



A Link-Free Future For Your Law Firm's Search Engine Marketing

Google Penguin 2.0 rolled out recently and Matt Cutts' assertion that it's targeting black-hat SEO seems to be viable. The first Google Penguin caused a lot of collateral damage for websites that inadvertently crossed the ethical link-building line. Thus far, Google Penguin 2.0 appears to be more discriminate, hitting websites that knowingly and willingly acted unethically to achieve links.

But, what if links were on their way out of the realm of relevance? That's what Dave Langdale believes as outlined in his article on Youmoz titled, SEO: The Future Is Bright, The Future Is Linkless.

In his article, Langdale explains how Google has evolved beyond the need for links; it can match relevance of a brand by reviewing the content around the brand and associate profiles such as Google Authorship.

Here is how Google used to review relevance:

Your law firm's website is <http://lawexample.com/>, and you are a personal injury lawyer in Chicago.

In order for Google to know that your website is relevant to injury law in the windy city, you would need to have a bunch of third-party links pointing back to <http://lawexample.com/> using anchor text of "Personal injury lawyer" or "Chicago personal injury attorney."

With a bunch of respectable websites linking to <http://lawexample.com/> with the keyword, Chicago personal injury lawyer (along with a number of other elements), Google will determine that your website is relevant to the keywords "Chicago personal injury lawyer" and theoretically rank your website higher in their index. Times have changed.

Say your law firm's name is the Smith & Smith Law Center. You have a Google+ Local profile for the Smith & Smith Law Center, which tells Google that the Smith & Smith Law Center's office is in Chicago and your website is <http://lawexample.com/>

Founding partner John Smith has used Google Authorship to associate his firm's website and blog with his name.

Now, John Smith can talk to a local news reporter about a serious accident in Chicago, the newspaper's website can reference "attorney John Smith of the Smith & Smith Law Center," and, due to the nature of the article and association with other Google profiles, Google can determine that the Smith & Smith Law Center is related to accident and injury law in Chicago, Illinois without the newspaper linking to the law firm's website.



For link brokering, text hacking, and search engine optimization firms this is bad news, because their entire business model was based gaming the system using tricks instead of marketing.

However, for SEO | Law Firm and parent company, Adviatech, this is the Promised Land. For the last eight years, we have modeled our company as a public relations and marketing company which focuses on online exposure and lead building. When our clients came to us after attending a seminar or listening to a podcast and said, “We need to exchange links with our websites,” we would refuse to do so. The question became so burdensome that in 2007, we actually stated our refusal to do any sort of link exchanges for clients within our contract.

When clients were talking about guest blogging for the sake of links or commenting on other websites to get links back to theirs, we would insist that they take the high road and not do things that could cheapen their brand.

So, as link building and spreading the word become less about actual keywords that are hyper-linked to a website and more about how a brand name is presented within truly useful content, we get a little excited.

Search engine marketing may finally be exiting the awkward adolescent years and entering a new era — one that is about true brand marketing and not tricks and gimmicks.

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