



Give people multiple ways to find your law firm's website

A report released by Forrester Research showing more people than ever are using social media to find websites has been garnering a lot of attention among marketers. For lovers of social networks, the data confirms what they have been trying to convince businesses of for some time: social will overcome search as the primary method people use to find your site.

According to the report, 54% of Americans use search engines to find the websites and information they need. That number is down from 61% in 2010. While traditional search usage is declining, social search is on the rise, particularly among young people. Close to 33% of all Americans claim to use social media as their primary search method, while half of those aged 18-23 prefer social.

Social media is a useful part of any serious marketing plan and will likely continue to become more important as those who grew up accustomed to using social searches continue to age and obtain more buying power. But organic search is still a critical marketing tool for attorneys. SEO | Law Firm™ performed its own survey of how clients are finding lawyer websites in March of this year. The results show that fewer than 5% of prospects use sites like Twitter and Facebook to find an attorney.

That is a fairly large discrepancy, and it is indicative of how search and social media use differ from demographic to demographic and from product to product. Half of people between the ages of 18-23 may be using social search, but it is unlikely most of them are in the market for an attorney. People are also more likely to use social media to find tangible items or businesses within the service industry, such as restaurants, salons and coffee shops. Service providers like attorneys, who may not be able to offer deals through social media due to state bar or ethics considerations, do not have the same advantage retailers hold on these networks.

However, none of this means you should ignore social media altogether. Social networks are good for building relationships with colleagues and prospects – and in turn gaining referrals. If the trends outlined in this report continue, having a strong social presence will only become more helpful. As the younger demographic continues to grow older, becoming adults aged 25-30, their habits will become more germane.

Some additional information confirming the need for a holistic strategy can also be found within the report. One item concerns the effectiveness of direct marketing and email campaigns. Other studies have shown that people prefer to receive solicitations from companies through email over any other source. This report shows some support for that idea, with 24% of users saying they find websites because they have received branded emails. That is up from 11% in 2010. Email may not be new and shiny, but it is still relevant.





The report also confirms that organic link building is still an important piece of an integrated marketing strategy. Links to websites from other sites are driving relevant traffic: 28% of users said they had found new websites through links on other sites they trust.

While many marketers seem to be focused on the social component of the data, the study as a whole, combined with SEO | Law Firm's own research, actually confirms that a balanced strategy including search, email and social marketing (plus on and offline networking) is the best way to work toward your goals. Knowing your market and understanding which methods your ideal clients best respond to is the basis for building a plan that actually returns quality leads.

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