like TextOptimizer can help you find popular words and phrases that relate to your keyword while Serpstat shows which keywords your competitors use to rank well. You can then incorporate them into your existing content to capture new clicks.

Keywords can also help you decide what content to update. Using a tool like Google Trends, you can search for a keyword and see its search history over time. If it trends up, it would be a great topic to focus on refreshing and expanding.

Anything you have already published on that topic has the potential to become evergreen or timeless, and relevant. Keep it simple and useful, and it should perform sustainably for your firm.

Long-form content is gaining steam with consumers, and quality content with higher word count (2,000 words plus) ranks well. Use the keywords you are missing to guide your expansion of old content into long-forms, and you will likely see more user engagement with your pages.

Moving up
Users very rarely venture off page one of search results. In fact, they hardly go halfway down that first page. The first five results on Google get 68 percent of clicks. Results on pages two and three get a measly six percent.

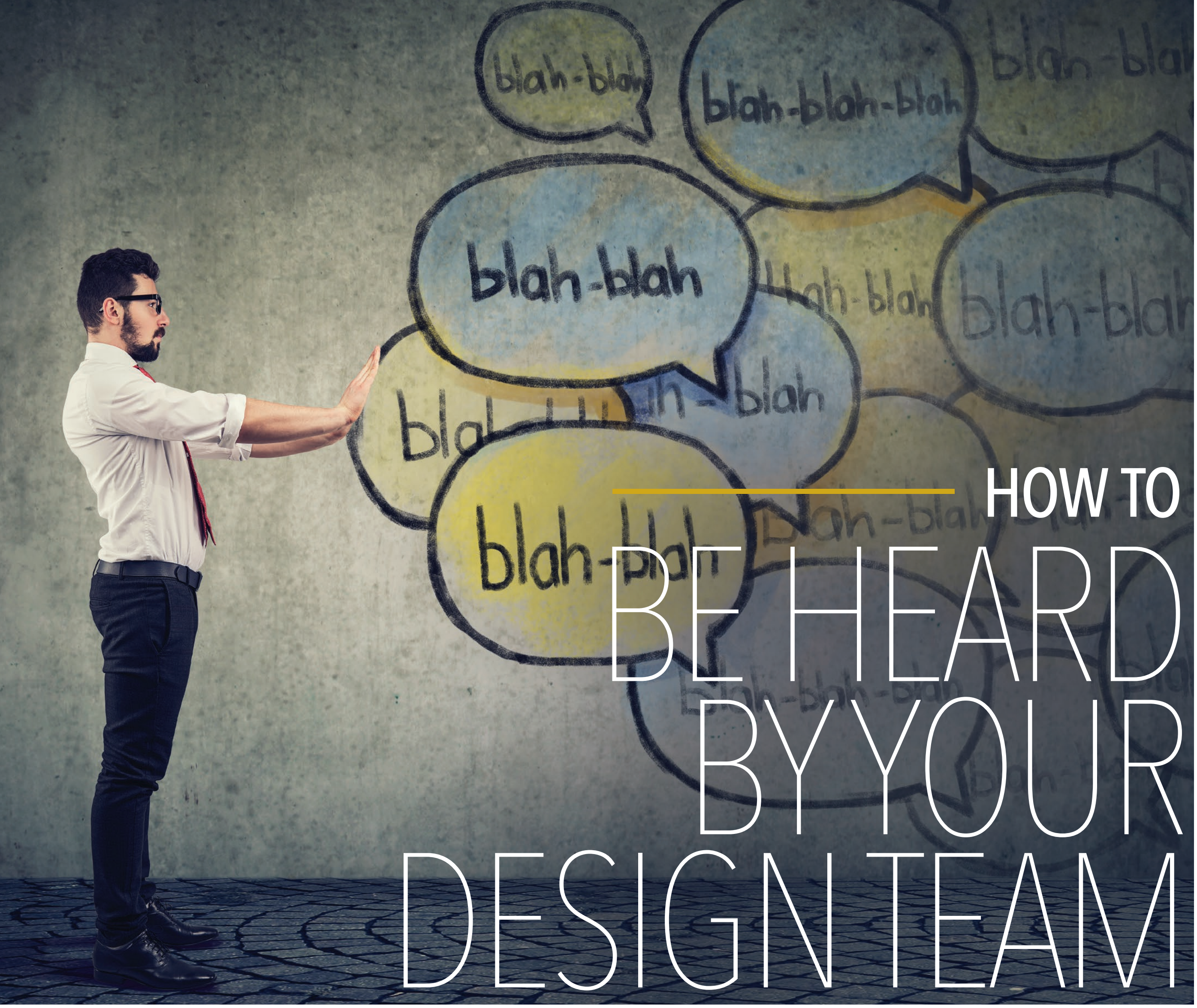
While this may sound hopeless, there is good news. When content is on page two, it likely only needs to improve slightly to move up into page one real estate and gain a ton of organic traffic.

