

Internet Advertising Trends for Law Firms

In 1996 when I first started my Internet-related career, I remember reading about some of the pioneer advertisers on the Internet. Two Arizona lawyers offered immigration services on some Usenet groups and received an outpouring of hate mail. Although negative for the lawyers, the lesson learned is that there are many potential clients on the Net, and the market is there. So how does a law firm tap into this massive market?

Practically any firm can succeed on the Net by offering information and services in a positive, unobtrusive manner. Recently, a Madison Avenue advertising executive, commenting on the use of Bank of America's ATM advertising, said that a person goes to the ATM to get money, not see an advertisement. Lawyers not only have to deal with issues of whether people want their marketing material, but also whether it will spark a certain resentment toward lawyers and advertising. That is why spamming, pop-ups and banner advertisements offer little to the individual law firm because of their obtrusive nature and overbroad market.

Therefore, a content-rich, well developed, keyword-specific site and a pay-per-click Internet marketing campaign offer an unobtrusive means for a firm to market its services

Content-Rich, Well Developed, Keyword-Specific Site

When I first started submitting sites on the Internet, everything was free and people would simply submit hundreds of keyword-rich pages to the search engines and achieve excellent results. Today, this method is not as successful because search engine technology is more advanced due to the use of complex algorithms to rank sites.

Many law firms spend time providing quality content for clients and prospective clients. Those firms that ventured to use this method are now reaping the benefits because every search engine, such as Google, needed to begin indexing sites to build content. One of my clients, who put together a content-rich Web site six years ago, receives an average of more than 4,000 unique visits per month with minimal maintenance. The lesson to be learned is that law firms should make a **REAL EFFORT** to produce content for their sites using Meta-tags, descriptions and titles. They should be unique for each page on the site.

Another approach firms might take is to pay for listings on search engines such as Yahoo!. Otherwise, the Web site will not get listed. But firms must be wary of scams on the Internet because there are many; and, certainly, law firms are not immune. Sixty-dollar fee-based search engine placement services, for example, typically just plug a Web site in a program and spend only about five minutes "submitting" the Web site. Most of these services offer no advice on Web content and page construction.

Pay-Per-Click Keywords

Perhaps the biggest trend today is pay-per-clicks. As the name suggests, the pay-per-click (PPC) search engines allow you to bid on keywords and pay for each visitor that "clicks thru" to your site. The more you bid, the higher you appear in the search rankings for that particular keyword. PPCs are appealing to law firms because most practices are regional and the most-traveled Internet destinations use the PPC services of Overture, Google, Findwhat and the European Espotting. In addition, these services work with the

most-visited search sites on the Internet such as Microsoft, AOL, Yahoo!, Google, Lycos, Ask, About, Excite, Alta vista and Looksmart.

All the PPC services work hard to provide relevancy for their listings, since a "click" is what makes them money. Because of this, they provide tools for tracking popular click-thru terms. For example, a law firm can sign up on Google and it will provide the firm with the ability to analyze the amount of clicks that each keyword search will deliver. Overture, which uses an excellent keyword tool, charges a minimum per month but delivers an excellent service. It has been doing this for some time and knows its business well. If you are unsure of the most effective keywords to select, consultants may be able to assist you with the selection process based on geographic location or their own methods of keyword marketing.

Conclusion

The nature of legal marketing demands content-rich, unobtrusive offerings for prospective clients. A **content-rich, well developed, keyword-specific site and using pay per click keywords** will provide excellent benefits for your clients and prospective clients and allow your firm to build on its future marketing efforts on the Internet.

Remember: **CONTENT IS KING!**

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