

## How to avoid content bloat

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Content bloat occurs when a website contains too many pages that have no independent, singular value. A large site is fine — even positive in some cases — but a large site with multiple pages containing very similar information may be suffering from content bloat. This phenomenon is a holdover from earlier days of search marketing when building a page for every possible search term with more attention to quantity than quality was effective.

If you are writing thin articles with only a cursory treatment of the topic merely to have a new [blog](#) post every day, your site may suffer from content bloat. If you are writing pages simply to make your site larger or to cover every iteration of a keyword you can think of, your site may suffer from content bloat. For example, the pages San Francisco Personal Injury Lawyer, Injury Lawyer San Francisco, Personal Injury Attorney San Francisco and San Francisco Personal Injury Attorney are not likely to each contain content that is different from the others in any meaningful way. Nor are they likely to add any value to the user experience; one version could probably say what is in all of those pages combined — and more effectively. Why bother with so many extra pages?

### Why is content bloat a problem?

Content bloat is problematic for both website visitors and search engines for many of the same reasons. It blurs the substance of a site, making it harder to determine which, if any, pages are the most helpful or will best answer visitors' questions.

Reasons to avoid content bloat include:

**1. Confusion.** Users (and search engines) want to find the best match for their query quickly. Searchers do not want to pick from a collection of pages that could answer their questions; they want to be directed to one page that clearly answers their question. Having a number of pages that basically say the same thing with different titles is confusing to potential clients. And studies have repeatedly shown that people tend to avoid making a choice at all when presented with too many options.

**2. Credibility.** Much of what attorneys write online is marketing of some sort. But for content to gain traction, it must serve a purpose that is not purely promotional. It must answer a question, provide entertainment or encourage action. Visitors are turned off when they see post after post about how great a firm is, and Google has learned to parse content and separate marketing fluff from substance. Blatant site bloat can alienate your audience.

**3. Connections.** Links are still an integral part of Google's [algorithm](#), and manual link building is an effective way to earn beneficial links. Content bloat can hinder your link building efforts. If you are trying to convince the owner of another site to link to you, you must offer a compelling reason. High-authority sites pass some of their authority through a link, and owners of these sites are less likely to link to a site that is bloated with unnecessary pages or thin content.

**4. Maintenance.** Content bloat produces needless work to maintain abundant pages. Why would you want to create more hassle for yourself or your staff?

**5. Panda.** Google Panda tries to lower the rankings of sites that contain duplicate content, thin content or low [quality content](#). Filling a site with a slew of pages that are all very similar has potential Panda consequences. If you are churning out page after page only in an attempt to meet an unrealistic content marketing goal, these pages are likely not all of the highest quality. And Google may take notice.

## What can you do to eliminate content bloat?

Several steps can be taken to identify and eradicate content bloat. First, turn to [analytics](#) data. Look for pages that have no backlinks as this can be an indication that the information on these pages is already being provided elsewhere on your site. Similarly, look for pages that receive no [traffic](#). You can learn a lot from your existing content. If a topic was not popular the first time, different variations are unlikely to induce a sudden enthusiasm.

Perform a content review to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your current pages. Try to identify groups of pages that are merely variations on the same keyword and determine whether they could be combined to create fewer, more informative offerings. When you have identified problematic pages, consider using the [Google Webmaster tools URL remove tool](#) to remove the urls from Google's index. Taking the pages off your site manually will work as well, once the new sitemap is reindexed.

## Content marketing the right way

Content marketing without content bloat is possible — and recommended. When producing content, remember that more is not always better. Each page must present an answer or provide value in its own way.

When writing pages or posts or creating videos or infographics, focus on client questions, concerns and

frustrations. You want to be the source of trustworthy answers.

## High-value content can take a variety of forms. Here are some ideas:

**1. Research/reports.** Share any data you have that is relevant to your practice area(s). Reports and case studies are popular among visitors, and they give other websites a good reason to link to your pages.

**2. Actionable advice.** Show your visitors how they can accomplish a task. (And no, telling them to contact an experienced attorney at the bottom of every page does not qualify as actionable advice.) Tell people how to get involved with community or advocacy groups that may be helpful to them. If you are a business law firm, for example, provide advice on successful networking for new business owners. Of course, do not steer visitors away from also contacting your firm, but do show that you understand the many complexities of their situation and can proactively help solve their issues.

**3. Worksheets/documents.** If relevant, offer a pre-consultation checklist or prepare documents outlining the steps necessary to undertake certain tasks, like file for bankruptcy or prepare documents for estate planning. Think of the questions you are asked most often and proactively furnish solutions in categorized, easy to understand documents. Preparing clients for what they can expect when working with you builds trust.

**4. Guides.** Branded guides serve several purposes. They give you a reason to collect emails. They provide your prospective clients with a reason to remember you as they research their legal issue. And they can be used as a reward or giveaway for a simple contest. Divorce guides, bankruptcy guides, estate planning guides, venture capital guides — a guide can be created for any practice.

Content bloat erodes authority and frustrates users. Visitors need to find information quickly without having to click through 5 or 10 search bot-oriented pages first. Give searchers and search engines a reason to trust your firm with thoughtfully-produced, solution-oriented content.

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