All the content optimization roads converge here. Refreshing older pages is the only chance they have to rank on page one.

Optimizing your content and time
Optimizing content is a daunting task. SEO has so many moving parts that it is almost impossible to know what will work best. Evaluating your existing content and improving it is a great place to start.

Figure out which type of content and topics do well for your practice and do more in those areas. Find what you are not doing yet and start. There is no need to reinvent the wheel by always creating new content. Optimize your old content, and in time, you will see results.

- Mandy Wakely



HOW TO BE HEARD BY YOUR DESIGN TEAM

Launching a design project should be an enjoyable experience. You probably have exciting ideas in mind and are looking forward to creatively improving your brand. Being able to best communicate these ideas with a designer will keep everything moving forward smoothly.

While new ventures can be exciting, they can also be daunting. There are many unknowns: you are trusting your brand to professionals outside your firm, and there is a possibility that your project will hit a roadblock and come to a screeching halt. This can be frustrating to you and your designer. Both parties are trying in good faith to do what is best for your firm, even if it seems like you are speaking different languages.

The good news is that barriers to progress can easily be avoided with clear communication and understanding between you and your design team.

Discussing design

Creating an effective design — whether for a business card or a large website — involves many steps, some in common and some unique to the individual project. At their core, however, all design projects are about solving a problem. That problem may be how best to articulate your firm's personality and promise through the layout of a small card, or it may be how to create an accessible website that produces valuable leads.

Good design in any case will make the solution look obvious. It will make peoples' interaction with the project easy and enjoyable. Once you and your design team reach an agreement on what problems need to be solved, communication about the actual desired results will be easier. Here are some recommendations on how to improve communication between you and your design team.

> Fortunately, you do not need to know all the design jargon or to speak the same industry language as your designer to keep a project moving. Taking the appropriate preparations and asking questions throughout the entire design process is the best thing you can do.

Communicate from the beginning

Before you start that first design meeting with your team, you will want to be prepared by having answers to these simple questions ready:

What's the problem? The right solution always depends the problem. There could be multiple solutions to your problem, and picking the best one requires digging deep and getting a clear understanding of the root of the problem. You can come up with a list of solutions on your own first, or you can brainstorm together with your design team. Once you have this question answered, that is when you can start thinking about the appearance and design.

What are your goals and expectations? This is where you come up with your SMART goals (specific, measurable, aspirational, realistic and time-bound). Do you need to improve your SEO, boost conversions or reach more customers? Take some time to come up with a list and share it with your team. This will help set realistic expectations and set the tone for the rest of the project.

What are your criteria and guidelines? Answering this question early can help ensure that the design process is smooth. What is a realistic timeline? Is there a budget? Who is assigned roles and tasks? Set practical guidelines and be sure there is some wiggle room for your team to explore creative solutions.

Give specific feedback. Designers love feedback, particularly when it moves a project forward. But not all feedback is constructive. Criticism that is vague or personal can bring progress and cooperation to a standstill. When anyone involved in a project thinks they are not being heard, that party is likely to dig in and become defensive rather than opening to constructive comments.

If your first response to a design is, "Oh no, I don't like this at all," this opinion is of course perfectly valid. Your challenge is to distill the reasons for this reaction into tangible suggestions. Telling a designer that you like or dislike their work can make the critique seem like a judgement, which does not help address the underlying design problem. It also forces the designer to start guessing about your preferences, which is non-productive. Instead, provide solution-oriented feedback that can be discussed and evaluated.

Ask questions. Do not be afraid to ask a lot of questions throughout the process. In fact, designers love questions — just not vague questions. For example, do not simply say, "It's ok, but can you make it pop?" This again forces your designer to read your mind to determine what exactly "pop" means.

