



FOSTER
WEB MARKETING

THE **5** **BIGGEST MISTAKES**
99% OF LAWYERS MAKE
WITH THEIR ATTORNEY WEBSITE
THAT COSTS THEM BILLINGS & CLIENTS

... AND HOW AVOIDING THESE MISTAKES CAN
ROCKET YOU TO **PAGE 1 ON GOOGLE!**

BY TOM FOSTER, LAWYER WEB MARKETING GURU

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Why are Lawyers so Frustrated with Their Internet Marketing?

Lawyers are some of the biggest users of the Internet to market their businesses. From websites to blogs to LinkedIn and Facebook profiles they are starting to “get it.”

Yet many are also very frustrated with their return on the Internet investment. Most don’t get on the first page of Google (the most valuable real estate on the Internet) and even when they do, they don’t convert visitors to clients. (Isn’t that why you built a web site? To get clients? It was cool, at first, to show your friends your whiz-bang site, but now its supposed to get clients, isn’t it?). Some are spending a ton of money with mega law firm directory web sites (or worse, with pay per click ads that someone convinced them would get them on the first page of Google) and getting little or no return.

As I scour the legal landscape, it’s amazing to me that 99% of all lawyers make the same mistakes with their websites. It doesn’t seem to matter whether they spend \$5,000 or \$50,000—they’re making fundamental mistakes that cost them clients and billings. The good news for readers of this report that these mistakes are easy to avoid (if you know what to look for). That means even if you’re only a one- or two-person firm, you can compete online with even the biggest law firms – and win.

In this report, I hope to “demystify” common SEO (Search Engine Optimization) practices and help you become more effective with your on-going efforts to capture the attention of the search engines, to gain more visitors, and dramatically increase the number of prospects and clients hiring you because of your website.

OK, so let’s get to it...

MISTAKE #1: BUYING KEYWORDS

What I Mean...

Most attorneys buy keywords such as “Virginia Car Accident Attorney” from Google Adwords or other PPC (Pay Per Click) sites and think that will do the trick. It is no secret to PPC companies that attorneys bid high for keywords. After all, it is very easy and attorneys can see themselves on Page One very quickly under sponsored links. Some are easily seduced by this and will gobble up as many keywords as they can, more often than not, without tracking or budgeting. But, heck, they are on Page One!

Why This is a Mistake

Here are some search terms and their average cost per click:

• new york mesothelioma lawyers	\$117.73
• austin texas dwi lawyer	\$86.72
• mesothelioma attorneys san diego	\$147.01
• los angeles criminal defense attorney	\$41.12
• georgia car accident lawyers	\$50.11
• philadelphia personal injury lawyers	\$61.09

(as of this writing - these change constantly)

Lawyer related search terms take 37 of the top spots. Nearly half of the Top 100! The other top buyers are mortgage and loan companies.

Ok, so what does this mean? Let’s do the math...

Just take the 5th example I listed above: “georgia car accident lawyers” at a mere \$50.11 PER CLICK. So let’s say 100 people click on it in a month– that would be good for your business, right?

Hmmm... $100 \times \$50.11 = \mathbf{\$5,011.00}$. After 1 year that cost is **\$60,132.00**

Holy Cow! I hope that each of those 100 people that click on that link hire you! The reality is, you’ll be lucky to get one case out of those 100 leads.

“But one case would pay for the whole year,” you protest. Yes, I agree that’s possible for some attorneys, but for much better quality and volume of “good cases,” you need to change your thinking. So let the other guys keep doing it that way. You are about to get smarter...

Reality Check

8 out of 10 searchers choose organic, or natural, search results over PPC or sponsored links. Just like you don't really want to watch commercials on TV and will fast forward through them if you TIVO-ed your favorite show.

It's a fact - more people click on organic links than sponsored links. So that is where you need to focus your efforts.

I know that this goes against everything you have been told by SEO specialists for years. The conventional wisdom has been to dump thousands of keywords into your META TAGS (code...).

This may be the way it USED TO WORK back when search engines were stupid and needed lots of help. Early search engine technology required keywords and that is the reason META KEYWORDS were even conceived.

