



AND THE ART OF LEGAL NETWORKING

BY: LINDSAY GRIFFITHS OF THE ILN

INSIGHTS & COMMENTARY ON

*Relationship Building
within the International
Lawyers Network*

POSTED IN [LEGAL MARKETING](#), TWO FOR TUESDAYS

Referrals and First Impressions: How Technology Has Changed Them

BY LINDSAY GRIFFITHS ON APRIL 19, 2016



Seeing [Jabez LeBret](#) at last week's [Legal Marketing Association Annual Conference](#) reminded me that I needed to catch up on my [Legal Coffee Break podcasts](#) – if you're not yet familiar with it, the Legal Coffee Break podcast is a concise, less than ten-minute, update on legal marketing, technology, and other issues in the legal industry, hosted by [GNGF](#) founders Mark Homer and Jabez, with Jabez being the primary voice to

this point.

Episode 26 discusses two things that are important to lawyers, and how they have changed with the advent of technology: referrals, and first impressions. Since Jabez talks about issues that I regularly address with my own lawyers, this one particularly stuck with me.

Referrals

As someone who espouses social media, something that I hear fairly often is “But am I really going to get BUSINESS from using Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc?”

For lawyers, business development is all about the referral. And in the legal industry, referrals are still about word of mouth. Anyone who really embraces social media will tell you that the “word of mouth” part hasn’t changed. What *has* changed is the process, and that’s what Jabez talks about in his podcast. Picture a typical scene: someone has a legal problem. They’ll go to someone they know, like, and trust to ask them for a recommendation for a lawyer.

That person will recommend someone that they have worked with in the past, or that they know well.

When that happens, the person giving the referral isn’t going to have the lawyer’s business card with them. At best, they’ll offer to email the lawyer on the spot to connect the two of them, or will send the person the lawyer’s name later.

As the person asking for the referral, though, what are you going to do? Either with the internet-connected mobile device in your pocket or the computer in your home later that day?

You’re going to Google the lawyer.

In the past, you may have relied only on the recommendation of the trusted person that you asked for the referral, or even if you did a bit more due diligence, you’d have asked around for a few recommendations, or spoken to a few people who had worked with that lawyer in the past. **But now, we Google.**

Jabez says:

“

The important thing to note about human behavior today: how do we go about gaining access to information?”

First Impressions

And that's where first impressions come in. Jabez observed that GNGF conducted a study that revealed that people go online to research their lawyer/law firm before they ever step foot into the firm itself. That means the first impression of you as a lawyer is NOT your law firm; it's your website (or more accurately, your search results). As a result, he says there are two things to be conscientious of:

- Is your website sending the right message to your prospects and clients? Does it give them the right impression of who you are? Does it match what you want them to think about you? And, very important these days, is it mobile ready?
- What do your attorney bio pages look like? These are the 2nd most visited pages on a law firm website. What does it mean to have these "ready?"
 - Photo: This should be professional and up-to-date (yes, it really has to look like you do now – it's like a dating profile photo; there should be no surprises for your clients, or they'll wonder what else you're dishonest about).
 - Personality: Who are you as a person? What are your passions outside of being a lawyer? Add in presentations that you give, articles you author, volunteer work, etc. Provide more information than the year you graduated from law school and passed the bar.

I'd argue that there's more to first impressions than just your firm's website, and this is what I share with my lawyers too – it's what answers the question above about whether they'll get business from using social media. I tell them that while once in a blue moon the stars will align and someone will see them on social media, have a need for their type of law, and will refer them work directly because of their social media activity, the *most* likely scenario is that when they've been referred to them, they'll instead Google them.

In the search results, they'll [hopefully] see a robust LinkedIn profile with a fully fleshed out profile that contains links to thought leadership pieces, recent wins, recommendations from clients (depending on the bar rules), other relevant articles that they've shared, etc., the blog that they contribute to with thoughtful pieces on their niche area of the law that holds them out as an expert, their Twitter feed with engaged conversation with other experts in their industry and shared links to the latest news and updates in the industry as well as their own, along with some of the personal things they're interested in (fishing, their kids, running, dogs, baking, travel, etc.).

When a prospective client Googles you, and the only things that comes up is a bio that is outdated, with a few lines about your practice, the year you graduated law school and passed the bar, it won't matter if you are the smartest and most talented lawyer in the world. The firm's website and your social media profiles are designed to support the word of mouth referral and their decision to hire you, to provide a level of

comfort that we all seek when looking online for information these days – that feeling of “oh yes, I’m making the right decision in trusting this person with my business.”

While referrals and first impressions may still be essential for lawyers (and will always be), the *way* that they’re occurring has changed. Have you embraced technology the way that your clients and prospects have so that you’re ready?

STRATEGY, DESIGN, MARKETING & SUPPORT BY

LEXBLOG