

New Year, New Website!

Is Your Website Delivering New Clients to You?

By Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC



Every month, I step back, talk to clients, and diligently work to create content that will be relevant to readers of *Attorney at Law Magazine*. This article will focus on the trends and best practices surrounding your number one marketing tool, second only to your dazzling personality – your website! I am continually amazed to see websites that are five to seven years old and haven't been touched since their creation.

THE HUB AND SPOKES OF YOUR MARKETING EFFORT

Remember, nearly every prospective client and referral source you work with will visit your website before calling you. You need a website that captures what makes you and your firm a unique butterfly in the legal industry. Your website is your electronic calling card and has the ability to attract or repel important contacts. Think of your website as the “hub” of your practice. From this important communications hub, extend multiple spokes including social media, e-communications, blogging, speaking, trade and professional association activities, writing articles, client satisfaction, client service, networking, public relations, community involvement, an integrated communications database, and more.

2017 MUST-HAVES FOR YOUR WEBSITE

Consider the following for your new website:

- ▶ **Responsive Design** – It's surprising how many law firm websites do *not* have responsive designs. A responsive website means your site will look great and have intuitive navigation on any device including mobile phones, tablets and on computer screens of all sizes.
- ▶ **Unique and Visually Compelling Graphics** - Do your best to use compelling, original photography, and graphic design. You want the photography on your website to augment your branding ... not to look like every other law firm's website. *Pro tip:* Avoid the scales of justice.
- ▶ **Google Analytics** – If you can't measure it – it's not worth doing. *Every* website today should have Google Analytics installed in the back-end code. This allows you to see what keywords drove visitors to your site, what pages they visited, how long they stayed, what device they used, and myriad other data points.
- ▶ **Informative and Engaging Content** – I know you're a lawyer and that you are a good writer, but *please* do not write the content for your website. Hire a professional copywriter or copyeditor who knows how to write for SEO, not to be confused with days gone by where SEO was repeating the same words and phrases throughout your website.



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▶ **SEO Integration** – Search engine optimization is all about maximizing the number of visitors to your website and ensuring your site appears at the top of the search results for keywords *you* determine. SEO should be incorporated from the initial website planning stage, to the infrastructure development, and into the content development phase. SEO strategies then need to be implemented consistently month-to-month to ensure your website is found by those you want to find it!

▶ **Unique and Consistent Branding** – Sometimes your new website will motivate the rebranding of other firmwide elements like the name of the firm, logo and other visual characteristics that distinguish your firm from others. *Pro tip:* Consistent branding builds name recognition and strengthens brand identity.

▶ **Embedded Videos** – We use videos to create “Virtual Consultation Rooms” on our clients’ websites. Think of it as a video-based question and answer session but without you having to spend the time with people who may or may not hire you! The videos can all but eliminate the free consultations many law firms offer. We are talking about embedded video players versus just sending your visitor to YouTube.

▶ **Calls to Action** – Better known as CTAs. This feature, if done properly, will drive prospective clients to your virtual doorstep if you offer information that is timely and relevant to them *free* of charge, and if you have a system in place to follow up with those who have reached out to you.

▶ **Social Media Integration** – We’re talking about company LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter pages, easily accessible from the website, and promoted through e-communications and social postings. *Pro tip:* Make sure your social media sites connect smoothly with your website.

▶ **Contact Form** – While you need a standard disclaimer, you will be amazed at the inquiries you receive from prospective clients delivered directly into your inbox.

▶ **Blog** – You need one. Plan a strategy for creating and posting relevant content. *Pro tip:* Make it easy for visitors to subscribe to your blog posts by having a blog subscription feature on your homepage.

▶ **Embedded Surveys** – Creating interactive surveys on your website allows your prospective clients to engage with you. Create a survey: “Is Your Company a Good Candidate for a Merger?” or “Would the Collaborative Approach Work for Your Divorce?” ... You get the idea.

▶ **Mini “Microsite” for Practice Areas** – Each practice area landing page should provide a gateway into everything about that service. Include links to client feedback, a practice summary, related blog posts, representative experience, attorneys in that practice and published articles.

▶ **Tab-Based Menu Structure for Biographies** – Your biography should also serve as a “mini website” to showcase *you*, and should include a summary, education, presentations, articles written, community activities, awards, blog posts, results, client feedback, and more.

▶ **Webinars** – A newer way to provide thought leadership and content to your target audiences. You can host live webinars and post them in a webinar archive page on your site.

If you incorporate the strategies above in your next website, you will ensure this important tool will generate real business for you now and into the future!



Terrie S. Wheeler, MBC, is the founder and president of Professional Services Marketing, LLC. PSM has worked with scores of legal industry clients on the planning and development of high impact websites that consistently deliver qualified leads and new clients.

They are always happy to share their honest views on your existing website and recommendations for improvement. Let Terrie know if you're interested by emailing her at Terrie@psm-marketing.com.