

## 15 Smart Marketing Tips for 2015

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What will 2015 have in store for your law firm? Growth and success (mixed with the right amount of positive change)? Firms can act proactively to make this happen. Take advantage of a time of reflection and renewed energy to evaluate long- and short-term goals and the systems in place to help achieve them. Here are 15 marketing tips to help your firm get a strong start in 2015.

**1. (Re)focus on user experience.** Websites are living creations. Pages are added and removed, images are exchanged, copy is accumulated and features are refreshed in an ongoing effort to achieve optimum effectiveness. Along the way, the actual user experience can get lost. Test your site's performance by giving a sample group a list of tasks and seeing how easy or difficult it is for the test users to complete them. On your own, you can review website and social media content to make sure it is addressing the needs of your clients and look at analytics data to determine what internal links or pages may be underperforming. Poor performance could be a user experience issue and should be addressed.

Usability testing tools like [OpenHallway](#) provide a group of remote test users who will perform a defined series of tasks on your site. OpenHallway records screen actions, voice and facial expressions of the testers, allowing you to see where potential clients may be getting stuck. You may also want to consider testing your competitors' sites to gain insight on what is working (or not) for others.

**2. Answer questions.** Your website is a promotional tool, but it should contain much more than

promotional content. People looking for a lawyer are searching for answers. If you can provide those answers through useful, targeted content, you will position yourself as an authority that people (and search engines) can trust. Provide regularly updated FAQ pages, write articles on helpful topics that contain actionable steps, or do a series of short videos addressing issues common to your practice area. Posts to your own site and to social networks must address user needs; broadcasting only shameless self-promotion is a sure way to be ignored.

**3. Get on the right lists.** Local and national directory sites receive a lot of attention from search engines. Google's Pigeon update, launched in the summer of 2014, ties local search results more closely to traditional ranking factors. So far, this change seems to give many large directories, and some well-known local directories, an edge. For many keywords, sources like Avvo, Lawyers.com and even Yelp rank higher on the first page of Google than organic law firm results. Take advantage of the weight directory sites carry by making sure your firm has a listing and that your listing is optimized.

Consistent directory listings also tell search engines where to find you and help your firm gain placement in map results for keywords that still return a local pack. Moz has a [local tool](#) that can help you determine what directories have a listing for your firm, which is a good starting point for directory research.

**4. Check your referral sources.** Not all referral sources supply leads of the same quality. Track where you spend your marketing dollars and monitor which sources deliver your best clients. A source that provides a large number of leads may not be worth the investment if all of those leads are low-value or unlikely to convert to paying clients. Audit your expenses and returns to help determine which lead sources are the most productive and which could be replaced.

**5. Make it easy for people to review you.** Social proof helps drive conversions. And reviews are a powerful form of social proof. Ask for feedback. Reach out to clients with whom you have a good relationship and see if they would be willing to provide a testimonial or a Google review. Hand out printed materials to clients that ask a few simple questions and provide a space for a short review, or try placing a simple feedback form on your website. You will be inviting both positive and negative observations, but both are equally valuable.

**6. Be the news.** Media attention can do wonders for a firm's ranking and authority. But journalists are not going to appear at your door just to investigate what your firm has been up to lately, and your social followers are not going to share your promotional materials without reason to do so.

Generate interest and attention by creating campaigns with actionable items. A [blog](#) entry by itself is passive. But a blog entry about bicycle safety that is part of a campaign to promote helmet use can become newsworthy and prompt action, especially if it is timed around an event like National Bike Month or Bike to Work Day.

In addition, reporters are often looking for professionals who can comment on news stories. Cultivate press relations through offline networking and online services like [HARO](#) (Help a Reporter Out). If you can become a go-to contact for quotes and opinions on trending topics, you will gain exposure and [boost](#) search marketing efforts, especially when a publication links to your firm's site after an interview or story.

**7. Be a part of your community.** Success in online marketing relies in part on offline activities. Active individuals are more likely to make valuable connections and receive positive recognition for their efforts. Be a good community member by volunteering for a cause that is meaningful to you or becoming involved in civic and professional groups. Sit next to a stranger, put away the phone and be open to a

conversation. Offline connections can lead to valuable online referrals, reviews and links.

