



Legal Marketing Strategies: **Google SEO Enhancements: Law Firms Take Note**

If your Google AdWords pay-per-click budget is going up, up, and away, you will want to be aware of recent search engine enhancements that can help you get or maintain organic placement.

Google announced 40 search changes in February 2012, which sets a new monthly record. Here are some of the tweaks, big and small, that are relevant to law firms dependent on website traffic for lead generation.

Local search. Ranking improvements are being used to refine local search results. Translate this in part to mean an increasing emphasis on Google Places and associated search capabilities. A new system is now being used to find and display results from a user's city with greater accuracy. For example, Google can now determine when both queries and documents are local to the user.

Link evaluation. Google uses characteristics of links to help them identify the nature of content on a linked page. They are now discontinuing a link analysis method that has been in use for several years; the exact method is not disclosed however. This is an apparent effort to "keep our system maintainable, clean and understandable." It also works to keep a bit of the mystery in SEO.

YouTube results are more localized. The ranking for predictions in YouTube are enhanced to present the user with geographically relevant data. At a high level, this translates into country relevance. Law firms using a video channel on YouTube will want to make sure and optimize video clips for geographic terms as well as practice areas.

Fresher images. Google now finds new images more quickly, reinforcing the need to keep refreshing the content on your website. Attorney photos, community events, and practice-related images should all be evaluated.

Fresher content. New content now shows up in search results even more quickly than before. If you use Google Alerts, you know that Google is now finding material within minutes or hours. Law firms that may be on a monthly update schedule (or worse) will find themselves left in the dust of daily dispatches being pumped out by some firms. Stay substantive, of course.

Panda update. One year ago Google launched the "Panda" system, designed to penalize websites with thin content. The new version 3.3 "refreshes data in the Panda system, making it more accurate and more sensitive to recent changes on the web," according to Google.

"Site:" query update. This is a useful search feature, particularly for research and competitive intelligence. Lawyers can monitor their own or competitor law firms by searching for a specific term on a

website. When searching, place the full URL path immediately after “site:” followed by your search term, as in: site:http://www.nytimes.com lawyer

Spam detection. Always on the lookout for spam, Google continues to find and fix spam issues.

Read about all 40 February changes on the Google Inside Search blog at:

<http://insidesearch.blogspot.com/2012/02/search-quality-highlights-40-changes.html>

Have fun, and remember: Never stop marketing! As always, keep attorney advertising guidelines in mind.

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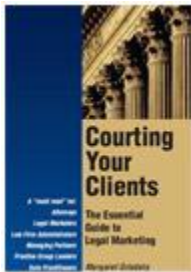
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