Instead, ask questions early and often. By doing this it is more likely that you and your team will be able to come up with the proper solutions. Here is a list of questions to keep in mind when providing feedback:

- What do I like or not like about this design?
- What emotion does this color or font bring up?
- Does this solve my problem?
- Does this serve my purpose?
- Does this help me reach my overall goal?
- Does the solution create other unanticipated problems?

Respond to questions

The biggest design project roadblock is when no one responds to questions. The sooner you or your designer can respond to questions the better.

Provide examples. Remember that even words that seem specific, like "modern" or "traditional," are subjective and may mean something different to your design team than they do to you. Pair subjective statements with samples. If, for example, you would like a design to be more clean, show your design team some websites or relevant materials you think match that description.

Consider looking outside of your industry for examples. You may really like the feel of a restaurant website or a tech magazine, and that feedback can be very helpful. Taking a legal design in a direction others in the industry have not considered can add currency to your firm's brand.

Trust the research. People are notoriously bad at judging human behavior — both the behavior of others and their own. Algorithms are almost always more accurate at predicting behavior because they are based on data not intuition. Telling a designer, "That's just not what my clients will do," removes the ability to test, ask questions and get actionable data about potential client behavior.

Factors that can influence your team's communication

Other factors aside from poor communication can affect the progress of a design project. These include:

1. You are short on time or budget. A big mistake is attempting to pursue a solution that is way outside your scope and resources. Limited time or budget are major constraints for designers. Be honest and realistic about your time and budget to your design team and they will help you figure out a solution that best suits your needs.

2. You focus mistakes instead of improvements. When communicating with your designer, it is important that you can speak and critique freely. However, solely focusing only on what does not work, rather than how can this be improved definitely slows the process. Take the time to really understand why you may not like a feature or design choice and communicate that to your team.

3. You feel forced to criticise. If your superior gives vague feedback to you about the design, you do not have to do the guesswork when relaying the message to the designer. Try to understand your superior's reasoning behind their feedback with simple clarifying questions. This will help your designer better understand your needs.

Do not talk fluff

There are common phrases and questions designers hear that may sound constructive and insightful, but in actuality can be very unproductive. Here is a list of some things not to say to designers:

You are the expert here. Yes, you are paying a designer for their creativity and expertise, and you should trust your designer's judgement. However, setting a designer free with no parameters can unnecessarily extend the process. And making the designer guess adds an unnecessary layer of pressure that can lead to friction.

We do not have finished copy, but can you make the draft first? Any design that effectively accomplishes its goals will be built around copy. Trying to shove content into an existing design does not produce the same results. Also, you may find that once the copy is complete, the design needs to be reworked, which is a waste of time and money.

Can you have this done today? Some simple design modifications may be turned around quickly, but most take thought and time. Ask your designer about the process and realistic time constraints before suggesting a deadline.

Can you use the logo off our website? Your firm should have several versions of your logo, and preferably at least one vector version that can be used at any size. Logos that are optimized for web do not have the resolution needed for print applications. They are often also not transparent, which makes using them in different applications — even different web applications — difficult.

Can you just do something that looks like this? Do not copy. Copying is unethical and can cause legal issues. It is also poor practice from a branding perspective. Your materials should match your firm's personality and be memorable in their own right. Copying will never accomplish this.

I will know what I like when I see it. This statement implies you expect unlimited revisions, which can cause a project to drag on indefinitely. Most designers are happy to make changes until the client is happy, and going through a few rounds of revisions is normal. But making a designer guess indefinitely is not productive for anyone.

Conclusion

Clients and designers who are polite and communicate clearly will get the best results from any project. People are much more driven to succeed when realistic expectations are set, collaboration is smooth and respect is mutual. Negativity is not a motivator. Most designers are happy to explain the design process and the thinking behind their choices. They like to ask questions and discuss the pros and cons of solutions. Any project that involves collaboration will be more successful when all parties feel heard and respected.

- Jessylyn Los Banos

Lawyers know how much time transcription can eat up during the discovery process or in taking a deposition. Hours and days may accumulate on the task, where shortcuts are rarely an option.

TRINT TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES

Since veracity is key to transcriptions, you need as close to 100 percent accuracy as possible in finished files. Because of this, transcription services can be costly, whether done in house or by an outside provider. As voice recognition technology continues to advance dramatically, the need to wait and pay exorbitantly for transcripts is decreasing.

Transcription using AI

Meet Trint,short for transcription and interview according to Founder and CEO Jeff Koffman. Trint uses speech-to-text algorithms to create accurate transcripts in a fraction of the time humans could perform the same task.

