

Strategies

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The Next-Generation Law Firm Website.

Attorney Bios Will Grow into Attorney Microsites



By Robert Algeri

Powerful forces—both business and cultural—are causing law firms to rethink their approach to business development. One result is that law firm websites, which have evolved very little over the past decade, are about to undergo a little revolution.

What will this Revolution Bring?

I predict that attorney bios will expand significantly. The one-size-fits-all, single-page attorney bio will be relegated to the dustbin of legal marketing history. And it will be replaced by something much more robust: *the attorney microsite*.

What Exactly is an Attorney Microsite?

Attorney microsites are multipage attorney bio sections—essentially, small, customizable websites for each attorney that fit within the firm's larger website. An attorney's microsite could be configured to have any number of pages and

any type of information that will help that particular attorney develop new business. For instance, let's take a look at how three different attorneys might configure their microsites:



The Thought Leader.

This attorney has a brilliant legal mind and builds his reputation through an effective blend of writing and speaking. As a result, his microsite would showcase his intellectual talents by including pages for publications, presentations, blogging, case studies, and links to valuable third-party resources, in addition to basic biographical information.



The Charismatic Rainmaker.

This attorney is both smart and charismatic. In addition to basic bio information, her microsite includes a page of video clips of her television

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appearances and photos of her in the company of politicians and business movers and shakers. She might also want to showcase her social media activity by including feeds from LinkedIn and Twitter.



The Senior Partner.

This seasoned attorney has a solid reputation and an established client base, and thus doesn't need to spend much time marketing. As a result, his microsite consists of only a single page of biographical information.

Because no two attorneys are identical, the benefits of a customizable attorney microsite appear to be self-evident (when compared to the traditional one-page attorney bio).

However, even if you accept that microsites offer a better marketing platform, you may be asking yourself: Who is going to see these things? *Is it really worth the money and effort to create these microsites?*

The answer is yes. And the statistics are compelling.

Who Visits Law Firm Websites?

According to a 2009 survey of general counsel at major companies performed by the Wicker Park Group, law firm websites played a surprisingly large role in the process of selecting outside counsel. The survey's revelations include:

- ▶ 100 percent of respondents visited a law

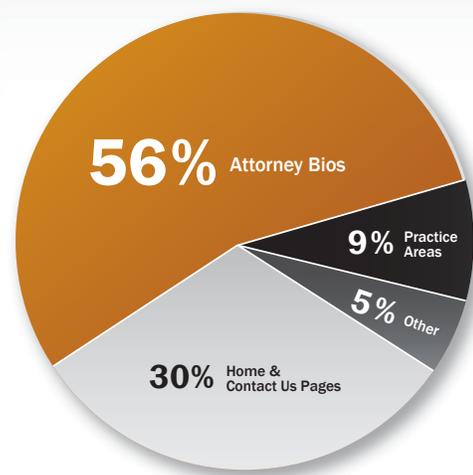
firm's website when evaluating and purchasing legal services.

- ▶ 90 percent said that the attorney bios section is the *most important* section of a law firm's website—and the one they visit most.

The Wicker Park survey confirms what most law firm marketers have known for years. My marketing firm recently ran the traffic data for several law firm websites that we manage. We found that 56 percent of page views occur in the attorney bios section. Some major law firms that we have spoken with report that over 70 percent of their traffic occurs in the attorney bios section. All of which beckons the question: *If attorney bios are the most important and most visited section of law firm websites, why do so many firms neglect them?*

The traffic data alone are enough to suggest that marketers will pay more attention to the attorney bios in the future. However, a variety of converging business trends could make the adoption of microsites inevitable.

56% of website traffic goes to attorney bios



A Shifting Landscape

Early law firm websites were essentially online versions of a firm's brochure. Since then, they have evolved; however, the basic goal has

remained constant: to help brand the firm. Now things are changing. Firms expect their websites to do more, and this includes helping individual attorneys build their practices. This new thinking

More Than a Bio... An Attorney Microsite

Attorney microsites are essentially small websites for each attorney that fit within the firm's larger website. Microsites can easily be customized to the specific marketing needs of each attorney.

- ▶ Each attorney's microsite can be easily configured to have any number or type of pages.
- ▶ Each microsite acts as a repository for the attorney's thought leadership work (articles, presentations, case studies, videos).
- ▶ A microsite can easily integrate all of an attorney's social media activities (blogs, LinkedIn and Twitter).

The screenshot shows the attorney microsite for Gregory Anderson at Bond LLP. The page features a navigation bar with links for Attorneys, Practice Areas, About the Firm, Careers, and Contact Us. The main header identifies Gregory Anderson as a Partner. Below this is a menu with links to Curriculum Vitae, Cases, Publications, Speaking Engagements, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Blog. The main content area includes a detailed biography of Mr. Anderson's experience in real estate law, a section on his Practice Areas (Litigation and Real Estate Law), and a section on his Bar Admissions (New York, 1975; U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York, 1975; U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York, 1975). On the right side, there is a portrait of Gregory Anderson, his contact information (phone number 212.444.4555 and email ganderson@bondlaw.com), and social media links for LinkedIn and Twitter.

is being ushered in by a variety of powerful forces including:

- ▶ **Tech-savvy lawyers, and clients.** The newest crop of law firm partners (and many of their clients) have been on the internet for their entire professional lives. They are demanding a more robust online marketing platform.
- ▶ **The economy.** As with any substantial reversal of the economy, The Great Recession has forced law firms to reconsider how they do business—and find a better way. As a result, more firms are embracing web marketing techniques.
- ▶ **A wider (and more competitive) market.** For a variety of cultural and technological reasons, clients are now increasingly willing to engage attorneys outside their immediate geographic area. As more business is pitched remotely—to prospects whom the attorney may have never met in person—lawyers will need more potent ways to market themselves online.
- ▶ **The emergence of social media.** Marketing platforms such as blogs, LinkedIn and Twitter continue to mature as effective marketing tools for attorneys. Their use, while viewed as purely supplemental today, will only grow in importance.

As more business is pitched remotely—to prospects whom the attorney may have never met in person—lawyers will need more potent ways to market themselves online.

We're entering an era in which websites, blogging and social media will be central to the business development efforts of nearly all attorneys. This is a seismic shift. And it presents an enormous growth opportunity for those firms that embrace the new marketing landscape—and master it.

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