

Organic Web Strategy for Lawyers



How lawyers can use strategic organic web marketing to grow their practices.

Welcome to AttorneySync's Organic Web Strategy Guide for Lawyers.

This guide is intended to be a short primer on how lawyers can use organic web strategies to grow their practices online.

We have tried to lay out some of the basic concepts and the most effective strategies for marketing a legal practice online. The guide is certainly not comprehensive. We've worked to keep the guide as short, simple, and understandable as possible.

The guide will cover topics including web design, search engine optimization, and paid advertising. We will cover these topics specifically as they relate to marketing a law practice.

While many of these strategies are geared toward attorneys that focus on consumer-facing practice areas (i.e. injury, criminal defense, bankruptcy, estate planning, etc), the concepts outlined in this booklet can be applied to most practices.

Before you launch into any legal marketing or advertising campaign, it's important to remember that your online activities are likely subject to your state's rules of professional responsibility. **While we strive to provide attorneys with ethical marketing and advertising strategies, we strongly encourage you to check with your state bar should you have any questions as to the permissibility of any marketing or advertising campaign.**

We certainly hope that you find this guide useful. We also encourage you to share the guide and submit questions, comments, or feedback directly to us at: info@attorneysync.com.

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How People Use the Internet

People use the internet in a multitude of ways. Further, the number of people using the internet, the amount of time they spend online, and the ways in which they use it are all growing at an amazing rate.

News

Every single day, more and more people turn to the internet to consume news. Just ask the New York Times and other offline print news organizations.



Research

Performing research tasks has been one of the most common ways people have used the internet since its inception.

Answers

Getting answers to questions is another very common way people use the internet. Message boards, how-to sites, and a variety of other questions and answer sites have grown significantly.

Shop

People use the internet to shop at every stage of the purchase cycle.

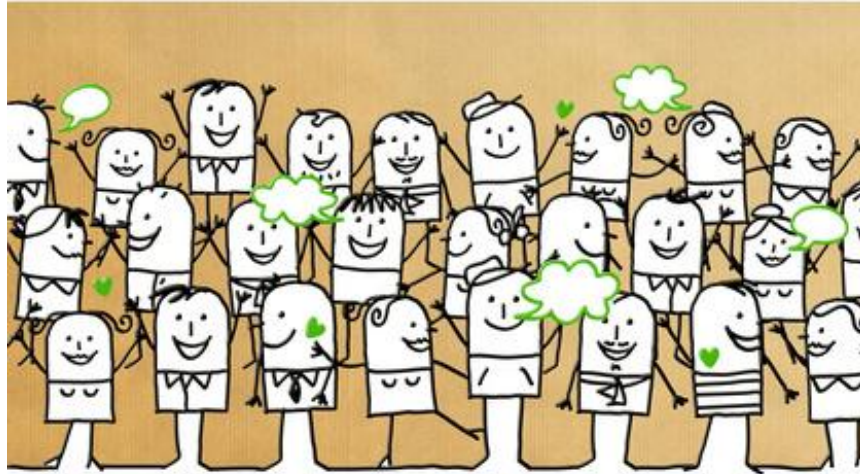


Entertainment

And of course, people turn to the internet for entertainment.

And while marketing a legal practice online is vastly different from selling shoes or providing pure entertainment, **the most successful online marketing efforts deliver to internet users what they are looking for.** So, in order to effectively grow your professional reputation online, you have to understand who is looking, what they are looking for, where they are looking, and how they are looking for you and your services online.

Understanding Your Target Audiences



Before you can begin to develop your professional presence online, you have to understand some things about who you're developing it for.

Who Your Target Audiences Are

When most lawyers begin to think about their target audiences, they immediately jump to prospective clients. After all, getting new clients should be the ultimate goal of any legal marketing or advertising campaign. However, limiting your web strategy to target only those people who are looking to hire an attorney like you online is a **HUGE** mistake.

First, depending upon who your clients are, they may not use the internet to hire lawyers in the way that you are thinking. This is especially true for attorneys that don't have consumer-facing practices (i.e. injury, criminal defense, and bankruptcy).

Second, even for those lawyers who do have consumer-facing practices, the segment of the online legal services consumer market that are searching for your specific type of practice, in your location, and are ready to hire, is a very limited audience.

