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Law Firm Websites: Tips for Making Your Content the Star

From the largest national firms to the solo practitioner, these days everyone has a website. Unfortunately, not everyone has a truly business development-driven website. Forget for a moment the world of technology…we challenge firms to use their online presence as more than just a showplace and focus on the words, the message and the **BRANDING** that can stimulate business development. Sure, visitors may be impressed with your tech-savvy but what makes them stay and read is good, clear, interesting content that reinforces your points of differentiation.

Websites are truly one of the easiest ways to give potential clients (and others) a good picture of who you are and what you do and have the added bonus of being easily updated on a moment's notice. It is the only vehicle that can present up-to-the-minute information about what's happening within your firm. Don't let your site get carried away with the bells and whistles of technology… let it be driven by your brand message. Here are our top tips for making content the star of your site…

Stay True To Your Brand

Nothing is more of a disconnect than a firm website that takes on an entirely new visual identity. Your site should reflect your firm, from the brochures and advertising to the overall personality (the lawyers, the office, the practice focus)—websites aren't the time to try something new. Stay true to your tone, your color scheme, and your voice and remember: Repetition, Repetition, Repetition.

Be Clear About What You Do

I can't tell you how many law firm websites I've visited where it took me a few minutes to understand what they specialize in. Take the time to have a clear logo, full firm name and brief synopsis of what you do on the home page. Also be sure that your navigation bar is well organized and easily visible.

Be Concise But Informative

Your firm website is a great place to expand on information you may have left out of other legal marketing materials, but be sure to edit yourself. Few people are looking to read pages of information so make use of graphic elements like pullout quotes, big words and powerful statements to get your brand message across. If you must go longer than two or three paragraphs consider using subheads between them to better organize the information. This will allow readers to scan the page and still understand your points of differentiation. Hook readers with a strong opening statement and make use of a "more" link for those who want to read on.

Make It Easy To Find You

Don't make potential clients (or even journalists and referral sources) search all over to find your contact information. Have a clear "Contact Us" button with all of the relevant information... including a phone number! In fact, we often advise clients to list their phone number on every page. For firms looking for publicity, you may consider a "newsroom" page listing contact information for your marketing director (or managing partner) as well as recent firm news and mentions.

Be Client-Friendly

Think like the client. What would you like to know? That means keeping attorney bios clearly organized and easy-to-read; practice area descriptions free from legalese; and (once again) contact information clearly labeled and thorough. You might also consider adding a specific contact person for each practice area to allow clients instant access to the people they need. For firms in large cities it's never a bad idea to include a map (or link to one) showing where your office is located as well as information on parking or other general tips.

Update Your Site Often

Be honest when planning your site. If your firm events occur only once a year...don't put up an events page. If you're not able to keep up with blog posts... don't add a blog. Be aware of what's online and make the necessary adjustments—especially when it comes to personnel. Encourage attorneys to update their bios to include a new focus, new notable cases or new recognitions.

When it comes to your site the easiest way to ensure it's kept on track is to designate one person to oversee all content—ask around the office, you may find an assistant or associate with a tech background or interest who will give the site the attention it needs. Another tool is to employ Google Analytics. Simple to set up, this service will let you see where your visitors are coming from and help you tailor your content to make the most of their time there. Whether you have 30 visitors or 30,000, in the end, taking 10 or 15 minutes a week (or even a month) to evaluate and update your firm website can make all the difference in the world.