

# Search Engine Optimization, or How Robots Find You

By Roberta M. Gubbins

**S**ally Consumer, seeking a lawyer in her city, turns to the Internet for help. She pulls up a search engine such as Google or Yahoo and types in her search terms. Almost instantly, a list of law firms appears on her computer screen.

How does that happen? How does the search engine take Sally's terms and match them with helpful information?

Search engines use automated robots that crawl through the web, building an index to provide consumers with a list of websites relevant to their questions. Assuming that the more popular sites have the most valuable information, the robot then ranks those sites, pages, or documents according to popularity. Think of it as a map of the web with only those stops that are both relevant and popular.

Creating a relevant and popular site that gets lots of visitors is called search engine optimization (SEO). It is the process of using strategies and techniques to obtain a high-ranking placement in the search results.

Which strategies and techniques?

Google, the most-used search engine, suggests these techniques:

- Great content is the key, so create a useful, informative site.
- Make your site easy to navigate with clear hierarchy and text links.
- Know your prospective audience—the topics of your pages should interest them.
- Create an accurate title for each page, one that succinctly and accurately describes the content.

Suggested strategies for lawyers include:

- Think local; instead of identifying yourself as “Michigan law firm,” try target keywords such as “East Lansing probate law firm.”
- Build a site based on your practice area.



- Present a high-quality website that conveys trust and experience; include lawyer bios, press coverage, awards, community service, or publications.

There have been rumblings among marketing experts that your advertising efforts should include long-tail SEO, which is a more targeted way to attract consumers to your website. Instead of using two-word search keywords such as *estate planning*, use longer phrases such as *What you need to know to write a will* or *What to consider when selecting a guardian for your child* or *What is a contract?*

You benefit from these marketing campaigns because long-tail search keys represent the specific products or services people are actually seeking. After finding your site and reading your information, the consumer knows more about estate planning or contract writing and feels a connection to you. At that point, it is easy to send you a query or call for an appointment.

Sally Consumer will find you if the content of your site and her search words connect—that is, if (1) she is looking for an East Lansing probate attorney; (2) your website uses the keywords *East Lansing*,

*probate*, and *attorney*; and (3) the search engine robots find those words and include your site as one of several with those keywords. Now it is up to the content of your website to convince Sally to make a call.

In addition to your website—or in place of a website if you don't have one—you can use these same methods in the SBM's free enhanced member directory powered by ZeekBeek®. When you build your profile in the new directory, you have the opportunity to present many types of information about your practice. In addition, your profile contains a page dedicated to adding publications—what search engines refer to as content. You can include a blog, articles you've written or articles in which your name appears, announcements of events occurring at your firm or otherwise involving you, and even videos you may have posted on YouTube.

To help with long-tail SEO, ZeekBeek® provides an “Enter Custom Keyword & Keyword Phrases” field on your edit profile page for you to enter phrases you believe will help consumers find you. Include as many phrases as you think consumers might use when searching.

For help with building your profile, contact the help desk at [support@zeekbeek.com](mailto:support@zeekbeek.com) or visit the help center at <https://zeekbeek.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/200193600-Lawyer-Help-Center>. ■



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