

From the Great Jakes Blog

2011: The year that content marketing becomes king



By Robert Algeri, Founder
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I recently stumbled over an old New York Times article that declared 2005 to be the year that law firms embraced “branding.” The article got me thinking. When it comes to legal marketing, what can we expect 2011 to be known for?

Social media? Perhaps.

However, in my opinion, social media is only a small part of the story. After some serious reflection, I’ve concluded that 2011 will likely go down in legal marketing history as *the year that content marketing became king*.

Why content? Why now?

Several trends in the legal marketplace – and society as a whole – are converging to make content marketing (i.e., “thought leadership” articles, newsletter, blog posts, etc.) more valuable than ever. These trends include:

- ▶ **An Increased Skepticism of Marketing** – Over the past 25 years, our society has become increasingly numb to marketing messages. As a result, it’s no longer enough to simply claim that you’re the best – you have to prove it. Content marketing gives attorneys the platform to do so.
- ▶ **A Trend Towards Specialization** – Routine matters are increasingly being handled by in-house legal departments. This means that the work given to outside counsel tends to concern highly specialized, bet-the-company matters. Content marketing is simply the best way for attorneys to demonstrate that they have the specialized expertise that clients are looking for.

The logo for The New York Times, featuring the words "The New York Times" in a classic, blackletter-style font, centered within a white rectangular box.

- ▶ **An Increased Reliance on Websites** – A 2009 survey (conducted by the Wicker Park Group) showed that nearly all general counsel visited attorney bios on a firm’s website when considering hiring them. What are they seeing? In most cases, not much. Attorneys are now recognizing that this is a problem – and remedying it by beefing up their bios with articles, case studies, blog posts, etc.
- ▶ **The Emergence of Social Media** – As attorneys embrace social media marketing, they are coming to the realization that it’s not sufficient to simply “be social.” Increasingly, it’s becoming clear that an effective social media marketing campaign requires you to be a “thought leader” in your niche. And that means generating insightful, cutting-edge content.
- ▶ **A Realization that Content Marketing Works** – A recent survey by The Brand Research Company found that 53% of executives surveyed have put a firm on their short list based on the information found on the firm’s site. Data like this indicate that attorneys offering the highest quality content are best positioned to reap the benefits.

Where is this leading us?

We’re heading towards a major shift in the way that law firms think about their websites. The idea that a law firm website is an “online brochure” will fade. Instead, the next generation website will be thought of as a *publishing platform* for thought leadership content.

More about this in my next post.