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## Marketing Your Law Practice on the Internet

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The Internet represents the dawn of a new age in law firm marketing. There is a large segment of potential clients and referral sources who enjoy the Internet. It is an environment in which they feel comfortable. It's how they like to do research. It's how they like to communicate. And, using the Internet to reach this market creates brand new opportunities.

This article addresses two aspects of Internet marketing: E-mail and Web sites.

### E-mail

One key to marketing success is maintaining a positive presence in the lives of your targets. E-mail gives you the ability to maintain a presence quickly and at almost no cost. You can send e-mail on a regular basis. You can send newsletters, announcements, and messages reminding people about who you are and what you do with no printing, postage or telephone expense.

Another key to marketing success is the ability to motivate a response to your messages. E-mail delivers an astonishing response rate. That's because when people receive e-mail at their computer it is easy to respond. For example, responding to an e-mail message doesn't require picking up the phone and engaging in a conversation. So, your messages are more likely to be returned. And, if you send an invitation to

an event via e-mail, you are more likely to get a response.

- **Marketing Tip:** Be diligent in collecting the e-mail addresses of all of your contacts. If you have a large enough number of contacts, consider delegating the responsibility of calling your contacts in order to obtain their e-mail addresses.

### Web sites

Typically, the first approach to creating a Web site is to think of it as nothing more than an electronic version of a firm brochure. But, Web sites offer significant advantages over brochures. Web sites are easier to update and there are no printing costs. Design elements can flash, change color and move around the screen. These design elements can be entertaining and capture attention.

And, Web sites provide a safer medium in which prospects can learn about your firm. Prospects can access information about your firm in private without need to reveal themselves.

One of the most innovative uses of Web sites is the ability to use them as a slide show for prospects to view during a telephone conversation with you. You can give prospects a guided tour of your site and direct them to go to different pages. This participation helps prospects explore your site in depth and gain a better appreciation of your firm. It also prepares

them to describe your firm to other decision-makers.

## **Offer Valuable Content**

Clearly, Web sites offer significant marketing benefits. And, if you want to maximize the benefits of Web sites, you must maximize the value of the content.

Valuable content motivates people to stay at your site and encourages them to return. This interaction develops trust, builds loyalty and enhances their willingness to reach out to you. Furthermore, valuable content motivates people to notify their friends.

Here are some examples of valuable content. You can provide newsletters, articles and legal updates. You can link to outside resources such as libraries and newspapers. If members of your firm speak or give seminars, you can post a calendar of upcoming events.

We highly recommend using audio and video seminars on your Web site. People absorb information in different ways. The greater the variety of communication styles, the greater the impact and retention.

## **Drive Traffic to Your Site**

You can further enhance the value of your Web site by driving traffic to it. Any competent Web site designer will probably know how to register your site with search engines to enhance visibility. And, while you should do this, realize that with the number of sites, unless someone knows your name or address, the odds are against their finding you.

You are probably also aware that you can register your site in directories such as findlaw.com and Martindale-Hubbell. But, these may be costly and like the yellow pages, you are listed among many other lawyers.

## **Create Links**

Another well-known technique for driving traffic to your site is to create mutual links with allies such as non-competing professionals and trade associations. Valuable content improves the likelihood that others will be interested in linking to your site.

## **E-mail Announcements**

The technique we have found most effective is to email your contacts announcements of valuable information on your site and provide a direct link. Those who respond will not only see the referenced item, but also will feel encouraged to browse the rest of the site.

- **Marketing Tip:** Get started. The more you pay attention to the process of creating a Web site, the more you'll develop creative ideas and become aware of new marketing technologies for the Internet.

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