



## Marketing, Managing and Growing a Profitable Law Firm

Law Firm Marketing With Content – Counterintuitive, Or Money Maker?  
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Marketing a law firm is time-consuming, costly, and rife with risk. What if your headline sucks? What if someone's offended by the photo you chose for your snazzy (and super-expensive) display ad? Will it make money or lose money? You're marketing a law firm to bring in business, after all – and if the new clients don't show up, you're out of luck. And potentially out of your home.

### Marketing Your Law Firm With Content Is Counterintuitive

You went to law school for three years, spent ages digging out of student loan debt, and now are struggling like hell to make enough to keep your law firm profitable. Some months are flush, some are lean. Heck, these days a lot of lawyers are contemplating their own bankruptcy filings. Including bankruptcy lawyers, mind you. Your law firm marketing efforts need to reliably pay out every month.

So you read about this concept of content marketing, which essentially tells you to market your law firm by giving away your expertise.

The companies that were selling you on beautiful law firm websites last year are now pushing blogs as the best thing to happen to law firm marketing. They aren't telling you how to blog or what to blog about, but they're pushing this blogging thing like drug dealers outside the playground. It's the bee's knees, they claim. Use a blog for your law firm marketing efforts and the world is at your feet. Empires crumble, the little lawyer wins the day with the power of a law firm blog.

Maybe you "get" it, maybe not. But the bottom line is that everyone is telling you to give away your hard-earned knowledge day after day, month after month. For free.

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What they don't tell you is how you're going to earn a living off all giving away this free stuff.

### **Let's Play A Content Marketing Game**

Pretend for a moment that you have a multi-million dollar business. Not a law firm. You make widgets of some sort, highly technical widgets. And each one costs about \$200 to the consumer.

You are required to hand-make each one of these widgets when a customer wants one. Making a widget takes about an hour, plus you've got to keep a huge overhead of widget-making parts on hand. Those parts go bad pretty fast, too. In fact, if you don't use it in a short period of time it rots and you've got to toss it. So you've got to make a lot of these things, and quickly.

Top it all off with the fact that you have to hire a bunch of people to help sell and deliver these doo-hickeys. Those folks like to get paid on a regular basis, so you need to keep them working for paying customers.

Oh, and did I mention the profit margins are stupidly thin?

### **Now Here Comes The Bad Business Promotion Strategy**

You know you need a truly great marketing strategy. Instead, you enter the universe of stupidity.

You spend a year or more writing a \$29.95 book detailing exactly how you create your product. You get so specific it becomes readily apparent to you that anyone could do exactly what you do. The metal pieces, the clips, the entire production process is so breathtakingly simple you could do a how-to on cable television and everyone could create it.

What a terrifically preposterous idea. Give away the entire process, show people exactly how to do it, and make absolutely zero dollars from the customer!

In fact, the customer can now sit at home and make your thingies in the comfort of their own home. And it costs less than going to your place to have you do it.

This, my friend, is exactly what I mean by marketing your law firm with content.

Give away the entire store for free.

### **Not As Stupid As It Sounds**

The social media intelligentsia will tell you that by putting content out there and making it free, you become invested with social capital. People look to you are the de facto expert, and they'll

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flock to your law firm when they need your help. What they don't explain is why anyone with half a brain would hire you once you tell them everything you know. They merely assure you it's the case.

Luckily for you, I'm not so smart. I don't follow the rules that someone else sets, and I don't expect you to, either.

I want to prove to you that content marketing works.

Last week I had the privilege of having dinner at [Bottega](#), a restaurant in Napa Valley. My wife and I had been a fan of the chef, [Michael Chiarello](#), for years. We had his books, had watched his television shows, and had organized our entire trip around this meal.

I won't bore you with the details, but it was the best meal we'd had in years. The chef came around to the tables and met the patrons (he folded my napkin for me), the ambiance was outstanding, and our service was perfect thanks to Murph, the seasoned server who made it all seem effortless.

### **How Does A Celebrity Chef Prove Content Marketing Works?**

Chiarello has been showing me exactly how to cook his recipes for years. I can follow every step in his cookbooks, mimic every technique he shows on television, and even swirl a glass of pinot noir the same way he does before taking a sip. In spite of that, I planned an entire trip around a reservation at [Bottega](#).

Why? Because through his content marketing approach he's established himself as the go-to guy for rustic Italian cooking. His personality comes through, and has made me like him. He puts himself out there, which makes me trust him.

In other words, he's let his content speak for itself. He's shown me that he knows what he's doing time and time again.

To be sure, he's made money along the way. I've spent about \$40 on his books over the years, and I'm sure he gets a decent salary from the television networks that air his shows. Those dollars don't come directly from my pocket, though, so I can't count them.

None of that matters, at not much. What does matter is that he's poured literally everything into my brain over a number of years.

And when the time came for me to buy, I didn't go across the street to [French Laundry](#) or down the road to some other famous place. I pulled out the credit card and went to Bottega. I also had the chance to buy his cookbooks again, visit his store across the street, and pick up some of his [family-made wine](#).

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## **Just Because You Can Does Not Mean You Will**

I can buy Michael Chiarello's cookbooks, but when I want a masterful meal I'm going to the restaurant.

I can buy every Home Depot DIY book out there, but when I need to install a bathtub I'm calling a contractor.

I can read the tax code but when I need to get the taxes done for my business I'm calling my CPA.

Maybe some of your potential clients will try to use your law firm content marketing efforts to do some of the legwork, and that's fine. But when push comes to shove and the big deal issues present themselves, the clients are going to call you.

Because what you do is not merely technical, it's infused with years of experience. Knowledge of your judges and trustees doesn't translate effectively into content. You can't replicate finesse and analysis of difficult scenarios.

And that's why you can market your law firm with content and never have to worry about going hungry. Ask a chef.

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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