From the Great Jakes Blog

# Four Must-haves For Your Next Law Firm Website

By Robert Algeri, Founder
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Web consultants will agree on several basics that should be part of every new law firm website initiative. These include the following: a design that inspires users, a user experience that is intuitive, an architecture that supports SEO, and clear messaging.

Although these might be difficult to achieve, they are must-haves. But great websites, ones that can further a firm's business goals, need to do more than the basics.

If your firm is considering building a website in 2013 or 2014, here are a few other things that you'll find helpful to add to your short-list of "must-haves."

1. **Responsive design mobile technology**
   **What is it?**
   Responsive design is a next-generation web design technique that is rapidly being adopted by major corporations around the world. The technology re-packages each page of your website to fit on any screen size, automatically.

   **Why you need it.**
   Mobile usage is skyrocketing, making it essential that one's website be mobile compatible. In the past year, mobile device usage on law firm websites has increased by 101%. We are conservatively predicting that within two years, nearly 40% of the visitors to your website will be arriving on some type

of mobile device.

Responsive design, a coding technique endorsed by Google, ensures that your website is accessible and useful, regardless of what type of device is being used to access it. That's important because users are increasingly beginning their research on one device, like a smart-phone, and continuing it on another, like a laptop or desktop computer.

Responsive design ensures a smooth user-experience and better access to the attorney-generated content that your firm is publishing. Read this article to learn more about how this new technology is affecting law firms.

2. **Ability to add "odd-ball" content**

   **What is it?**

   Odd-ball content is a name we invented for all the content that attorneys produce that is not pure text – such as video, audio recordings, photo galleries and PowerPoint presentations and webinars.

   **Why you need it.**

   Having rich media content is no longer odd! In fact, the things that comprise "odd-ball" content, like video or podcasts, are so common today that it would appear odd to not be able to easily include them in every attorney bio, practice area or other section of the website.

   More significantly, content, regardless of whether it is something like an article or a radio interview, helps an attorney (or practice area) substantiate their claims of expertise. If the PowerPoint from the keynote address that your attorney just gave helps make the case for their experience, then it makes sense for it to be easily found in their bio.

3. **Blog integration**

   **What is it?**

   The ability to propagate the blog posts that an attorney writes, directly to their bio or to a particular practice area. Here's an example.

   **Why you need it.**

   The prevalence of attorney blogs continues to grow – which makes sense because well-written blogs have proven to be wonderful reputation-enhancing tools for attorneys. The 2013 Greentarget study found that 55% of in-house counsel indicate that they read attorney-authored blogs and 53% say that such blogs influence hiring decisions.

Given all this, it just makes sense that if an attorney or practice area has a blog, it should be easily found. Teasing to blog posts from within an attorney's bio (or a practice area) means that the posts are easily accessed, consumed and shared.

4. **"Custom" page capability**
   **What is it?**
   In short, a "custom" page is a page that could contain any type of information that helps an attorney (or practice group) grow their practice.

   **Why you need it.**
   Every attorney and practice area is different. Therefore, the information that each may need to share might not always fit neatly into pre-arranged templates.

   This attorney's "Beyond the Office" page is an example of a custom page – he's the only attorney in the firm that could possibly have it. Another example could be a practice area with unique information that is specific to its area of focus.

   Custom-page functionality allows the marketing department to respond to unique business development needs of an individual attorney or practice area. It also offers marketers flexibility that was unavailable in older websites – and that opens up endless possibilities.

While compiling the above list, I attempted to narrow down the must-haves to just things that I'd recommend to a friend if they were in the midst of a website overhaul. There is a lot of other useful functionality in law firm websites today, and I encourage you to explore it.

Are there any other types of functionality that you think are "must-haves" for a law firm to include in their next launch? I look forward to your comments.