

# Client Marketing: Four Fundamental Web-Based Changes

By Todd Webber and Bob Weins

**T**he World Wide Web has changed the way prospective clients look for and select attorneys. This article examines four fundamental web-based changes that affect how you build your practice.

## 1. How Clients Find You

*Web Factoid: 62 percent of your prospective clients search for products and services on the web.*

*Web Factoid: 98.4 percent of these searchers stop on page one, i.e., searchers don't go beyond the first page of search results.*

This means that if you're not on the search engines, you're missing two-thirds of your potential clients. Additionally, if your firm isn't included on page one of the search results, you're not being seen.

## 2. On the Web, You're Competing for "Attention," Not Space

With traditional media, you purchase ad space. You purchase inches in the Yellow Pages, minutes on radio, or square feet on a billboard. With the Internet, space is free. (If you can attract a prospective client to your website, you have unlimited "space.") The Internet is not about space, it's about drawing and retaining prospective clients'

---

Law Practice Solutions is a regular feature brought to you by the Practice Management Resource Center (PMRC) of the State Bar of Michigan, featuring articles on practice and risk management for lawyers and their staff. For more resources offered by the PMRC, visit our website at <http://www.michbar.org/pmrc/content.cfm> or call our Helpline at (800) 341-9715 to speak with a practice management advisor.

—JoAnn Hathaway and Diane Ebersole,  
Practice Management Advisors

---

*attention.* To do this, your online message must answer four questions:

- How successful have you been in helping other clients with similar needs? (Expertise)
- What unique benefits does your firm deliver? (Value)
- Are you available promptly in person or by e-mail or phone? (Accessibility)
- Will I *like* you? (Likability)

After you've answered these four questions, your next challenge is getting your ideal prospects to see your message. This can be accomplished through search engine marketing (SEM).

## 3. Search Engines, Not Your Website, Drive Traffic to Your Firm

*Web Factoid: 90 percent of searches are for content... 10 percent to find a specific website.*

Assume that a prospective client needs an estate plan, but doesn't have an attorney. How will she select legal counsel? First, she'll ask friends for a referral. If you happen to be the attorney of such a friend, your name *might* be provided. However, if this prospective client is part of the 62 percent that search the web for services, she'll also use a search engine (e.g., Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc.) to investigate estate planning firms. Will she find you?

If this prospective client doesn't know that your firm exists, she's not going to search the web for your firm's name. Rather, she'll search for keywords that describe the legal services she's seeking, such as "estate planning" or "wills and trusts." (Prospects who know your firm's name are apt to search by keywords, too.) This means your firm needs to get the services you provide listed with the major search engines. This is what SEM is all about.

SEM is the process of increasing your firm's visibility on the major search engines. There are three parts to SEM: maps, organic search, and sponsored links.

### Maps

Maps are a must for *every* law firm! Map listings are free, appear on the first page of search results, and are usually above the fold (i.e., near the top of the page, clearly visible without scrolling down). A typical map listing will display your firm's name, phone number, and a link to your website (if you have one).

To create a map listing, you'll need to register with each search engine. Until you become familiar with the process, plan on spending one to two hours per search engine registration. Quarterly updates are important to improve the order and frequency with which you'll appear.

There are over 50 search engines that offer map listing. However, Google, Yahoo, and MSN control more than 90 percent of the traffic, so you may want to register with these search engines first; registration links are provided below:

#### Google:

<http://maps.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=7039>

#### Yahoo:

[http://listings.local.yahoo.com/basic.php?\\_ylt=AqUUh89ObyU13K2zjjzcxYnYoZ4](http://listings.local.yahoo.com/basic.php?_ylt=AqUUh89ObyU13K2zjjzcxYnYoZ4)

#### MSN:

<https://ssl.search.live.com/listings/ListingCenter.aspx>

If this sounds like too much work, a number of local search marketing services will create and maintain your registrations on all 50+ search engines for a monthly fee of \$40 to \$75 per month.

## Organic Search

“Organic search” refers to the portion of the search engine results page (SERP) that lists websites containing content pertinent to the keywords being searched. There is no fee for this listing, but getting on page one of a SERP can be difficult. We won’t bore you with the details of optimizing your website for organic search (such a discussion would make the rule against perpetuities sound exciting), but you should know two things about organic search: (1) it can be extremely difficult to get—and stay—listed on page one of the leading SERPs for the keywords your firm will want to target, and (2) unless you are a true “web geek” with extra time, hire a search engine optimization (SEO) expert.