Trint offers users the ability to drop audio or video files into its web-based software to be transcribed. Once transcribed, a copy is returned to the lawyer for verification, along with edit and search functions that may be used to update the text. Once the attorney reviews and makes any changes to the transcribed document, it may be shared with others in a wide variety of formats, including .mp3, .mp4, .wav, .mov and .avi.

Trint promises to help attorneys:

- Convert video and audio files to text
- Get transcriptions in minutes
- Make files searchable
- Caption videos for presentations
- Share clips online

Trint is currently compatible with iOS and not yet available for Andriod. For those using iOS devices, interviews may be recorded through the device, uploaded and transcribed in the Trint app. Audio may also be imported from other apps for transcription. The complete transcript library may be managed using a smartphone. Hang on to important phone calls as well, since they are auto-saved to the Cloud and encrypted.

Reduce time and cost

Trint can dramatically reduce the cost and time spent on transcriptions. Humans cannot process language as quickly as Trint's software, which can transcribe a video in less time than the length of the file. A 30-minute video, for example, should take fewer than 30 minutes to transcribe. Some videos can be transcribed in minutes. Because of this, staff and attorneys will be able to spend more time completing tasks, which in turn saves money.

Easy editing
Once a file is transcribed, you can access the source audio or video on the same screen as the transcript, making text easily searchable and editable. You can also conveniently compare the audio to the written transcript during playback.

If you want to export portions of the file with its associated transcript, you can select and highlight text and export either the audio or video portions with text. This makes it easy for you to create presentations containing only the necessary parts of your transcript.

Online video
Online videos are already popular; estimates are that video could make up to 80 percent of online traffic within the next two years. Cisco Visual Networking Index predicts global yearly IP traffic will exceed 3 zettabytes by 2021.

One only has to surf the web to see that Google is increasingly returning video content on its results pages. Currently, search engines are only able to find videos by parsing the words used in the title, description or metadata. Since Trint automatically attaches the transcript to the video file, Google will be able to recognize the words from the transcript and show those words in search results.

Additionally, the transcript is interactive. When a user clicks on a word in the transcript, the tool goes straight to that part of the video. The text also auto-scrolls as the video plays. Trint claims a 99 percent accuracy rate, although some users have had a different experience.

Are there downsides to Trint?
According to PC Mag, if a file is relatively simple, the app works well. However, it falters if the audio has numerous voices talking over one another, if there is background noise or if people have accents. Complex audio files may not necessarily work very well in Trint. Trint hints at that limitation when it offers guidance for those looking to transcribe a recording.

Before transcription Trint asks whether the background is noise-free, the speakers are close to the microphone, the conversation is absent people talking over one another, and whether those talking have accents Unless the ambient noise is controlled and people do not interrupt one another, a Trint transcript may not be as accurate as an attorney would like. This is a possible downside to consider if your firm handles immigration matters, international law or other areas where those involved in the case are multi-lingual.

Trint pricing
Trint offers subscription and per-hour plans. The transcription option is $15 per hour for pay-as-you-go; a basic subscription is $40 per month for 3 upload hours, and a supercharged subscription rate is $120 per month for 10 upload hours. If you go over the upload time allocated in the plan of choice, there is an extra cost involved: $13.20 per hour for the basic plan and $12 per hour for the supercharged plan. Unused hours roll over every month, and all plans are on a rolling 30-day basis, permitting cancellation at any time.

Trint also offers Team and Enterprise accounts for those with higher transcription needs. The Team option is for groups of up to 50, with centralized billing, team admin roles and multiple user accounts. The Enterprise option is for firms with over 50 attorneys and staff and has all the bells and whistles in the Team option in addition to an enterprise dashboard, APIs and single-sign-on options.

Whether your firm can use Trint is an individual decision, based on long-term needs. It is certainly worth doing a trial to determine whether the application would be useful. While Trint may offer the ability to speed up your firm's workflow, the ultimate question may relate to the final accuracy and utility of the document(s).

- Kerrie Spencer

AUDIO & VIDEO RECOMMENDATIONS

For audio, Trint suggests:

- Advanced Audio Coding
- MP3
- M4A (MPEG 4 Audio)

For video, Trint suggests:

- MP4 (MPEG-4 Part 14)
- Windows Media Audio
- MOV
- AVI

All the above formats can be converted either online or with a dedicated conversion program.

Get started with Trint at https://trint.com/