



De-Optimizing Your Firm's Website for Search Engine Placement

What started out as a fairly slow year in the world of search engine changes rapidly changed this summer as Google updated their algorithm and made some of the most significant changes in recent history. Last week, we talked about link building, but this week we are back to discussing your law firm's website.

Onsite SEO is something that doesn't often change. Your law firm's website needs to grow by adding new content and building new pages. But SEO "changes" can be done with less frequency. In fact, if a company is proposing monthly changes to your website and meta data, you can assume they stopped all continuing education around 1999.

We do quarterly reviews, which generally include a few minor changes, a meta description update (which is more about conversion than ranking improvement) and another look at any keyword opportunities we might be missing. If your website was optimized more than a year ago, it probably needs an updated look at its keyword usage.

Keyword Stuffing

Google defines keyword stuffing as "...lists or paragraphs of keywords, often randomly repeated." However, your site can appear to be stuffing keywords, even if you are not just listing them. Here is an example of keyword stuffing:

When dealing with a Chicago divorce, you need an experienced Chicago divorce lawyer who can help you with your Chicago family law case. For over 20 years, the Chicago divorce law firm of Smith & Smith has been helping families with their Chicago divorces and Chicago family law needs.

That paragraph is awkward and uncomfortable to read. Your readers would not like it and neither will Google. We recommend a balance of one full keyword per 100 words. The fictional law firm of Smith & Smith should absolutely use "Chicago divorce lawyer" or "Chicago family law firm" in their content once or twice within a 400 word page, but overstating a keyword is going to do little to help their rankings. It may actually hurt them.

Descriptive Titles That Convert

We have all seen titles like this: Chicago Divorce, Family Law, Attorneys Chicago, Custody Lawyers | Smith & Smith Law Firm, Family Law Firm in Chicago. People who see that title in Google's search results are going to be bored with it, and therefore, it will probably not be effective in improving your rankings or click throughs.





A good title must use a keyword, but you should focus only on keywords that are actually used on that particular page. In this case, Smith & Smith should have divorce-related keywords on their divorce page and custody-related keywords on their child custody page. They should not have all keywords on every page because every sub-page is not (and should not) be relevant to every key phrase.

A consolidated home page title for our fictional friends at Smith & Smith would be:

Chicago Divorce Lawyer/Attorneys Helping Families | Smith & Smith Law Firm

It's short, it says something beyond a long string of key phrases, but it still emphasizes the firm's most important key phrase.

To make your website appear to be the most relevant, it needs some keyword usage, a diversified link profile and other elements to prove to Google that your law firm's website is worthy of top placement. Keyword spam and over usage tells Google that you are not concerned with your visitors' experience or reading comfort.

Therefore, de-optimizing may improve your search engine rankings.

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