AttorneySync's Guide To

Law Firm Websites Done Right

Introduction

The topic of websites for law firms has been extensively explored through books, blogs, seminars, webinars, screen casts, and more.

The purpose of this guide isn't to explain all the considerations that go into setting up a website for your law firm. Instead, we aim to give some simple and tangible considerations that should be on your mind when you're either setting up your own website, or hiring someone else to build it for you.

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You've Gotta Have Goals

The key to any marketing effort is having identified goals. This is no truer than when it comes to marketing your law firm through a website.

So ask yourself, what are your goals for your website? Here are just a few examples:

Getting Your Feet Wet

Some law firms just want what I describe as "an online business card". Their website goal is to have something to show people who ask them about their website. They don't care whether or not their site will get visitors, leads, or generate new clients. They just want see their law firm's name in lights.

Become A Blawg Superstar

Some lawyers recognize that merely having an online business card isn't enough. They want to be the next great blog author. They want a readership. Perhaps they want to generate advertising revenue. They understand some basics about law firm internet marketing, but aren't really ready to completely commit to a full-scale online marketing campaign. Typically, they're less excited about practicing law than they are about writing about it.

Grow Your Practice

Then there's everybody's favorite, getting new business from the internet. Many law firms are learning that the internet can be an excellent source of new clients and new sources of referrals. They need comprehensive web marketing services. These typically include a website and blog, contact form integration, link building, and other features designed not only to help the website get found online, but to turn more traffic into leads and clients.

These are only a fraction of the different goals that a website can be used to achieve. The key is to identify these goals beforehand.

Your goals for your website can take you in completely different directions and change your prioritization of time investment, monetary investment, and overall implementation.

That is why it is critical to establishing these goals before diving into an expensive and time consuming law firm website solution.

Static Site vs. Content Management System

A long, long time ago… (circa the 1990's) it was completely acceptable to have a static website. A static website is one that has a static number of pages.

Typically, these sites would include a homepage, a practice areas page, an attorney profile page, and a contact page. They were usually built in html or some other static web programming language.

While these sites may (or may not) "look good" they are very difficult to update (i.e. add new pages, images, change layouts, etc).

They also have major draw backs when it comes to "getting found" by search engines.

Eventually, web developers started recognizing the importance of building sites that are easy to update. This sparked the generation of the content management system.

A content management system (CMS) is a platform upon which a website is built. They allow for simple and frequent updates, modifications, and additions to a website.

Content management systems come in all shapes, sizes, and price tags. An entire guide could be dedicated to exploring the advantages and disadvantages of the different types.

For the purposes of this guide, you need to understand that a CMS really is a must.

The question really becomes, "Which CMS is right for me?"

For most law firms, using Wordpress as a CMS will be more than sufficient. While many people think of Wordpress for "blogs", it can also be easily implemented as a CMS.

Unless you have some very specific and unique needs for your website, try to avoid hiring someone to build you a custom CMS. Generally, its cost will far exceed its value.

Tag You're It!

Without going into too much detail (or getting too technical), I think it's important for lawyers to understand some basics about HTML tags when they're considering setting up a new website.

The reason for this is that search engines take these tags into consideration in deciding when and where to display your website in their results pages.

Important Tags:

<title>   **Title of page that appears in upper left hand corner of browser.**

<h1>,<h2>,<h3>   **Headings on a page in descending order of importance.**

<b> and <strong>   **Bold and strong make the text bold.**

****   **Basic tag to add an image to a page.**

Anchor Text   **Tag for a link.**

rel="nofollow"   **Prevents search engine from following the link.**

Hopefully I didn't lose half of the audience. The important thing to take away is that using your keywords in these tags is important to your search engine rankings. This is commonly known as "on-page optimization". Generally, this accounts for about 25% of your site's likelihood to "get found".

However, don't become consumed with trying to understand html tags (unless of course you want to be a web developer). **Be careful of SEO services that promise to adjust or monitor these tags for a monthly fee!**

The truth is, if you're using a CMS worth its weight, performing on-page optimization should be fairly simple and doesn't require more html knowledge than using the tags above.

Page Components

Now that we have a "skeleton" what does your law firm's site need on the pages?

1. Attractive, professional looking website – **Yes, your site needs to "look good." However, don't get carried away by fancy graphics, fonts, flash, designs, etc. For years, custom web developers have been charging lawyers excessive fees for extravagant websites.** Most of the time, this is a waste of money. **For most law firms, having a clean-looking and simple website will be more than sufficient for generating new clients. On the other hand, your website is a reflection of your law firm. If your website looks like it's from 1990, your potential clients may think you are out of touch. Here are just** [a few themes we recommend to our clients](#)**.**

2. Multiple calls to action – Calls to action are your website's way of getting visitors to "do something". Phone numbers should be prominently displayed. Forms should be strategically designed and placed. The key is that not everyone has the same intent and interest when they visit your firm's website. Different things will appeal to different users. Make sure you are offering your visitors multiple ways to reach you.

3. Free E-Book Offer – Too often, the only potential client information capture is on a "Contact Us" page. Why should they want to contact you? Give them a reason, offer a free e-book or a guide relating to their issue. Think what's in it for them, not what's in it for you. Yes, it takes time and effort to write and craft a useful e-book or guide, but that's the point. If it was easy everyone would do it (like putting your phone number on a contact us page… and nothing else). Offer to help them and educate them (what they want) in exchange for their information (what you want). [It works for us…](#)

4. Testimonials, Case Results, and Media Appearances – All of these "trust" factors add credibility to the firm and their accomplishments. Doesn't it make more sense to have others talk about your expertise and accomplishments rather than just saying it yourself? **However, check with your state bar's rules on endorsements to avoid an ethical issues.**

5. Blog and Videos – Adding content to your site is imperative. If you're going to pay for it **(which may not be worth it depending on the price)** video should be prominently featured on the homepage. Relevant and interesting content should be frequently added to your website. This will lead to search engine placement and positioning yourself as an expert in your field of practice.

6. Photos - In the age of the internet, there is a certain anonymity that exists. People want to do business with other people, not faceless companies or firms. This is especially true with regards to those of us offering

professional services. Let people see who you are. When we can put a face with a name and a brand it goes a long way.

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AttorneySync's law firm web marketing services are all about accountability and performance. You need low-risk, affordable, and measurable solutions that generate results. We provide you a full-spectrum of services designed to generate new clients and develop professional relationships.

You can download the complete library of internet marketing guides for lawyers here.