For example, someone who gets into a car accident might not be thinking about hiring an attorney. However, they may be thinking about things like how to file a claim with their

insurance company or how they are going to pay for their medical bills or what the long-term impact of their injuries might have on their future.

Further, limiting your target audiences to solely to those people that might hire you ignores all of the other people that might be able to assist you in growing your practice. These people may include: referring attorneys, journalists, bloggers, and former clients.

When brainstorming your target audiences, you should begin with a list of all the different types of people that might be interested in the content that you will be publishing online. Here are some people to start with:

- Professional Colleagues
- Personal Friends
- Family Members
- Your Competitors
- Former Clients
- Current Clients
- People at Your Office
- Vendors
- Local Journalists
- Practice-Specific and Subject-Specific Bloggers
- Related Community Organizations
- People You Know Through Professional Organizations
- Prospective Clients

Where Your Target Audiences Are Looking

Once you've identified some of the specific people that make up your target audience, the next step is to start thinking about what they look for online and where they are looking.

Again, don't limit yourself to thinking that your target audiences are only looking for lawyers. Think back to the ways people use the internet. Here are some ideas about what your target audiences might be looking for:

- Information on topics that is really only tangentially related to a legal issue.
- Recommendations from people they know.
- Answers to questions about legally related issues they are facing.

- Local news of a legal bend.
- General information about a legal matter.
- Local attorneys who can help them with their legal situation.
- Specific lawyers to whom they've been referred offline.

And here are some places your target audiences are likely looking:

- Google
- Yahoo
- Bing
- News Websites
- Blogs
- Twitter
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Avvo
- Yelp

While my experience has taught me that these are some of the types of things and places that your target audiences are likely to look online, the best way to find out how your target audiences use the internet is to listen to and observe them.

Ask everyone that contacts you how they found you. Ask people you know where they would go to get information about a relevant legal issue and how they might use the internet to get more information.

Think about how you use the internet. Read what bloggers, journalists, reporters, and other people who publish online are writing about and where they are getting their information.

This will give you critical insight into who your target audiences are, what they are looking for, and where they are looking online.

Once you understand your target audiences, the next step is developing content in which they will be interested and sharing that content with them.

Developing & Sharing Content Online



The biggest factor to whether or not you will have long-term success with organic web strategy will be the quality of your content and your ability to get that content in front of the right audiences.

Listening

Just as listening was crucial to understanding your audiences, it's likewise very important in developing and delivering content to them.

Web content can come in many forms:

- Text on a web page.
- A blog post.
- A blog comment.
- An answer on a discussion board.
- A tweet.
- A status update.
- An image.

- A video.
- An infographic.
- A press release.
- An article.

But no matter what form your web content takes, it needs to satisfy one of the various needs of your target audiences. Does it inform? Does it answer a question? Does it entertain?

Everything you publish online should be designed to satisfy the demand of your online audiences.



Further, it should position you as authoritative on the subject. However, it should do this without you specifically saying that you're authoritative on the subject. Too many lawyers believe that demonstrating expertise is best accomplished by listing their educational and professional accomplishments.

More often than not, the people who are finding you online aren't vetting you by the number of treatises you have written on a particular area of law (admittedly some might be).

Instead, they're vetting your ability to answer their question, solve their problem, or demonstrating your knowledge, skill, and experience through your content.

Developing Great Content

In a nutshell, great content supplies a demand. In practice, great content may accomplish several goals by:

- Motivating a prospective client to **contact** you.
- Motivating a referral source to **refer** to you.
- Motivating an online publisher to **link to** you.

- Motivating someone to **connect** with you online.
- Motivating someone to **subscribe** to your content.
- Motivating someone to further **share** and **publicize** your content.

If you invest time and money into only one thing online, I recommend that it should be content.

Sharing

But developing great content, by itself, isn't enough. You have to get your great content in front of the right audiences that are eager to consume, link to, share, and further publicize it.

This doesn't mean spamming or auto-posting to a bunch of social media profiles. It also doesn't mean comment spamming on various blogs with links to your website.

What it does mean is finding and engaging the people online that are most likely to be interested, ready, willing, and able to engage, discuss, and share with you.

