

New Jersey Law Journal

VOL. CLXXVII – NO. 1 – INDEX 27

JULY 5, 2004

ESTABLISHED 1878

MANAGEMENT

By JAY P. GRANAT, Ph.D

How to Expand Your Law Firm With Internet Marketing

21 ways to attract more clients

Can you really get more clients by utilizing the Internet? What is the best way to utilize a Web site to attract more clients, enhance our firm's image and increase profits?

Law firms are increasingly relying on the Internet to grow their practices. Corporate law firms, personal injury firms, matrimonial firms, trust and estates firms, immigration firms, real estate attorneys and criminal law firms have all increased profits by using the Internet and their respective Web sites effectively.

However, the Internet is a new advertising landscape and it is easy for law firms to waste a lot of time and money by employing the wrong marketing and advertising strategies.

Here are some guidelines that will illustrate how attorneys can use this medium in a cost effective manner.

1. Select a Web site with a memorable name. For example, if you run a personal injury firm, your site ought to have a name that relates to accidents, injuries or medical malpractice. The name ought to be short, simple and easy to recall. There are still many clever names that are readily available for law

Granat is the founder of ExpandYourPractice.com.

firms. Some states have rules that prevent law firms from using certain kinds of names, so check with your ethics committee before you forge ahead.

2. The design of your site must be simple, elegant and user friendly. Moreover, the site should fit the psychographic and demographic nature of your target audience. If you are trying to reach software engineers, you need a different kind of site than does a matrimonial law firm.

3. Many law firms make the mistake of designing a site that suits the members of the firm. It is more important that the site considers the psychology of your clients and potential clients.

4. Show examples of your planned Web site to a panel of existing clients and use their feedback and opinions to determine the best designs, content, graphics and colors for your site. Your Web site is an advertisement for your firm. This "ad" must compel people to want to contact your firm via phone, fax, e-mail or face-to-face appointment. If your site does not encourage people to reach out to you, your site is worthless.

5. The colors used on your site should fit in with your firm's décor, logo, area of practice and image.

6. You must develop a site which

sets your firm apart from competing firms. Do not imitate what your competition is doing. Be innovative, creative and informative. There is some basic information that you need to have on your Web site. However, the way the information is disseminated and the information you include on your Web site can set you apart from other firms practicing in your area of the law or in your geographic area.

7. Link your site with those of your colleagues and referral sources. For example, if you do trusts and estates work, you may want to share links with accountants and financial planners who refer clients to you. This is "a win-win" for all the parties involved.

8. Create an "ezine" or Internet magazine for existing clients and new clients. Update this online newsletter monthly and send clients and potential clients useful information. Do not send them self-serving press releases about your firm. Send them some free and valuable information that will help them in their business, professions or personal life in some way. Similarly, you can create an ezine for referral sources. For instance, if you practice family law, you can have your ezine read by psychologists, psychiatrists and marriage counselors. You can help to keep them informed on changes in the law that impact them and their clients.

9. Remember, the Internet is a relationship-building tool as well as an informational device. Use it to stay in touch with referral sources and colleagues.

10. Designing a fine Web site is a waste of time, unless you can also draw visitors to your site. In order to

bring traffic to your site, you must integrate your Web activities with your other advertising, marketing and public relations efforts. For example, if you utilize print advertisements, the yellow pages, trade journals, direct mail, brochures or seminars, you must promote your Web site in all of these materials. Offer free items to motivate people to visit your site.

11. Consider using pay per click programs to get more traffic. There is a real science to selecting and monitoring the most effective key words for drawing people to your site.

12. Consider using optimization programs to allow your site to get high rankings on search engines. Again, there is a science to doing this effectively, but it can generate a great deal of traffic, if it is done correctly.

13. In my opinion, you must be in the top three listings of the major search engines if your site is to be an effective marketing tool.

14. Add relevant content to your site on a frequent basis and change the look of your site periodically.

15. You can also use your site as a profit center by charging other companies a fee for having a presence on your site. For example, if you do estate planning, you may want to allow brokerage firms to have an advertisement on your site.

16. Be sure to keep good data on your traffic, as this will help you sell advertising space on your site. It will also give you a sense of where leads and new clients are coming from. There are several companies that offer programs that allow you to keep track of where your site visitors are coming from and what they are viewing on your site.

17. You can also sell e-books, books, tape programs and software products on your site. These kinds of items can enhance your reputation as an expert and can be another source of income for your firm.

18. You can offer seminars and conferences via your Web site.

19. Many law firms have had success in increasing Internet traffic by using radio commercials, print advertisements, television appearances, articles and speaking engagements in conjunction with their Internet efforts. For example, if you appear on a television show, you can add a video clip to your site. Similarly, you can use your site as an electronic press kit. That is, you can refer reporters to your site, if they need an expert in a particular area.

20. Consider adding an "Ask The Lawyer" section or a "Free Consultation" section to your site. While this may be time consuming, it is an excellent way to make contact with new clients.

21. Designing and managing a site are complicated tasks. Most law firms will benefit from working with outside consultants who have experience with this form of marketing. ■