



Critical, Actionable Marketing Advice for Law Firms.

From word-of-mouth to the web: Understanding the online referral chain

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The icXadvisor is a publication of icXlegal® – The New Standard in Law Firm Websites

1: the issue

“I don’t need to update my website, because all of my business comes from referrals.”

This is one of the most common excuses for having an outdated or neglected website – or for lacking one altogether. But in today’s online world, it’s a risky stance that is likely to cost you future business.

With little exception, the first thing buyers of legal services do – even if they first heard about you from a friend or colleague – is visit your website to learn more about you.

Given the legal fees involved, and what may be at stake in a given matter, fewer are the clients who will simply take someone else’s word for it and hire you without further due diligence. Online research has moved front and center in the evaluation process. If the general population today isn’t willing to buy a toaster without reading a host of online reviews, they will certainly not be hiring lawyers without similar scrutiny.

If you’re still not convinced, don’t forget that there are also other audiences who may be frequenting your website. Opposing counsel, bar association peers, potential recruits, firm alumni, and members of the media are all routine visitors of law firm websites. So it’s in your best interest to have it reflect the level of your expertise.



70 percent of 117 small firms surveyed report that their website generated new matters.

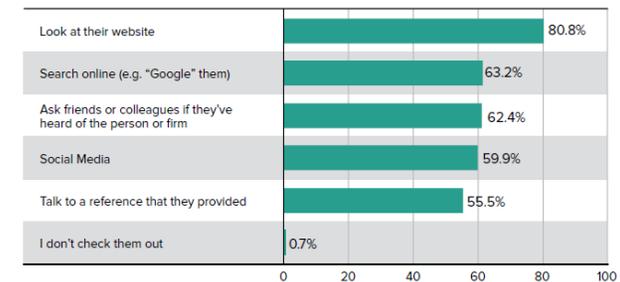
- 2014 National Marketing Effectiveness Survey

2: why you should care

Personal referrals and word-of-mouth may have been enough to sustain a law practice in the past. They are no longer enough, and inaction will result in lost opportunities.

- The 2014 National Marketing Effectiveness Survey concludes that the traditional law firm word-of-mouth marketing model needs an accompanying online component to be at its most effective.
- Websites are available 24/7 and work for you even when you're not.
- A website can also serve to further warm a lead, bringing in-depth information that informs audiences about your practice, leading the conversation that much further along. Those interested in your firm might then be able to ask you about specific questions or matters you have handled, advancing the conversation towards an opportunity to close.
- A good website not only reflects well on the firm but also on the person who referred them to it. There is a professional obligation to look your best when another party sends an opportunity your way.

Figure 2. How Buyers "Check Out" Potential Professional Services Providers



Over 80% of buyers of professional services go to your website to evaluate your capabilities, regardless of how they may have heard of you.

3: what you can do

Current technology from leading vendors has made it easier, less expensive and less time consuming than ever before to have a great website. High cost and time investment are no longer excuses for inaction.

Here are a few guidelines you should follow:

A good site is well-executed, professionally-designed, has up-to-date biographies for all of your attorneys, and is optimized to display as well on mobile devices as it does on desktop computers.

A better site has the “good” criteria above, and also pulls in additional relevant content like by-lined articles and representative matters within the appropriate locations throughout the site.

The best site has all the “good” and “better” criteria, and also uses a combination of functional elements and richer content to help show – not just tell – how your firm creates beneficial outcomes for its clients. Detailed case studies, blogs, video content, tabbed biography and practices displays, and an internal search capability are hallmarks of the best law firm websites.



With today's technology, you can improve your website across all platforms quickly and inexpensively.

4: conclusion

Don't expect referrals alone to produce the same results in the future that they did in the past. Build a high-quality online presence that supports your reputation.

Your website is a key location to showcase your work and to keep existing clients engaged –and existing clients use websites more than you might think. Even if a client has worked with you on a certain matter in the past, they may be deciding whether or not to use your firm again for another matter. Your website can help them make that determination.

And don't forget about all of those other audiences using your site from alumni to opposing council, to media and potential recruits.

Remember, it doesn't necessarily matter how someone got to your site – whether they Googled it or typed the address directly into a desktop or mobile device. What does matter is that one way or another, they will research you online and it's in your firm's best interest to make the best possible impression... one on par with how you would present yourself in person.



Transform your website from being a liability or non-factor in to being a key asset for growing your client base.

5: reading/resources



- **Beyond Referrals: How Today's Buyers Check You Out**
<http://www.hingemarketing.com/library/article/beyond-referrals-how-todays-buyers-check-you-out>
- **ABA Journal: People looking for a lawyer are turning to the Internet first**
http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/survey_finds_people_in_need_of_legal_representation_turn_to_the_internet
- **Legal marketing spending rebounds**
<http://www.steamfeed.com/alyn-weiss-survey-results-legal-marketing-spending-rebounds-to-pre-recession-levels-and-online-tactics-create-clients-absent-personal-referrals-for-business-law-firms/>

about icXlegal®

icXlegal® is the New Standard in Law Firm Websites.

For the first time, a firm's size and marketing budget are no longer deciding factors in whether a firm can present itself online with an outstanding web presence. icXlegal® levels your playing field for less cost, less effort, and less of your time than you may have thought possible.

Created by ICVM Group – a premier web design firm with nearly two decades of experience in the development of websites for some of the largest and most prestigious law firms in the world – icXlegal® employs universal best-practice standards engineered specifically for the legal marketplace.

- Beautiful.
- Affordable.
- Quick to deploy.
- Mobile-optimized.
- Easy to maintain.
- Future-proof.

Learn more at www.icxlegal.com

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