Now, leading search engine's like Google™, Yahoo™, Bing™, Ask™ and MSN™ are very intelligent and don't need a list provided to them to figure out what is on a particular website page. They figure it out on their own! They do this by actually scanning the content by sending their "spiders" out to billions of websites.

What To Do

The reason why it's called "organic search" is because it is meant to be natural. Writing articles about the areas that you want to be found for will naturally have those keywords in them.

If you write articles about "Traumatic Brain Injury" and use real words that actual people (not lawyers) use, then the chances are much greater that you will get indexed for that search term. Make sure that you support this keyword with many variations (on the details) and add a short page about each variation.

You need to capture as many different kinds of searches related to the same subject. If you want to be found for 10 different search terms, the old way was to write a long webpage listing every variation of the search term you could imagine – usually leading to long-winded and confusing copy that wasn't very informative or helpful to the reader. The new and more effective way is to write a smaller more specific webpage for each relevant term you want to come up for.

Conclusion

In short, the old way was keywords. The new way is content. You need to build content equity in your website and you do that by adding relevant content for the kinds of cases you are looking for.

MISTAKE #2: USING THE WRONG “GOOGLE BAIT”

What I Mean

Don't make your website sound like a lawyer, unless you want other lawyers for clients. Use common sense: “Personal Injury” and “Product Liability” are legal terms that only other lawyers know.

Why It's a Mistake

Typical ineffective law firm websites I see all have these things in common:

- **List the name of the firm more times than I can count.**
 - “Welcome to The Law Firm of Smith, Smith and Smith, PLLC.”
- **Talk about how long they have been practicing.**
 - “Our Firm has been practicing law for over 100 years...”
- **List what they do.**
 - “We specialize in products liability, wrongful death, and serious personal injury cases in Houston, Texas.”
- **Brag about it.**
 - “\$1 million awarded to our client for an auto accident.”

Does your website do this too? I wouldn't be surprised. And don't worry - you are in good company. Even some of my clients still do this. You just can't help it!

Reality Check

Based on real world information, no one cares about these facts. I'm sorry but at this point in the game, it's not important where you went to school, what kind of office you have, the legal jargon you know, how many hours you work, or what degrees are framed on your office wall.

You are in one of the most competitive areas on the Internet. You also have many challenges that most other industries do not have to contend with, such as the stigma that has been associated with lawyers, dealing with the state boards on advertising rules, and the fact that all lawyers copy the other guy - it's all the same rhetoric! The marketing message from all attorneys is the same – it's just who is shouting louder.

What To Do

Dare to be different! You need to have content on your website that is relevant and helpful to the clients you want to attract.

Search engines reward websites that are helpful and informative above anything else. So your first objective is to make sure your website has content that meets these requirements. How much content your website needs is dependent entirely

on how much content “the other guy” has. You are not living in a vacuum, and it is no big secret getting that to get listed high on search engine indexes requires a lot of relevant content added frequently. The more congested the space is, the more writing you will need to do (or have someone do for you).

Be interesting! But not interesting to you... What is interesting to you is probably not particularly interesting to your prospective clients. You must think in terms of what kind of cases you want, but from your clients’ perspective!

Think about your conversations with prospective clients when they first call you. What word choices do they use when they discuss their potential case or issue? Take notes of these word choices, most likely this is what they, and many others, would type in a keyword phrase search.

Conclusion

Users don’t search for generic terms. Think about what you do when you’re shopping for a camera online. You don’t do a search on the word “camera,” because if you did you’d have to sort through about 3 million links. Instead you type in something like “buy Nikon Coolpix 3000” or maybe “best digital point-and-shoot under 7 ounces.” The point is, you’re specific. It’s the same with your potential clients. If you get 1,000 clicks per month, 500 of them are not going to be for “personal injury attorney in <your city>”. You’re much more likely to get three or four or five clicks on 100+ different SPECIFIC terms. You need to build your site accordingly.

