

# Web Law Predictions for 2013

Steve Matthews | December 2012

It's become my December routine. First, get the Clawbies season started: check [<http://www.stemlegal.com/strategyblog/2012/2012-clawbies-now-accepting-nominations/>]. Then, turn my attention to legal web trends and predictions for the upcoming calendar year.

Now, yes, I am the guy who told you in 2012 [<http://www.slaw.ca/2011/12/19/web-law-predictions-for-2012/>] that Twitter was going to become a Facebook acquisition, so you know I'm not afraid to take a shot in the dark. (And that I'm going to have a little fun in the process.) No guarantees that I'll be that creative this year, but your mileage may vary....

So, let's see what law firms might have coming to them in the new year.

**Massive rise in video conferencing.** One of the biggest game-changers for me in 2012 was Google Hangouts. We adopted Hangouts [<http://www.google.com/+learnmore/hangouts/>] for our monthly scrums at Stem and have been really pleased by the addition of visual feedback to our communications. If we factor the influence of Apple's FaceTime technology, Skype, and video-VOIP calls generally, the tipping point for video conferences seems close.

I think a lot of business communication will be video-driven in 2013. Clients and business partners are going to request it — and interestingly enough, I think solos and smaller firms are going to be the change agents here. Larger and mid-sized firms have been tinkering with video conferencing for 10+ years, but for mainstream adoption to happen, it's going to require simpler consumer technologies and smaller firm buy-in. The stars seem to be aligning for both pieces in the coming year.

**Lawyer ratings close the feedback loop for matter management.** We rate everything these days, and the numbers we generate provide quantitative feedback (and process improvement) for a wide range of industries. In 2013, I wouldn't be surprised to see a private, web-delivered ratings service applied to matter-level legal engagements.

This could be driven by corporate counsel, but an outside company would be far more interesting. That company could later anonymize the data and use it to deliver a public-facing lawyer rating that would be grounded in substantive work product and could showcase legal services for lawyers, practice groups, and firms alike. I predict that a high-quality work product rating service will arise in 2013.

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Steve Matthews is the Founder and Principal of Stem Legal, a company dedicated to bringing web visibility to the legal industry. A prolific blogger, Steve co-founded the Canadian legal blogging cooperative Slaw ([www.slaw.ca](http://www.slaw.ca)), and maintains his own blogs: Law Firm Web Strategy ([www.stemlegal.com/strategyblog](http://www.stemlegal.com/strategyblog)) and Vancouver Law Librarian Blog ([www.vancouverlawlib.blogspot.com](http://www.vancouverlawlib.blogspot.com)). Steve can be reached at [steve@stemlegal.com](mailto:steve@stemlegal.com).



**Google fixes its local search mess.** Mike Blumenthal recently called Google's local search a train wreck [<http://blumenthals.com/blog/2012/11/29/google-local-train-wreck-at-the-junction/>], and I can't imagine anyone connected to the SEO industry disagreeing. Firms and businesses continue to be confused about whether to transition their Google Places listing to Google+ local. Most are concerned about reports of lost ratings and testimonials and few understand the dashboard administration arrangement between the two services.

Firms know how important local search is and will obviously need to keep on fighting through this. But in 2013, I hope and expect that Google will get its local search services fixed. My prediction is for a universal company dashboard that would centralize control over brand information across all Google services. Many smaller firms and solos are terribly confused by how these services are currently operating, and would be grateful if Google could deliver a clearer picture going forward.

**New legal gTLD domain registrar gets rich!** 2013 should see the approval of a handful of new legal-oriented domain name options [<http://www.stemlegal.com/strategyblog/2012/your-future-law-firm-domain-name/>]. ICANN is currently considering a wide range of alternatives to having a .COM, including new top-level domains such as .LAW, .LAWYER and .LLP. Once this approval process is complete, the shakeout will begin. We will see new dedicated business units, or entirely new companies being created based on those approvals.

My 2013 prediction on this topic is that someone will conduct a quick flip of their winning domain application and walk away with the cash. There's no predicting how Google will value these new domains, or that the number of registrations will even warrant a business venture. But it is new, and should make for some exciting experiments in the year ahead!

**The multi-device law firm employee.** I have little doubt that we will look back on 2013 as the year we mobilized legal information. Firms will bring in more iPads and Android tablets and will work feverishly to make consumable content available to lawyers and employees outside the office. I expect firms to go beyond the provision of basic IT support for tablets, and move into the realm of purchasing and providing dedicated mobile work devices. Implementations will be optimized to limit data exposure, and effectively rebuff the concept of BYOD.

Why? Because the cost of tablets isn't all that prohibitive, and because mobile security will be a huge topic of discussion in 2013. The rise of private enterprise apps, and even enterprise app stores [[http://www.cio.com/article/704977/The\\_Enterprise\\_App\\_Store\\_10\\_Must\\_Have\\_Features](http://www.cio.com/article/704977/The_Enterprise_App_Store_10_Must_Have_Features)], will only push firms to further control the mobile environment they provide.

**Responsive design, HTML5 and Parallax Scrolling.** Expect the web design ecosystem to change dramatically in 2013. Not necessarily in terms of what firms do, but in terms of what's possible. 2013 will see many traditional companies (law firms included) roll out Windows 8, accompanied by IE10

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[<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-CA/windows-8/internet-explorer>]. Even firms that aren't rooted in this upgrade path will be using browsers like Chrome or Firefox. This all adds up to a big upgrade in HTML5 capabilities for the average business user.

Mobile-responsive websites will continue to draw firms' attention, and rightly so, but perhaps the most interesting development I see for 2013 is how our attitudes will change towards vertical scrolling. I expect website homepages will trend much longer, and that technologies like "parallax scrolling" will change our expectations entirely. Check out this shining example from AHBL here in Vancouver [<http://www.ahbl.ca/>]; or these design examples [<http://smashinghub.com/30-awesome-parallax-scrolling-effect-in-web-design.htm>]. Regardless of whether firms opt for more visuals or more information, the end result will be less clicking and more communication.

Happy holidays to all my Slaw friends, and best wishes for a prosperous new year!

Cheers, Steve

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