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## ***How to Audit Your Law Firm Marketing Company***

With tax day a few months behind us, it is once again safe to say the A-word that strikes fear in the heart of every American taxpayer. Audit. Fear not, we will not be questioning your “business trip” to the Bahamas or your fishing boat named “Office” for which your business must buy many “Office supplies”. Nor will we look into the validity of your country club being a “professional association”. This week we are auditing your online [law firm marketing company](#). Here are the questions for you to ask.

### **Are You Building Links to My Law Firm’s Website?**

The operative word is “building”. Some marketing companies place your website in a network of directories, websites, blogs, etc., that they previously establish relationships with. Certainly there is nothing wrong with that, unless they are charging you a monthly fee to link build when there is no monthly link building taking place.

### **Show Me a Recent Inbound Link.**

Some answers are better demanded. Since you are paying a monthly fee, you should be able to see some recent activity. Ask for some links that are within the last 30 to 60 days. As the period between submission and publishing can take a few weeks, going out 60 days gives fair opportunity to show your firm what their marketing dollars are doing.

### **Why Are These Websites Linking to Me?**

Ideally, the answer should be related to unique content that is being written, distributed, and published. This is the most organic method of link building. Website directories are helpful but should not make up the entire link building strategy. Also, it is important that social networking is a part of your legal marketing plan.

What you want to look out for are paid links. If your legal marketing company is paying for links, you will lose 100 percent of these links should you ever move to another company. Plus, should someone report you, Google may penalize your site. Why? Because paid links for SEO purposes are against their guidelines.

### **Google’s Webmaster Guidelines state the following under Paid Links:**

“Google and most other search engines use links to determine reputation. A site’s ranking in Google search results is partly based on analysis of those sites that link to it. Link-based analysis is an extremely useful way of measuring a site’s value, and has greatly improved the quality of web search. Both the quantity and, more importantly, the quality of links count towards this rating.

However, some SEOs and webmasters engage in the practice of buying and selling links that pass PageRank, disregarding the quality of the links, the sources, and the long-term impact it will have on



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their sites. Buying or selling links that pass PageRank is in violation of Google’s Webmaster Guidelines and can negatively impact a site’s ranking in search results.”

They cannot get any clearer than that. It is important to know what passing Pagerank means. If your law firm pays your local newspaper \$100 per month to advertise and link to your website, that is OK. The newspaper will more than likely utilize a nofollow tag, which will not extend its reputation to your website (that would be passing Pagerank). If your law firm (or a company working for your law firm) pays a website \$10 per month to link to your firm’s website for SEO purposes and the website does not utilize the nofollow tag, you are in violation of Google’s terms.

Of course, if your press release links back to your website and your local NBC, CBS, or ABS news affiliate picks up your news release, publishes it, and does not include a nofollow tag in the links pointing back to your website, you are in the clear because you did not pay the publishing website solely for a link.

As we approach summer, take some time to chat with your law firm marketing company to make sure you are getting what you pay for. A friendly audit never hurts the auditor.

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