

From the Great Jakes Blog

What my sinus doctor taught me about legal marketing.



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I have a recurring sinus condition. It's nothing serious, but it does affect my quality of life on occasion. So, after a few years of ineffective treatments, I decided to find a new doctor.

It's important to know that I was already seeing a specialist. And while this guy was no joker, I sensed that I wasn't getting cutting-edge care. So, I decided to seek out an ace. I wanted to find one of the world's leading sinus specialists.

So, what did I do? As you might guess, I asked around for some referrals, performed some online research, and then used all of this information to compile a short list of possible doctors. Finally, I selected my man: Dr. Satish Govindaraj at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York.



What does this have to do with legal marketing?

At the time that I was looking for a doctor, I didn't think that this had anything to do with legal marketing. However, in retrospect, my experience reveals much about how people are now finding professionals — including lawyers — in the age of the internet. Here are just a few of the lessons that I learned:

► Referrals are just a start

I got lots of referrals — some from experts whom I highly respect. However, in all cases, I did my own research on each of these doctors. Why? Because I could. Checking out their bios online took just minutes.

I think that this point is particularly important because I often hear lawyers explain that they don't need

to invest in their website since most of their business comes from referrals. They don't realize that a website is (increasingly) a tool that helps turn referrals into clients.

► **Online bios matter**

The professional profiles I read varied greatly in style and substance. For example, take a look at Dr. Govindaraj's bio, which is chock full of valuable reputation-enhancing information and compare it to that of another doctor who came recommended. The difference is striking. Based on their bios, I quickly put doctors into two groups: practitioners and thought leaders. The practitioners didn't make it to the short list. I was looking for a leading expert.

► **"Thought leadership" content matters**

What I found most compelling about Dr. Govindaraj was his thought leadership work. I glanced down his list of publications and immediately saw that he was writing serious articles about topics that concerned me. Clearly he is on the vanguard of his field.

► **Good content matters**

During my research process, I found myself watching an hour-long online video of a medical lecture. Why did I dedicate an hour of my busy schedule to watching this? Two reasons: (1) the video was well produced and easy-to-watch, despite its technical content, and (2) the video contained cutting-edge insights relating to the exact problems I was facing.

The lecturer would have been tops on my short list of doctors if he wasn't located 2000 miles away. While distance was a factor in my decision, we're finding that it's less and less of a concern for people looking for highly specialized attorneys.

Why is all this important?

My experience reveals how — over the past 10 years — the internet has fundamentally changed the way we search for professionals. Information is now much, much more easily accessed than ever before. People now have the tools to make their own judgments. And increasingly, they are.

How do you take advantage of this?

In the internet age, the advantage goes to those professionals — be they doctors or lawyers or consultants — who most skillfully use the web to demonstrate their cutting-edge expertise. It's becoming clear that those professionals with the most reputation-enhancing content will be positioned to win the business. This may sound obvious to some people. However, judging by the number of flimsy one-page bios on law firm websites, most of the legal industry isn't yet on board.