Here are some guidelines for content sharing:

- Listen – Again with the listening. Listen to what and who is talking about subject-matter related to your practice.
- Engage – When the time is right, introduce yourself just like you would offline.
- Interact – Have a discussion with your new online acquaintance. Maybe it's about practicing law, maybe it isn't. Develop rapport.
- Share – When the opportunity arises, share content that you have found or published online. Remember, it doesn't **always** have to be something that you've written. It might be something that you found interesting.

Online sharing is more like offline sharing than many folks would like to admit. Social media and social networking tools are just tools. Like all tools, their effectiveness, or ineffectiveness as the case may be, depends upon the person using them.

Organic Search Visibility



Search Engines

Increasing your visibility in organic search results, more commonly referred to as search engine optimization (SEO) is really about improving a site's user experience and performance in organic search results.

When trying to help people understand search engines, I often refer them to Google's mission statement:

"Google's mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

[-Google](#)

When viewed from this perspective, increasing your organic search visibility is really about helping search engines understand what your web content is about and how it is perceived by the online community as a whole. These concepts are more commonly referred to as "relevance" and "popularity."

Relevance is a measure of how relevant your site is to a search query. **Popularity** is a measure of what the greater internet community thinks about your site.

Google

Search About 1,890,000 results (0.18 seconds)

Everything

Images

Maps

Videos

News

Shopping

More

Washington D.C., DC

Change location

All results

Related searches

More search tools

Ads

[Washington DC Malpractice | WilsonLaw.com](#)
www.wilsonlaw.com/Medical-Malpractice
Experienced **Malpractice Attorneys** Free Consultation Call 877-314-4630

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The **organic search results**, which I have highlighted in green, are the most clicked results on an average search engine result page.

It is also worth noting that the **organic results** should not be confused with paid search results that are designated with “Ads.”

You cannot pay search engines for visibility in their organic results. You can pay search engines to have your ads displayed in the designated advertising areas on a search result page. It’s very important to understand the difference between organic and paid search results.

Getting Technical

While it is my intention to keep this guide straightforward and not overly technical, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention a few technical aspects to organic search visibility.

First, it's important to understand that search engines have to be able to access, or crawl, your web pages in order to add them to their index. If something prevents search engine spiders from crawling your web pages, no amount of great content and links back to your site will help you achieve visibility.

The biggest technical search obstacles are the robots.txt file and the `<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX, NOFOLLOW">` tag.

For the sake of simplicity, I will give you the following advice:

Just use Wordpress (from wordpress.org) and ensure that your privacy settings allow search engines to view your site.

Settings -> General -> Privacy



Privacy Settings

Site Visibility

- I would like my site to be visible to everyone, including search engines (like Google, Bing, Technorati) and archivers
- I would like to block search engines, but allow normal visitors

Save Changes

There are many other technical search considerations, but if you use a mainstream content management system and avoid the two most common issues above, you're likely not to have any trouble.

Signals

Search engines use a variety of signals to understand the relevance and popularity of web pages to deliver search engine results.

These signals that search engines use to understand what a web page is about and how much authority it has garnered from the internet community.

Increasing your visibility in organic search results is all about increasing the quantity and quality of these signals that your web pages are sending to search engines.

Keywords

Keywords or key-phrases are the words or phrases that search engine users type into search engines to find things online.

Brainstorming keywords is much like brainstorming audiences. You want to think about all the search phrases that your target audience might use to find you online.

Once you have developed a good list of keyword targets, you need to organize and prioritize which web pages will target your various keywords. Try not to target more than 2-3 keywords per web page.

You will want to use these target keywords in the following components of your pages and posts:

- Title Tags
- Headers
- Img Alts
- Regular Text
- Internal Link Anchor Text
- Bold and Emphasized Text

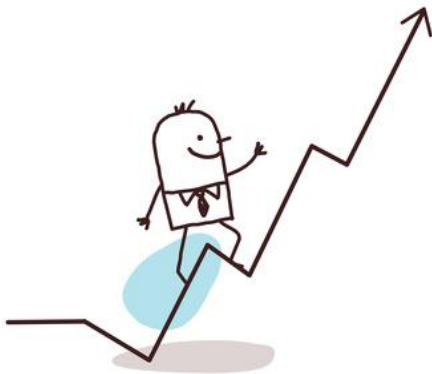
Link Signals

Your ability to appear highly-visible in search results is based upon a wide variety of factors.

