

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION



ALWAYS, SOMETIMES, NEVER...
ADVICE FOR LAW FIRM MARKETERS



Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for law firm websites is very complex. It involves not only your firm's website, but its brand and reputation, its online and offline marketing, its presence in the community and myriad other factors. This resource contains some helpful advice but should not be considered an exhaustive list of ways to achieve success with your law firm's SEO.



ALWAYS

Best practices for SEO say that the following should always be done in attempts to improve organic search appearance and improve rankings.

○ **WORK TO IMPROVE PAGE SPEED:**

It is important to make sure that the pages on your site load quickly. It has been shown that faster pages often rank higher and bring in more visitors and contacts. If you feel your site is taking a long time to load, chances are your users probably feel the same way and may move on to your competitors' websites, instead.

○ **PUBLISH COMPREHENSIVE CONTENT:**

Don't be fooled that search engines only want to see X number of words on your page to determine it's quality. If you are going to put a piece of content on your website, make it the very best it can be. Go deep and provide as much information as you can to satisfy your reader. Add frequently asked questions, videos and other graphics to support your content.

○ **OPTIMIZE YOUR PAGES:**

As good as search engines are at trying to provide the searcher with the right information you need to help them in any way you can. Add title tags that sell the user on visiting your site, headings to break up your content into logical sections and add images, statistics and other information that supports your message on each page.

○ **ADD INTERNAL LINKS:**

Most people spend a lot of time trying to get other people to link to them, but one of the easiest ways to get quality incoming links and increase the relevancy of your website is to link your topic pages together. Keep your internal links topically relevant to each other and don't spam. Link with the visitor in mind first, leaving search engines as a secondary priority.

ALWAYS

○ **PERFORM REGULAR CONTENT AUDITS:**

Periodic evaluation of your website's content and making adjustments to your content strategy are some of the best ways to keep your content focused and fresh. Without content audits, you run the risk of having thin or duplicate content, or old and rarely-visited content that gets very little or no interaction. All of these situations can hurt your organic search visibility.

○ **CHECK YOUR SITE'S TECHNICAL HEALTH:**

There are many hidden elements of a website that may be keeping you from optimal rankings. Slow pages, broken forms, links coming in to your site that are broken, user navigation issues, and other problems can hurt your ability to show up in relevant search results. Basic technical elements should be checked periodically, while performing a deep technical audit at least once a year to make sure these little elements are not neglected. There are professionals with specialized knowledge and tools to help you perform this type of analysis, and fix issues with your site.

○ **BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LINKS:**

Earning authoritative, quality links is one of the absolute best ways to help your site to rank higher. There are many opportunities to earn links from various organizations with whom you may be associated, through scholarships, sponsorships, charitable activities, business relationships, creative assets on your website, and other means.

○ **HAVE A MOBILE FRIENDLY, RESPONSIVE DESIGNED SITE:**

Mobile search is growing and will continue to do so. Google now takes mobile friendliness and other factors into consideration when ranking search results. More searches are now done on mobile devices than desktop computers so it is critical to have a site that functions well for mobile device users.

○ **FOCUS ON THE USER FIRST:**

Every page of your website should have a clear purpose, be easy for visitors to navigate and readily provide the information visitors need or want. Also, metrics that show that users are engaging with your site can be helpful for SEO and achieving higher rankings.

○ **MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE YOUR REPUTATION:**

The more reviews and comments you can cultivate around your business the more relevant you become. Setup systems in order to make sure every happy client has lots of opportunity to leave a review of your business. If you come across an unfavorable review, respond gently and try to resolve the issue. Remember, the world is watching how you interact with both happy and unsatisfied clients.





SOMETIMES

Some actions and activities can be very beneficial to the effectiveness of your efforts to improve your website's search engine optimization. However they may only be worth the investment of resources in certain situations, or for certain pages.