Google offers an incredible free software program called Google Analytics that I highly recommend. It shows you the search terms people are typing in every day. And shows that “real” people don’t search on terms like “personal injury attorney” and “product liability.” Instead, they search for terms such as “child car wreck in Hattiesburg Mississippi,” “attorneys handling 9-11 first response lawsuits,” and “rotator cuff tear + malpractice” (all actual search terms from our clients’ Google Analytics reports).

If you create content about what people are really searching for, your website will attract prospects like a magnet. Best of all, you don’t have to pay for keywords and AdWords. The search engine will find you naturally.

MISTAKE #3: BELIEVING YOUR HOME PAGE IS YOUR MOST IMPORTANT PAGE

What I Mean

Everyone always focuses on their home page and practically ignores all the other pages in their website. The homepage is the first page that comes up if someone types in simply the domain name or url with nothing else following. Webmasters load all images, calls to action (if they have any), strongest content, keywords, links, and whatever else, on the home page. The assumption is made that all visitors will come in through the “front door” or home page.

Why It’s a Mistake

I’ve been creating attorney websites for 10+ years. And the biggest insight I can give you is this: your homepage is not necessarily the most viewed page on your website. I am not stating here that your home page is not important; it is very important. However, consider the following.

Do a search for “Virginia Medical Malpractice Attorney” and review the results. Which of these results is the most compelling? Well, based on the search phrase that I typed in, the second result is a closer match to my request. It also has a clever “call to action,” offering me a free book. However, both descriptions are compelling. So some might click on the first, others may click on the second. The second actually goes to an internal practice area page.

Let’s say half of the searches click on choice #1 and half click on choice #2. That means for this attorney, 50% of his prospects are NOT coming in through the home page – and in fact may never see the home page. So if he was relying on his home page to make the sale, he’d be ignoring (and losing) at least 50% of his prospects. (Fortunately, the attorney in this example is a FosterWebMarketing.com client and he knows how to avoid this mistake.)

What To Do

This is actually a pretty easy mistake to correct with the right web partner. You need to ensure that every single page of your website has a relevant call to action or a way of contacting you. This could be as simple (and boring) as a “contact us” paragraph and link that, when clicked on, brings the user to the contact form of your website, to a more acceptable and widely used “mini contact” form on each of your pages. The best thing and most effective conversion tool to use on a website these days is a compelling video and an offering of free information. This is a proven method our clients use to increase the number of visitors into actual contacts.

Conclusion

Don’t put all your eggs in one basket – also known as your home page. At the very least, you must have a passive contact-us paragraph on every page. Be creative and think of things that trigger you to complete a contact form on a website. For instance, we provided this free report in return for your email and contact information. This is information that was obviously of interest to you or you wouldn’t be reading it. Think of this with your own prospects.

MISTAKE #4: NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WEB 2.0 TOOLS

What I Mean

What the heck is Web 2.0 you ask? It's just really a fancy term to describe the new websites and technologies available on the Internet. It's mostly about video websites (YouTube & Yahoo Video), social networking websites (Google+, Facebook, Twitter), bookmarking websites (Digg, Reddit, StumbleUpon, Jumptags, Delicious), and finally - blogs.

Why It's a Mistake

It goes beyond the scope of this report to go into each one of these areas individually, but suffice it to say, you need to be playing in all these arenas if you want to be ultimately successful on the web now and for future generations.

Young adults and teenagers are as familiar with these new kinds of websites as our generation is familiar with DVDs. This is the current and future of web searchers. If you are ignoring these portals, you are making a giant mistake.

What To Do

These sites and what they do can be very confusing. You should tackle them one at a time. Here are my recommendations for sticking your big toe in the water...

First, get a blog. (don't be afraid. These days, thanks to new technology, posting a blog entry can be as easy as writing an email). My clients all get a blog with their service as part of their website. Some have other blogs in addition to their main website. A blog is simply a website that you and others can update. It's a social site, and Google loves them because they are updated with real and relevant content frequently.

