

THREE SIMPLE STEPS FOR ONLINE MARKETING SUCCESS

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Embracing online marketing can be challenging for law firms that have traditionally relied on good old-fashioned word of mouth and a yellow pages ad as their core marketing strategy. None the less it is imperative for the ongoing viability of your firm that you embrace a digital presence.

Many small firms continue to avoid committing to an online marketing program due to factors such as cost, the resources required and a fear of the unknown.

As a result, those firms that are willing to embrace this aspect of law firm marketing still have an opportunity to get ahead of their competitors with minimal effort or expense.

Here are three simple first steps towards success for small firms moving into online marketing for the first time.

1. Get your house in order

The central aspect of all your online marketing should be your website. This is where you are aiming to direct most of your traffic and is the place where your persuasive content converts an online visitor into a potential client.

Almost everyone's website can be improved.

First and foremost, make sure it's up to date. This includes look, style and content. It is essential that staff lists are kept up to date as team pages are often the most visited pages on a law firm website after the home page.

Content is king when we talk about websites. Google loves fresh, useful content so it is essential that you regularly add to your site to dramatically improve your chances of ranking well in search results over competitor websites that will rank lower if their content is static and stale.

Ensure that you write for your audience, not for yourself or your peers. Adding content is great, but adding the right content is even better. Remember to talk about the solutions you can provide to your client.

Don't just talk about yourself. Outlining your experience is important but only as a tool to impress on your client that you are right to help them. Don't bother with content that will only impress other legal practitioners.

Having a website that is modern, well maintained and full of fresh, client focussed content will pay immediate dividends in google rankings, viewer engagement and client conversion.

2. Focussing on your location will save you money!

There are millions of people online everyday searching Google and social media sites, but are they actually potential clients? If you're a firm in Bathurst you don't advertise in the Sydney Morning Herald or the Sydney Yellow Pages. Applying this same approach to online marketing will produce better returns on your investment.

For example:

- Prepare content for your website that references your location
- If you are paying for online advertising with Google or Facebook make sure you're targeting local searches and phrases
- If you pay an SEO company to get you better Google rankings don't chase "family lawyer" when you will catch most of your genuine potential clients for far less cost by targeting "Bathurst family lawyer"

3. Choose the right medium for your message

The idea of focussing your online efforts should also be applied to the choices you make in your methods of communication. Are your clients on Facebook? Do they want to read your content there? Are there LinkedIn groups where potential referrers of work gather? Do your clients form an online community that is active on Twitter or would a regular email newsletter be more to their liking?

For example:

- Facebook pages are a great way to connect with your clients if you're a personal services firm. It's a great replacement for traditional "firm happenings" newsletters. But Facebook is almost entirely useless for marketing a business focussed legal area such as commercial property.
- LinkedIn is a great way to stay connected with a large group of referrers and contacts. Or to demonstrate your niche industry expertise by starting a discussion group for legal issues in your area. But if you're running a conveyancing practice your time would be much better spent elsewhere.
- Twitter can be effective in engaging with a community of like minded people if both you and your audience are regular users of the service. But if you're a commercial lawyer and you understand that your clients are too busy for Twitter, a regular, concise, email newsletter with information directly relevant to them will be far more effective.

By starting with these three steps the wide array of online marketing choices is far more manageable and effective. So before you sign up for expensive SEO campaigns or online advertising take the time to get your house in order, understand how your location influences your marketing and then make sure you choose the right medium for your message.