One of those factors is the search engine's analysis of other websites that link to your content.

In HTML, a link looks like this:

```
<a href="http://www.yourdomain.com">Anchor Text</a>
```



On the web, it would look like this:

[Anchor Text](#)

Where <http://www.yourdomain.com> is the address that the link **points to** and “Anchor Text” are the clickable words that usually appear in blue.

The quantity, quality, and relevance of links **pointing to** your web pages play a significant role in when and where your web pages will appear in a search engine’s search results.

As previously discussed, one of the best methods for motivating other website owners to point relevant links to your website is by creating great content. However, there are a variety of other ways that you can increase the quantity and quality of links pointing to your website. These might include:

- Registering a profile with an online legal directory.
- Syndicating your content on another website.
- Distributing a press release.
- Sponsoring a charitable organization that recognizes you on their site.
- Taking out a classified ad with your state bar association.
- Lecturing at a law school that publicizes the event with a link to your site.
- Sponsoring an event with a professional organization or association.
- Sponsoring a scholarship.
- Guest blogging on another legal blog.

There are many more ways that you may consider to acquire new links to your website. However, be careful. Some link schemes may violate a search engine’s quality guidelines.

[Link schemes](#) like buying links and massively exchanging links may actually hurt your website’s organic search visibility. Further, if you hire someone to help you with your organic web strategy, make sure you understand specifically what they are planning to do on your behalf.

While it may take months, or even years, to establish a strong organic search presence, it can take only minutes to get penalized.

Local Signals

If you have a local law practice, local signals are more important than ever in achieving local organic search visibility.

Local signals include business citations and reviews of your services on a variety of local data provider sites.

In a nutshell, you want your business name, address, and local phone number to appear prominently and consistently across these local data provider sites.

Further, you want to do what you can to encourage both professional, as well as, client reviews on these sites.

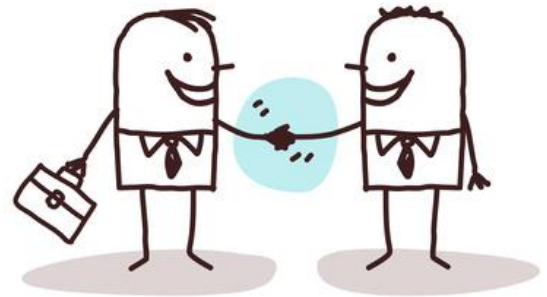
This is an area where you will want to check your state's rules about testimonials.

Social Signals

Today, and in the future, social signals are playing a more and more important role in organic search visibility.

These signals occur when other people +1, like, tweet, or otherwise socially promote your content through their social media and social networking profiles.

As discussed above, the best way to increase these social signals is to engage, discuss, interact, and share with others online.



Some Final Thoughts

It's important to keep in mind that a successful organic web strategy can take a long time to develop. If you're looking for a marketing and advertising programs that generate results today, then organic web strategy probably isn't the right fit for your goals.

On the other hand, if you're looking to grow a professional online presence that will last throughout your career and beyond, then I highly recommend that you start making investments today.

Keep in mind that none of the strategies that I discussed here is a get-rich-quick scheme. Search engine optimization and social media should not be thought of as overnight rain-making strategies. They are only online enhancements to more traditional reputation building and networking.

Further, organic web strategy is just one piece to a comprehensive internet marketing campaign. While organic marketing can be extremely powerful, you should also examine paid internet and search advertising, email marketing, and a variety of other online marketing tools.

Finally, this guide was really just an overview of some the more important concepts, techniques, and strategies that can help you develop organic web visibility. Admittedly, many aspects were only very minimally touched upon. Hopefully, you came away from this guide with a basic understand of the fundamentals of growing your practice organically online.

We believe that with an understanding of the concepts outlined here, you will be better equipped to make informed decisions about what you do online and which web marketing professionals you choose to work with.

As I stated at the beginning of this guide, should you have any questions, comments, or feedback, I strongly encourage you to contact us directly at: info@attorneysync.com.