Second, do some videos! Either have them professionally done (you can see examples of professional videos we have done for our clients at www.FosterWebMarketing.com) or be a maverick like my good buddy Gerry Oginski and do them yourself. He has over 100 videos on YouTube and on his website, which you can check out at oginski-law.com. It's easy (and free) to set up an account on YouTube and upload a video. You just need to have the video - that's generally the hard part. But just do some now before it's too late and you're playing catch up!

Third, set up a Twitter and Facebook account. These are just social blogging sites where you talk about yourself. You can do one about your firm, but you need to use contemporary language to make it effective as young adults are the ones currently using these resources. I recommend hiring someone that understands this world.

Fourth, set up a delicious.com account. This is a great place to start in the world of social bookmarking. Simply put, it's making your bookmarked links available for all to see. The premise is that you can see your bookmarks from any computer once you log in, but the other aspect is that if you "share" them, then others will see them as well. Basically you can build a complete page of bookmarks that link to various pages on your website.

Conclusion

Universal Search is here. You must have noticed videos, blogs, and other nontraditional websites creeping into the search engine index. This is not an accident. In fact, it's an incredible opportunity. If you don't take advantage of these technologies, you are handicapping yourself – costing yourself clicks. Conversely, since most lawyers ignore the opportunities Google is handing out on a silver platter, if you can just bring yourself to do a few of them, you'll gain a tremendous advantage in the marketplace.

MISTAKE #5: THINKING THAT ONCE YOUR SITE IS BUILT, YOU'RE AT THE FINISH LINE

What I Mean

Many lawyers think that simply building a website and publishing it is all it takes to magically appear on Page 1. It's not that simple. Think about that for a minute – if all you had to do was to add a webpage about yourself and never have to change it, isn't that a lot like wearing the same suit every day of your life and never changing?

Why It's a Mistake

Google rewards fresh content that is continually updated. Read that again. Those are the rules. You can ignore them or try to fight them if you want; but you will lose. Think about it. What is one of the most highly-ranked websites on the Internet? Wikipedia. Why? Because it offers new, constantly update, relevant content.

How can you “be like Wikipedia?” You need to:

- 1.) continuously add relevant new content to your site
- 2.) update even “stagnant” areas of your website at least every 1-2 years. For example, Practice Areas. You can update your practice areas by adding recent cases, recent verdicts, etc.

Google, Yahoo, Bing, MSN, et al., will index you once you prove yourself. It's THAT simple. Your web site needs to BE UP TO DATE and reflective of what you do NOW. It needs to be current and accurate. Google is evaluating you for relevance. Google takes its job seriously. Your competition is doing content that is relevant to what legal service they provide. If your competition does not have content, then it is only a matter of time before Google realizes that yours is better and ranks you higher. What are you waiting for?

What To Do

Since the search engines appreciate good content and links to that content over anything else, doesn't it make sense that you would add content to your website to feed them what they want?

There are many ways that this can be done, and some are more effective than others. The best thing is to be able to update and add content yourself to the site. My clients use a proprietary web application called DSS (Dynamic Self Service) which allows them to update all the critical elements to their website. We also have services called CMP (Content Management Program) where we actually customize content and update our clients' websites for them. You can do this yourself as well.

Conclusion

A website should be almost a living being that changes, grows and improves. Update your website with great quantities of relevant and fresh content - as much as you can and as often as you can. Be relentless. You are competing for the top spot on Google. Assuming that it will be easy is not realistic.

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I've been creating attorney websites for over a decade now. Today we have over 300 law firms across North America as clients. So what I discuss here is not theory; it's in-the-trenches experience.

But don't take my word for it, check out my website and view and read our testimonials and then check out our clients websites!

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



As founder and CEO of Foster Web Marketing, Tom Foster has seen web marketing evolve in a way that makes it harder and more work - and time - intensive for lawyers to compete online. He developed a proprietary software solution (DSS) that makes it easy for busy attorneys to add content and update their website without involving the services of a webmaster. While other attorneys chase after expensive keywords, FWM clients achieve high rankings on Google, MSN and Yahoo via advanced search engine optimization techniques. To arrange a complimentary analysis of your attorney website, email Ken@FosterWebMarketing.com or Chad@fosterwebmarketing.com.



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