- **USE STRUCTURED DATA:**

It is a good idea to add Schema.org or Micro Data markup on every webpage to help Google and other search engines understand the elements that it contains. Some of the elements that you can mark up with structured data include “review,” “person,” “event”, and others. “While structured data hasn’t yet proven to be a large ranking factor, it’s future-facing value can be seen today in rich snippet SERPs and social media sharing”.
(Source <https://moz.com/blog/how-to-rank>)

- **SHARE POSTS ON LINKEDIN:**

LinkedIn posts may help your firm’s brand exposure and rankings. LinkedIn posts also provide an opportunity to build new referral relationships with other firms based on your expertise in particular areas.

- **PERFORM AN IN-DEPTH TECHNICAL SEO AUDIT:**

A professional with specialized knowledge and tools can assist with auditing key pages that are being optimized in an effort to rank for relevant terms. For other pages, this is unnecessary. (Examples of pages where ranking may be irrelevant include “thank you” pages, “terms and conditions” pages, login pages, supplemental info pages, PPC / social media landing pages, team bio pages, about us pages, contact form pages, and others.

- **INVEST IN TRAFFIC:**

Running a small media buy on Facebook, Google, Outbrain and other potential traffic sources can help increase your site’s overall profile. A site with no traffic and little user engagement is more difficult to rank organically than a website that has traffic and interaction.

- **SPLIT TEST YOUR TOP LANDING PAGES:**

SEO is intended to get you a steady stream of leads over the long term. That won’t however make sure that the traffic you are getting is going to convert into leads. Install tracking tools and use goals to see how people are interacting with your site. A/B test, using alternate versions, and implement page improvements to make sure you increase your return on investment over time.

- **BUILD MICROSITES:**

With the proper strategy, niche microsites can be a great way to target clients with specific needs and increase your digital footprint on the Web.



NEVER

There are some very harmful and dangerous SEO-related concepts of which you should be aware. Below are some things that we suggest you never do, with regards to your firm's online marketing campaign.

○ **NEVER ADD DUPLICATE CONTENT ON YOUR SITE:**

Avoid any unnecessary duplicate content issues on your site. It is important to make sure your content is original and provides value to your users. Copying content from other sites or duplicating content on your site can really hurt your rankings.

○ **NEVER BUY A LINK:**

You do not want to EVER buy links.

○ **NEVER HIRE AN SEO AGENCY OR EMPLOYEE WITHOUT VERIFYING THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK:**

Hiring an SEO agency with little experience or one that uses “black hat” techniques or low quality link building can permanently damage a site's rankings. Exercise extreme caution when hiring someone to work on your firm's behalf.

○ **NEVER OVER OPTIMIZE YOUR LINKS:**

Treat your website's incoming links with care. If you want to be ranked for “car accident lawyer” do not start trying to get tons of other sites to link to you with that phrase. Always focus on branding first and then on earning links from the highest quality and most relevant websites.

○ **NEVER KEYWORD STUFF YOUR PAGES:**

Search engines have gotten pretty smart so it's important not to spam your target phrases all over your page. Use variations of your keywords and related phrases instead, and always write for the user first.

○ **NEVER FORGET THE “BIG PICTURE”:**

Google Search alone publishes over 500 algorithm changes every year and is continuously adding new features to integrate or express the latest digital technology. Internet marketing is a fast-moving space and it can be easy to get caught up in the latest craze. Never forget to take a step back and contemplate Search technology - where it came from and where it's going; how Social Media companies make their money and their role in our society; Google's (and parent company ABC's) plans for the future; etc. Taking some time to think can help you navigate through all the noise and more clearly chart a successful long-term strategy.

We hope you find this resource helpful in your efforts to get a better return from your firm's investment in online marketing. If you have any questions about this guide, or other activities related to Web marketing, our team at Consultwebs would be happy to speak with you. Since 1999, we've been helping law firms and clients connect. Contact us today at getmore@consultwebs.com, or call **800-872-6590**.

