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Your firm has something to say; the online community is already searching for information that you have valuable expertise on. Will your firm be among the voices they hear?”

The Online Presence Toolkit: Visual Content Marketing Tools You Need to Build a Standout Online Presence for Your Firm and Attorneys

The biggest mistake law firms make, according to *Forbes*, is the belief that they do not need an online presence. In fact, as noted by Khalil Salman, a Galveston attorney, “A firm that doesn’t have a strong online presence is failing to reach a great cross section of potential clients and just giving up those potential clients to their competitors.”

So how does a leader in the business of law help his or her firm and attorneys begin to stand out in this new age of online proliferation? Let’s look at a few strategic tools that every firm should have in its toolkit to tackle the process of building a strong online presence.

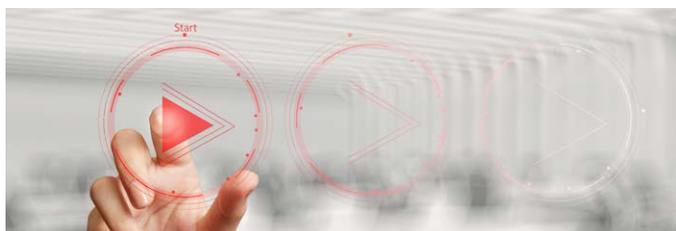
TOOL #1: WEBSITE

If you’re not online, you don’t exist. But with more than a billion websites at a consumer’s fingertips, you’ve got to make your online voice heard. One of the best ways to do that is to begin with a modernized website.

What do you expect when you visit a website? While this list may not surprise you, comparing your current firm website to this list might:

- **Clear message:** Does your homepage communicate who you are and your firm’s mission?
- **Enhanced presentation:** When was the last time you updated headshots of your attorneys? Do the images on your website convey a message, or are they simply space fillers?

- **Progressive navigation:** Is your site intuitive, or do your clients get lost and frustrated trying to find pertinent information? Do you employ crosslinks throughout your site to help facilitate engagement and improve search engine optimization (SEO)?
- **Easy-to-find contact information:** Is your contact information easy to locate, or is it hidden below the fold? You may be surprised to find out that 68 percent of firm websites do not have an email address on their homepage, and 27 percent do not have a phone number listed either.
- **Mobile-friendly view:** According to Cisco, smartphone traffic will exceed PC traffic by 2020. Is your website prepared?



TOOL #2: VIDEO

About 6 out of 10 executives would rather watch a video than read text. They're certainly not alone. Video is the choice of today's generation and helps to reach and engage your audience.

Have you invested in high-quality video that communicates the message and culture of your firm and attorneys? If not, you are likely falling behind the pack faster and faster each day. Law firms are using video to tell their stories with firm mission statements, answering area-of-practice FAQs, and projecting their attorneys' expertise with video bios — and they are attracting new clients for their efforts.

- **Attorney bios attract clients.** In fact, the bios page of a firm's website is typically the most visited page — 56 percent of page views within a firm website are to attorney bios. In a world where the average attention span is a mere eight seconds, employing video here is one more way to help gain and maintain interest. Bio videos can also help personalize the experience for potential clients.
- **YouTube is your new best friend.** YouTube is the No. 2 search engine in the world. If you create video content that can help inquiring individuals answer simple questions in an easy-to-follow manner, YouTube will serve it up and help you reach more people. What's more, with YouTube's annotation feature, you can create links within your videos to

your website — that's an incredibly powerful way to drive engaged prospects to an opt-in page!

- **One video can go a long way.** Once you have created your video and uploaded it to your YouTube Channel, you can leverage it in your blogs to increase its reach. Promoting your videos on social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+) or in an electronic newsletter, email campaign or podcast can help a firm to expand its visibility. Countless inexpensive customer relationship management (CRM) systems allow a firm to establish a social media strategy that can rapidly distribute video content and other information in a coordinated manner. And if tackling the online element seems outside of your wheelhouse, invest the expertise of a business partner.

TOOL #3: BLOGGING AND NEWSLETTERS

Establishing individual attorneys or firm practice groups as experts in their areas of practice, and communicating to your consumer base in an easy-to-understand, down-to-earth manner, is priceless. Blogging and/or a consistent newsletter with a targeted topic supported by real-life examples, "how-to" checklists, or specific recommendations are seen in the online community as expert information.

Blogs and newsletters posted to social media, along with links to your website filled with educational white papers, videos and Q&As, can create a linked environment of quality information with staying power. Your firm has something to say; the online community is already searching for information that you have valuable expertise on. Will your firm be among the voices they hear?

Remember, these three tools are not intended to be all-encompassing. Start with these areas and have fun creating a client experience that you would expect to receive from anyone you do business with. Good luck, and remember to stand out! ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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