



[Bankruptcy Lawyer Sees New Business from Participation in Online Legal Advice Forum](#)

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by [Stephen Fairley](#)

My friend Larry Bodine (at right) recently interviewed Orange County bankruptcy attorney David L. Gibbs for his [LawMarketing blog](#) about the benefits Gibbs has received from participating on the Lawyers.com Ask a Lawyer forum; here is that interesting interview:

LexisNexis® Martindale-Hubbell®: Can you tell me about your law practice? Who are your typical clients and how does a new client typically find you?

David L. Gibbs: Our clients are primarily homeowners in our small town in South Orange County, Calif., who experience problems with their homes or other real estate they own. Most of it is residential foreclosure activity. The single biggest driver of our business is word of mouth, because it is such a small community. But more and more we are receiving leads from online sources, including Lawyers.com and the Ask A Lawyer section on Lawyers.com.

LNMH: How long have you been participating on Ask A Lawyer?

DLG: It's been almost a year.

LNMH: I heard that you've gotten several new clients as a result of your Ask A Lawyer work. Some of the other attorneys I've talked to have told me that lawyers shouldn't expect to get new business from Ask A Lawyer because its primary benefit is search engine optimization. Why do you think you've had success in driving new business where others haven't?



DLG: It's probably a combination of factors: The sheer number of answers I'm providing and the areas of law where I'm posting.

LNMH: What about the other benefits you've seen from your participation? You mentioned the links back to your website.

DLG: I haven't tried to quantify the search engine optimization benefits. I have gone into Google Webmaster Tools, looked at the profile for our website and seen click-thrus from Lawyers.com to our site, so I assume it's working. I just have to think that just being on Lawyers.com and posting frequently is helping drive traffic to our website.

LNMH: How much time do you spend in the average week answering questions on Ask A Lawyer?

DLG: I'm not on there daily, but when I do get on, I usually spend about an hour at a shot, and I do that a couple times a week. So probably two to three hours a week.

LNMH: Are you doing this during office hours or on your own time?

DLG: Mostly during office hours. For example, I'll jump on if I have a half an hour free and don't have time to start something new. Or if it's slow, I'll go onto Lawyers.com and spend an hour or so answering questions.

LNMH: What's the strangest or most memorable question you've ever answered?

DLG: [Laughter]

LNMH: The laugh makes me think there must be one or two.

DLG: There are tons of them. I'd have to say that landlord-tenant law is the most frequent source of weird questions. They're all over the map. It seems that about half of the questions are comical in some respect. Not comical in the sense of making fun of people, but weird stuff happens in that arena. You hear about landlords peeping on their tenants or walking into apartments without any advance notice.

LNMH: Understanding that you probably don't want the competition, would you recommend Ask A Lawyer to a colleague with whom you weren't competing?

DLG: Absolutely. It's a great tool and the fact that it's still free is fantastic. Ask A Lawyer is a good resource for consumers. And although the search engine optimization benefits are hard to quantify, it can't be a bad thing for attorneys.

LNMH: What advice would you give to other attorneys who want to participate on Ask A Lawyer?

DLG: Limit yourself to areas where you know the law. On other online legal advice forums, I've seen attorneys taking guesses on answers in areas where they don't practice. Don't do that, you look like an idiot. Focus on what you know.

Second, be human. I've seen responses on other online legal advice forums where attorneys seem very condescending and are talking above their audience.

Finally, jump in and get going. It's very easy to do.

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Stephen is the CEO of The Rainmaker Institute, the nation's largest law firm marketing company specializing in lead conversion for small law firms and solo practitioners. Over 9,000 attorneys nationwide have benefited from learning and implementing the proven marketing and lead conversion strategies taught by The Rainmaker Institute, LLC.

He works exclusively with attorneys and partners at small and solo law firms to find new clients fast using online and offline legal marketing strategies and to convert more prospects into paying clients using automated marketing and by fixing their follow up systems.

Stephen is a nationally recognized law firm marketing expert and the international best-selling author of 12 books and 10 audio and video training programs.

He is a Registered Corporate Coach (RCC) through the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, has a Master's degree in Counseling and a second Master's in Clinical Psychology. Stephen's doctoral training is from Wheaton College (IL) in

Clinical Psychology and he practiced as a therapist for several years in Virginia and Chicago. After leaving the field of clinical psychology Stephen founded and ran two technology companies, one in the restaurant industry and another in the health sciences field prior to launching Today's Leadership Coaching, LLC, a Chicago-based professional business coaching and consulting firm.

The Rainmaker Institute, LLC grew directly out of his experiences first speaking to, then coaching, consulting with, and training attorneys.

Stephen's work has been noted and quoted in the American Bar Association's Journal, Entrepreneur, Inc., Fortune Small Business, Harvard Management Update, Business Advisor, the Chicago Tribune, Crain's Chicago Business, and on the front covers of AdvantEdge and Choice magazines. He is a member of the prestigious National Speaker's Association and his Rainmaker seminars are sponsored several times every year by some of the largest state and local bar associations in the country.

On a personal note, Stephen loves to travel and has been to 33 countries. He enjoys boating, fishing and his two Bichon Frise dogs, is married to his college sweetheart, Ruth, and loves living in the desert just outside of Phoenix, Arizona.



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