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Keeping Your Marketing Efforts Current

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Changes in what is effective in marketing seem to happen today at the speed of light. Some concepts and vehicles, like Twitter, were in their infancy just a few years ago but have taken hold and are now pervasive. Others, à la MySpace, burned brightly but are now obsolete. This progression shows how once-effective marketing tools can evolve, while others essentially disappear.

Some lawyers and firms understand this transformation and have invested resources into keeping pace. They know business development is integral to the success of their practices and firms, not ancillary. Then there are the firms that still underestimate what it takes to keep up with today's marketing practices and technology in order to remain competitive. For example, they may have "finished" their websites several years ago when they also created their LinkedIn profiles and have not made updates since.

Those who continue their marketing and business development efforts on the same plane as a few years ago will quickly be overtaken by those who have accelerated to market in the moment. Here are useful concepts that can help bring your knowledge and marketing current.

The New Kid in Town: Content Marketing

One of the essential aspects of today's lead generation efforts is content marketing. This attracts prospective clients by packaging your expertise and knowledge and distributing it through multiple vehicles—media, website, email, social media and other means. The goal is to create conversation-engaging topics with prospective clients and referral sources so they realize you are the first choice for their needs.

The online world has created a voracious appetite for quality content. Multiple outlets need material, a circumstance that gives you the opportunity to transform your knowledge and expertise into material that generates business-building openings. At the same time, you can expand your online "footprint," which can level the playing field between you and larger firms.



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May Contain Graphic Images

The ever-increasing amount of content means your audience has more pressure to absorb material more quickly. Employing visuals will allow you to make complex information easier to digest. But these are not your college professor's visuals, bar graphs and charts. Today's quick-story visuals are called infographics, which combine words and images to engage and inform. The graphics and fonts are bold and attention-getting. The overall look is colorful without being garish. Well-executed infographics foster curiosity and engage the reader. Because the purpose is to inform, you do not need statistics to create an infographic. For instance, you can use this graphic vehicle to explain how to do something or provide a "10 Things You Need to Know" list. Effective infographics are shared via social media vehicles, magnifying their impact. They also entice viewers to visit your website and learn more about your firm. The caveat is that infographics take skill, so you need to work with a professional who has experience with them.

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When short and professionally created, videos can be crucial to satisfying your market's need for quick takes on information and are acceptable mainstream vehicles for lawyers to use in their marketing efforts. Videos achieve multiple purposes at once, enabling you to showcase your expertise and educate your audience, while giving your market the chance to see you in action. Here, the caveat is that because they are showcasing and "productizing" you, they need to be of high caliber production.

Staying Social

The shakeout in social media has filtered down to what most lawyers should focus on now, which is at a minimum, the use of LinkedIn. The key to LinkedIn is to use it consistently and frequently. If you haven't revisited your profile since you first created it, now is the time to expand and update it, and commit to keeping it current. Your profile is often the first item at the top of search engine results when someone Googles your name, and is often your first—possibly only—opportunity to impress your prospects.

The other social media universe you want to participate in is Google+. This social-media mechanism is the behemoth's answer to better-known social media players. It has had its ups and downs, but it appears that Google wants it to succeed, so it should not be dismissed.

Going Mobile

You are likely one of millions of professionals using smartphones for research. As a user, you understand how important it is that your mobile site be user-friendly and legible with easy navigation. However, as much as lawyers may understand how crucial this concept is to their marketing, there are a multitude of firms who have yet to do anything about it. There are several options when it comes to going mobile. You can use a reasonably priced app like Duda Mobile, Mobify or Mofuse, which

convert your current site into a mobile-friendly version. However, this is similar to putting something through Google Translator. You still need to be prepared to review and modify the result.

A more polished solution is to have your website developed with responsive design. This means that your website "knows" what it is being viewed on—an iPad, smartphone or desktop, and the format then responds accordingly. You may be able to have your site programmed so it is responsive, which involves a reprogramming, not a redesign. If you are overdue on a website redesign, be sure the programming is mobile-responsive.

The mobile revolution brings up another point in terms of marketing in the moment; moments have gotten shorter. The marketing lifecycle, whether it's marketing material, a product or an idea, has been condensed. Presuming you are always working on fine-tuning your website, the shelf-life of your new website is 18 to 24 months before it will need a redo. If you are embarking on a new brochure, plan for its obsolescence in 18 months and be ready to create a new one.

With the broad expansion of delivery vehicles, today's marketing world can seem overwhelming, making it more necessary than ever to narrow in on a select few areas. Fortunately, this expansion also means greater opportunities to showcase your expertise and reach a wider audience of prospective clients and referral sources. The key is to create insightful content, which you present in ways that quickly engage your audiences and encourage them to connect with you. ■

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