**8. Make your content work overtime.** Yes, content is king. But the “build it and they will come” strategy for content development does not work. Content marketing requires promotion. Make the most of the content you do produce by promoting it across several different types of media. If you have done research for a speech or webinar, for example, write an article on the same topic. Create an infographic to post to your blog or social media. If you have slides, offer them on SlideShare or use them to produce a downloadable ebook. Maximize the work you put into your content to gain a wider reach.

**9. Optimize for smarter keywords.** Not all keywords are worth your efforts. Some are very popular, receiving a high volume of searches. Others are more likely to convert once the searcher clicks through to your page. A specific query about the personal injury lawsuit process or a certain type of injury is more likely to convert, for example, than a generic search for “personal injury lawyer.”

Your firm should optimize for terms your clients are using and those that convert well. You will want to try for some very popular keywords and some that produce high-value clicks. The key is optimizing for the terms that are right for your firm. Do not fall into the comparison trap: judging your ranking against that of your competitors for every imaginable term. Instead, research keyword search volume and investigate your own visitors’ behavior. Google’s Keywords Planner Tool is a good place to start. Do not waste money going after terms that no one is searching for. Leave that to your competitors.

**10. Seek relevant links.** Link building is still a valuable SEO tool. After Google’s first Penguin release, some webmasters became understandably wary of link building. But Google is only punishing techniques that have long been against its Webmaster Guidelines. Google’s [algorithm](#) still relies on links to determine authority and relevance, and your firm should actively be seeking links from reputable sources. Remember, a link is a signal of trust — the site linking to yours passes some of its authority because it trusts the quality of your site enough to provide a link to it. Manual link building requires time, patience and coordinated outreach, but it is worth the effort.

**11. Create a plan for following-up.** Follow-up is difficult. Without a plan for follow-up, potentially good relationships can fall through the cracks. Having a database of leads or using lead management software can help you keep track of what connections you have followed up with and at what times.

Classify your contacts and set reminders — actually put them in your calendar — for when to send a note or email and to whom. Storing information about your contacts, like a favorite pastime, a birthday, or a child or spouse’s name, can help provide conversation starters when you do choose to reach out.

When following up, do not assume that the person you are contacting has received every message or read every email. Follow-up more times than you feel is appropriate — one call or email is not enough.

**12. Track your experience.** Research suggests that people searching for an attorney online are most interested in finding someone who has experience handling their issue. Providing representative cases and other confirmation of your experience can give you an edge. But after years of handling cases, you will not remember each one — even those that at the time seemed notable. Keep a database of noteworthy cases to which you can refer when offering proof of relevant experience to potential clients.

**13. Be smart with social.** Social media can be a helpful marketing tool if used thoughtfully. While it is worthwhile to be on the largest networks, it is unnecessary to be on every network. Limit social media profiles to those your clients might actually visit. Do not post the same content to all networks; be selective and publish content that fits the specific platform and audience. Use pictures and video when

possible to attract attention. Social users see through self-promotion quickly; give them posts that are relevant to their interests and needs.

**14. Be a storyteller.** A brand is a promise that a firm offers to its clients. [Branding](#) involves telling a story both about your firm and about what clients can expect from the experience of working with you. Everything a firm does, from [ad](#) copy and website design to the office environment to the intake process and interactions with clients should support the brand story a firm is telling. Be consistent, and use the same language, colors, fonts, graphics and tone in all your communications. Review branding and marketing materials, check for consistency and make sure all staff and any marketing professionals working for the firm are conveying the same message.

**15. Keep providing excellent client service.** Personal referrals will always be a valuable source of new business, and happy clients can be a good source of online social proof. All the marketing in the world cannot save a firm with inconsistent client service. Take some time to review your procedures and ensure all members of the firm are committed to providing the same positive experience.

By [Kristen Friend](#) - Kristen is a 1999 graduate of Indiana University, with Bachelors Degrees in both journalism and religious studies. In 2003, she graduated from the International Academy of Design. She is a contributor to the Bigger Law Firm magazine, and is the Art Director for Adviatech (Custom Legal Marketing's parent company). When she isn't making law firms look their best, Kristen can be found hiking up Mt. Tamalpais or inventing gluten free baking recipes.

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