

From the Great Jakes Blog

Long distance clients part 2. How does this impact legal marketing?



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As mentioned in my last blog post, our society has recently hit an inflection point — and we are now entering the era of the long distance business relationship.

Better technology has made it largely unnecessary (on a practical level) to work with local folks. Additionally, after 15 years of widespread internet usage, people now have less of an emotional need to be located near their clients and co-workers. As a result, geography is becoming less of a consideration when purchasing all sorts of products and services, including legal counsel.

How will marketing shift?

What does this mean for legal marketers? Lots. As geographic barriers are brought down, I expect that you will see the following changes, among others:

- ▶ **Micro-specialization:** Adam Smith once said that specialization is a function of market size. As the market for legal services goes global, expect to see an unprecedented level of specialization.
- ▶ **More thought leadership:** Clients looking for a highly specialized expert will expect you to prove your expertise. As a result, you can expect to see a large increase in volume of attorney-generated content, like articles, blogs, videos and podcasts.
- ▶ **Increased meritocracy:** The “old boys’ club” will diminish in importance as the playing field widens and there is increased specialization. In short, a person with a reputation as the “leading authority” will win



out against “the familiar.” Read Ian Brodie’s fantastic blog post about this subject.

- ▶ **Emphasis on website bios:** People will increasingly turn first to the web for information about attorneys. In many cases, the information contained within the bio is what will determine whether a referral turns into a client (or at least a meeting). Judging by the number of flimsy one-page attorney profiles, most law firms haven’t yet realized the importance of improving their online bios.
- ▶ **More personal information:** As face-to-face meetings become less essential (and thus less common), attorneys in the “Facebook generation” will use their website bios as a platform to create an emotional connection with prospective clients. Expect to see more engaging attorney portraits and increased use of video as well as lots more personal information about attorneys.

Will these changes happen overnight? No. However, I think that five years from now, the legal industry will be noticeably different. And, as is the case with any industry shake-up, there will likely be big winners and big losers. Am I overstating this? I’d like to hear your thoughts.