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Helping Experienced Attorneys Find a Digital Voice

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Seasoned lawyers, most often with small or mid-size firms, sometimes profess frustration at being left in the dust from a marketing perspective.

Experienced, successful lawyers who have been practicing for several decades are often dismayed by the fact younger, less experienced lawyers, some just a few years out of law school, successfully put their online marketing savvy to use and usher new business through the door.

Whether these less experienced attorneys are good at what they do remains to be proved. What they are proving, though, is they are skilled at generating leads and capturing the business more seasoned lawyers covet.

One would think such results would motivate those attorneys to get into marketing action, enhancing their firm's website, exploring how to make search engine marketing work for them and using social media. If you count yourself among the professionals who have revisited and overhauled your marketing efforts, you deserve credit. However, many lawyers "of a certain age" are reluctant to make the significant changes necessary to competitively position themselves in the digital age.

What's holding you back

This reluctance stems from several factors: being overwhelmed and not knowing where to

begin; entitlement by thinking past accomplishments place you above the need to adopt new methods; and hope, believing that bringing enough business through the door by other channels will obviate the need to make changes. While each of these reasons is understandable, the inevitable fact is that they are obstacles to your continued success.

In this situation, the term entitlement is not pejorative. You have devoted years to honing your craft from a range of perspectives. Your skill at representing clients and managing their expectations springs from years of effort—a road younger lawyers are just embarking on. At this stage of your career, you feel you should not have to rethink the tactics that got you where you are today. Unfortunately, the digital realm is forcing all professionals to reevaluate how to generate new business. The digital dimension also creates previously unimaginable opportunities



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to reach prospective clients. It is that aspect you want to embrace, because there really is no way around it.

As for hope, it does spring eternal when it comes to revising your marketing and business development. After all, you have made it this far without having to overhaul your lead generation. The phone rings; referrals come through the pipeline. The status quo keeps some professionals content. Others, though, bristle at business being diverted to less experienced lawyers who happened to grow up in an online environment. Those senior lawyers no longer want to cede business.

It's not surprising those professionals who recognize the need for change first feel overwhelmed about where to begin. The spectrum required today for effective lead generation—website, social media, search engine ranking and lots of content—makes one long for the days when you needed no more than a website. In addition, the plethora of providers aiming their sights at you can make any professional cringe. >>

Helping Experienced Attorneys Find a Digital Voice (continued)

Invest or fall behind

No matter where your reluctance or hesitation originates, you have the competitive drive to set it aside in the pursuit of generating leads that turn into clients. The tactics that less seasoned professionals are using to attract business are available to you, too—no law school needed, but plenty of energy, zeal and patience required. There is no way to sidestep the requirement of a monetary investment for professionals to get the job done. If you want results, let go of the fantasy that your brother-in-law or teenage child can manage your online marketing in their spare time. Only professionals will win on this playing field, not dilettantes.

The fabric of today's marketing has a tight weave. One element heavily influences another. Your social media movement impacts your search engine results. Public relations creates the content that feeds your website and social media. This means that, as you gather your team, you understand that a marketing expert in one area does not necessarily have the expertise to cover the gamut. You can put your team of individuals together with you as team leader, or you may want to consider an agency with all the necessary resources under one roof.

The present state of affairs leaves you vulnerable from other viewpoints, aside from losing business to those who have not been practicing as long as you have. When extraordinary opportunities do come along to generate business, like legislative or regulatory changes, you have no platform from which to take advantage of them, and you position yourself to lose even more ground. Once you decide to implement changes, know that it takes time to see results; the bonus window of opportunity could conceivably slip away by the time you are up and running.

While you may find it aggravating that newer lawyers effectively redirect "your" business to

themselves, you can also look at the positive aspect of your situation. You do not have a lot of choice other than to make changes if you want to capture some of that business. Having fewer choices makes knowing which direction to take more obvious.

You may not be on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter every day, but you see the unstoppable flow around you. One can no longer assuage anxious feelings by saying social media is only for kids, or that no one will hire a professional by looking online. At some point, you will have to enter the fray. By taking action now, you increase your potential for success in the future. ■

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