Though organic listings are free, SEO consultants aren’t. Below is a chart of SEO fees based on an ad hoc survey posted by SEOmoz.org (a leading SEO blog):

Service	Low End	Mid Range	High End
Site review plus consulting	\$500	\$2,500	\$10,000
Hands-on editing of pages	\$2,000	\$10,000	\$50,000
One-day SEO training seminar	\$750	\$4,000	\$12,000
Monthly retainer for ongoing SEO	\$2,500	\$7,500	\$20,000+

One final note on organic listings: With the increased popularity of map listings, organic listings are being pushed down the page. This means you need to be one of the top four or five listed sites to be seen on page one of a SERP—a significant challenge considering the hundreds (or thousands) of sites competing for this position.

## Sponsored Links

Let’s assume your firm concentrates in political-economic law. Prospective clients seeking your advice are concerned with uncomplicated topics like “global economic collapse” and “geo-political meltdowns.” With your specialty niche, you need to be on the web *today*, so you consider sponsored links.

Sponsored links are paid-for advertisements that appear when someone searches the keywords you’ve purchased. A unique

feature of sponsored links is you only pay when someone clicks on your advertisement. There are five reasons why your firm should consider buying sponsored links:

- **Visibility**—You can be assured your ad will be on page one of the SERP. (However, the higher your listing, the more it will cost.)
- **Control**—You can direct the sponsored link to a specific web page that is best suited for the keywords being searched.
- **Landing page option**—Even if you don’t have a website or the ability to create a series of web pages tailored to each keyword search, a few local search companies will do this for you. These companies create specialized mini-websites, called “landing pages,” that tailor your content to match the keywords being searched and include all your contact information (phone, e-mail address, location map, etc.) on the same page.
- **Speed**—Your message can be listed in the sponsored links in less than 96 hours.
- **Measurable results**—The more sophisticated local search companies will provide detailed reports consolidating the results of your sponsored-link campaigns on Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc. Additionally, they will place a traceable phone number in all your sponsored links, allowing you to track and record the phone calls generated by each ad campaign. (You will need these reports to calculate if your advertisements are cost-effective. Evaluating the cost-effectiveness of your marketing campaign is extremely important and will be discussed in future *Michigan Bar Journal* articles.)

## 4 Being “Found” on the Web is Not Enough

*Web Factoid: You lose one-half of your audience with every click.*

Stop reading this article, go to Google, and search the following keywords:

“estate planning <your city> MI”  
(for example, “estate planning Grand Rapids MI”)

Now, click on the link to any law firm. You’ll probably see a home page displaying

photos, a logo, and a general description of practice specialties. The home page may list estate planning as an area of specialization and offer a separate page that describes these services. If a prospective client wants to call, he or she will click on “Contact Us” to get a phone number. Sounds good, right? It’s not, and here’s why.

Per the previous web factoid, you will lose one-half of your web audience with every click. This means that one-half of the audience won’t go to the above firm’s estate planning page. Additionally, less than one-fourth of the initial audience will click on “Contact Us.”

The solution is to create a series of specialized web pages that do three things: (1) discuss the exact services being searched (in our example, estate planning), (2) explain the unique value your firm provides to clients who use *this* specific legal service, and (3) present your contact information, including telephone, address, e-mail, and a location map. If this isn’t all on one page, you’re losing most of your audience.

## Conclusion

If you’re not using the web to help build your practice, you’re missing two-thirds of your prospects. To reach these prospects, you need to be above the fold on the search engine results page; you can accomplish this by (1) registering your firm for search engine map listings, (2) optimizing your website for organic search, and (3) investing a portion of your marketing dollars in sponsored links. If you don’t have the time or inclination to do this on your own, hire a local search marketing firm.

Remember, most prospects won’t search for your firm’s name, even if they know it; however, they will search for what you do and where you do it. You need to be on the web when they’re looking. ■

---

*Todd Webber, JD, is the founder and president of LocalBizNow, a leading local search marketing company. Bob Weins, JD, CPA, is the operations manager at the firm. They have over 30 years’ combined experience in web and local search marketing. They can be reached at (248) 593-9850 or by e-mail: Todd at todd@localbiznow.com and Bob at rweins@localbiznow.com.*