

# An Online Presence May Be a Legal Necessity

By Roberta M. Gubbins

**S**ome lawyers, when asked why they don't have a website, respond that they don't need a website, all their business is from referrals, or setting up a website is too complicated and costly. Let's look at each of those explanations in turn.

## I don't need a website

According to the January 2014 Pew Internet & American Life Project survey, 87 percent of American adults use the Internet to research services, goods, and information. And a recent Nielsen study reports approximately three of four people search online when they want to find a lawyer. These two simple facts should convince you that a website is necessary if you want to grow your business.

## My business is from referrals

Referrals are a great source of business. The odds are good, however, that most consumers review the websites of lawyers recommended to them. If consumers can easily review the qualifications of one lawyer but not the other, the lawyer without a website is at a distinct disadvantage. This is also true when several family members or a board of directors must make a decision. The ability of everyone involved to review a lawyer's website may be key in choosing a particular firm.

If those reasons aren't enough, consider:

- **A website builds trust and credibility.** The information you provide can build trust in your skills and knowledge. When consumers believe you can help them, they will contact you.
- **A website creates a good first impression.** Even the most basic profile keeps your law firm visible.



- **A website helps consumers make that call.** Face it: lawyers can be scary. Consumers are often anxious about calling a lawyer. However, those who visit your website, see your picture, read your profile, and get to know you a little will feel more comfortable about calling.

## A website is too complicated and costly

Creating a website can be complicated. Put simply, there are three basic steps: selecting your domain name, choosing a web

host, and designing your site. These steps require research and take time to accomplish. The cost is not great if you do the work yourself. However, if you hire someone to run your website, the costs add up.

Alternatively, you can use your profile on the free SBM Member Directory powered by ZeekBeek to create an online presence. Your profile can include a complete biography, areas of practice, courts in which you practice, arbitrations you've conducted, and publications—in other words, all the information consumers want and need to make a decision. You can also add words and phrases describing your practice, making you easier to find via a web search.

If you already have a LinkedIn account, you can easily use that content to build your ZeekBeek profile. Or, for a fee, ZeekBeek will write a profile for you.

Lastly, for a one-time cost of \$25 you can purchase a personalized URL (ZeekBeek profile web address) to use on business cards or in marketing your practice.

A website can cultivate relationships and help you find your next best client. Begin with a simple site, add content over time, and soon you will have an impressive online presence. ■



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