



Marketing, Managing and Growing a Profitable Law Firm

4 Online Legal Marketing Trends Every Other Industry Knows About Jay S. Fleischman, Esq

Don't you wish you had a crystal ball to peer into the future? Some way to tell what the next few years would bring? What would you do with that information? Would you put money on the Super Bowl? World Series? Or would you take the opportunity to move ten giant steps ahead of the competition?

OK, it's no and either-or sort of thing. You'd probably do all of those things and a lot more. But when it comes to marketing your law firm online there's a certain amount of forecasting we can do without any help. All it takes is a quick glance around to see where the rest of the world is today.

That's right, we can see the future of online legal marketing by looking around us right now. As a [backwards-looking profession](#), we live in the past. It's in our legal pleadings, our reliance on precedent, and our education. But the fun thing is that the rest of the world is living in the present.

Look outside the window and you can see where the world is right now. Take the audacious step of joining the world, and you move way into the future of legal marketing.

Yup, I'm telling you to join the human race. And with that in mind, here are my 4 online legal marketing trends for the future (which you should be doing today):

1. Content Creation As Online Legal Marketing Tool

Look, you'd have to be [Rip Van Winkle](#) to be blind to the reality that content creation is how the big guns are making their impact online and creating authority. What began as teenagers showing their angst with blogging has turned into a valid business model over the past few years. [WordPress 2.9](#) has been downloaded 9,342,201 times as of

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5:00am on May 25, 2010 (for more updated number, [go here](#)). There are over **126 million** blogs (according to [BlogPulse](#)). There **were 234 million** websites as of December 2009, and 47 million of them came online in 2009 alone.

With that volume of content online, it's not a stretch to say your 10-page law firm website isn't going to make much of a dent. Without a content creation strategy in place, your online legal marketing efforts aren't going to amount to much.

2. Email For Law Firm Marketing Purposes

With such an overwhelming volume of content online and greater demands on our time than ever before, we need to meet our clients where they are. To a large extent, that's in their email box. With **247 billion** email messages sent per day, it's safe to say that people are using email more than ever.

[Email marketing](#) is seen by some as an extension of junk mail. The reality, however, is very different. Junk mail comes unsolicited to recipients, and ends up in the trash. Email, however, can't be sent unsolicited - sending unwanted email is a violation of the [CAN-SPAM Act](#), and can land you in serious hot water. Using [autoresponder systems](#) and opt-in lead generation on your website or blog allows you to attract only those who want to be contacted with information about your offerings.

Using email for your law firm marketing allows you to bypass the search engines because people who opt into your email marketing list won't need to go back to the search engines for their information. Instead, it will be delivered on a (virtual) silver platter in the form of relevant and interesting content.

3. On-The-Go Law Firm Marketing

It seems as if everyone's got a smartphone these days - iPhone, Android, BlackBerry, even PalmOS and Windows-based phones. In fact, as of January 2010 it was reported that [42% of the U.S. used a smartphone](#). And a mere 28 days after the release of the iPad, [Apple confirmed that it had sold 1,000,000 of these devices](#). The tablet form factor promises to be a huge growth market, as everyone and their Uncle Sol is releasing one in the upcoming months.

Every device has bazillions of apps available, and people download those suckers like kids eating M&Ms (OK, like me eating M&Ms).

All those people are using their smartphones and iPads to find information, get answers, and do stuff. They're abandoning their televisions and radios, ditching their stereo systems and canceling their newspaper subscriptions in favor of staying online.

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At the same time, location-based services such as [Foursquare](#) and [Gowalla](#) let people check-in to tell the world where they are and what they're doing. It's part social-media, part game. People are flocking to these services in droves, collecting badges as a new type of customer loyalty program.

Most companies are still playing in the shallow end of this pool, trying to figure out how mobile marketing can help them. By getting in early, you may find the sweet spot before your competition even knows what hit them.

4. Social Media As Law Firm Marketing

[Facebook](#) is the big thing right now. Facebook's got ads you can target with stunning accuracy (how does the dentist advertising on my Facebook page know I'm 40 years old and graduated from Buffalo Law School?), fan pages, and a host of other ways to get people together and build community.

Some companies have done a good job at it, and [others have fallen badly](#). But chances are pretty good that the extent of your law firm's Facebook presence is a fan page that has been "liked" by 28 of your friends and colleagues. But that ignores the true value of Facebook as a legal marketing tool - the power to bring together people of similar interests in one centralized location.

Facebook fan pages can be tricked out with custom HTML forms (email marketing once again), discussion boards, and even used as a distribution point for your blog. Using these features at the very least can help you engage with people and increase the level of trust and authority given to you by your existing and prospective clients.

Twitter's also a social media darling, a place where people gather to share what's on their radar at the moment. Interesting stuff gets passed around all day and night. And it's not just, "here's what I had for lunch today," either. There are [Twitter](#) feeds for discounts on [airfare](#) and hotels, local coupons, and more. [Mobile food trucks](#) in big cities are using Twitter to tell their customers where to pick up lunch (uh oh, there's that "what I ate for lunch today" thing creeping up again). Retailers are using Twitter for customer support.

How does this tie into your online legal marketing efforts? Using Twitter to syndicate your online content, alerting the public of news and information, and connecting with journalists are all easy ways to use Twitter to market your law firm. But what about using it to communicate broadcasts to your clients? Telling people when you're going to be out of the office and unavailable to return phone calls would be one way to distribute your message to those who might otherwise call you in the middle of a deposition. Connecting with the

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people who may need your help in a quick and informal way helps get your message out without being threatening and scary.

This Is No Secret - And It's Not A Fairy Tale

These online legal marketing trends aren't wishes for the future. They're trends we're seeing in the marketing of consumer as well as business-to-business products and services. You can ignore them for only so long before some other law firm begins marketing with these channels and others that will come along.

The platforms will undoubtedly change or, at the very least, evolve with time. Your legal marketing efforts will likewise need to keep up with the times. But by looking to what the rest of the world is doing you can get a better sense of where you need to be.

Jay S. Fleischman is a consumer bankruptcy lawyer practicing in New York City, as well as an [online legal marketing expert](#) who helps solo and small-firm lawyers get more of the clients they want to work with.



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