

The Lawyer's Web Marketing

RIP-OFF

Prevention Guide

The logo for SuccessTrackESQ features a blue curved arrow pointing to the right, positioned below the text. The text "SuccessTrack" is in a grey sans-serif font, and "ESQ" is in a blue sans-serif font.

SuccessTrackESQ

Introduction: Everything Ties Back to Strategy

When you sign on with an internet marketing service provider (IMSP), make sure to talk in depth about your specific business growth goals by practice area and matter type, your firm's genuine differentiators, and who your exact target clients and referral sources are. Then you need to decide which specific tactics make sense for each business goal. Your IMSP should always be able to give you a clear answer to the question, "Why are we/you doing this particular thing?"

There are 10 main areas of internet marketing:

1. Content Creation 	6. Paid Advertising 
2. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) 	7. Client Reviews 
3. Local/Mobile SEO 	8. Directories 
4. Technical SEO 	9. eNewsletters 
5. Social Media 	10. Press Releases 

Whether you do any or all of these areas of internet marketing depends on your strategy. In the next section we review what should be reported in each area. The third section is a list of metrics. The list of metrics appropriate for your firm will vary depending on your goals and strategy but this list is a solid starting point.

What Should Be in Your Monthly Reports?

The overall format for a useful marketing report is simple:

1. Customized metrics covering your web-wide online presence for the most recent period
2. Data comparing the most recent period with the previous period
3. A list of actions taken during the previous period
4. Data and narrative evaluating the impact of those actions from previous to most recent period
5. Specific goal recommendations and action plan for the next reporting period

Baseline Report

Before starting on regular monthly activities, your IMSP should give you a baseline report. This gives you comparison data to see if what they're doing is working and how well. A high-quality baseline report should include "health diagnostics" from Google Webmaster Tools, as well other data such as backlink referral domain data and core traffic data.

Historical Data

Statements like, "The website had 894 visitors in the last month," mean nothing unless you know how many visitors your website had in the months before you started working with your IMSP. Reports need to compare current data to the previous reporting period, as well as year-over-year period comparison.

Specific Goals

Vague goals such as "increase website visitors" are not helpful. Goals need to be specific for each reporting period such as:

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- Increase "target persona" and "geo-relevant" visitors from 1000 a month to 1250 a month
- Reduce bounce rate by 5%
- Increase newsletter sign ups by 15% in the next month
- Increase number of contact forms submitted from 20 each month to 30
- Improve "conversion rate" of videos watched by 10%
- Get 3 high quality backlinks with strong "domain authority"
- Get 2 reviews from satisfied clients on Avvo.com, Google+, or Yelp

Analytics

In addition to data about however many of the 10 areas of internet marketing you're employing, reports need to clearly answer the question, "How did people find our website and what did people do when they got there?" This information comes from an "analytics" program. Some IMSPs use their own or other 3rd party analytics tools but Google Analytics is by far the most widely used – and most customizable – analytics program (and it's free). These are the three broad areas on which Google Analytics provides data:

Audience – How many qualified visitors come to our website? Who visits our website?

Acquisitions – Where did website visitors come from?

Behavior - What do people do on our website? What are our "conversion ratios"? (i.e., what % of the time do visitors do what we want them to do such as click a Contact form?). How many times did new visitors call our "dynamic insertion" phone number from the site (which ties into your phone system to track web-generated calls).

List of Metrics: Analytics

In these boxes contain the metrics your IMSP should report to you monthly or quarterly. This list is a baseline. Exactly which metrics are pertinent to your firm depends on your specific strategy for each area of internet marketing.

Audience

1. How many target persona visitors came to our website in the last month?
2. How many pages did the average website visitor look at?
3. What is the average amount of time visitors spend on the website?
4. How long did visitors spend on the pages and posts?
5. What is the bounce rate?
6. How many are new visitors and how many are returning visitors?
7. How frequently did people visit the site and when was the last time they were there?
8. What cities did visitors come from? How many came from each city?
9. What type of device did visitors use to access our website? (desktop, mobile phone, tablet)

For each of the questions listed above:

1. What is the % change from the last report?
2. How do you explain the changes in data for each question above?

Acquisition

1. What % of site visitors came from the following sources:
 - a. Organic search
 - b. Directly entering the URL
 - c. Referral (i.e., from another site, online ad, or citation)
 - d. Each specific social media site
 - e. A link from our E-newsletter

2. Which pages of the site have the highest bounce rate?
3. Are there any pages that take a long time to load?
4. Of the keywords Google will show us, are there any that are particularly interesting?
5. How many people shared our web pages or blog posts on a social media site?
6. How many people who came from a social network filled out a contact form or signed up for the newsletter?

Behavior

1. What pages do people start on and where do they navigate through the site?
2. Do people who come to the site via social media behave differently from people who come to the site via organic search or paid ads?
3. How many people signed up for our newsletter?
4. How many people filled out a Contact form?
5. From what pages did they fill out the contact form?
6. How many phone calls were placed?
7. How many first-time callers?
8. What page were they on when they called?
9. How many "conversions" occurred where, for example, users clicked an offer to download a white paper?
10. How many visitors are using the search box on the website? What search terms are they entering? What pages do they visit?
11. What did the people who clicked to our site from our E-newsletter do on the site?
12. Which social media buttons did people click on our site?
13. Where are people sharing our pages/posts?

Specific Internet Marketing Tactics

Following is a brief description of the 10 major areas of internet marketing and the metrics used to measure them. Keep in mind that there is some overlap in these ten areas. For example, content creation is an important component of search engine optimization. Additionally, videos can be considered part of content creation and also an aspect of social media.

1. Content Creation



Content creation is most commonly thought of as new writing added to a website (usually as new page about a practice area, or a topical blog post). Adding high quality pages and posts to your website on a consistent basis is the single important way to improve website rankings. But content creation also refers to videos, free or paid "information products" such as "How To" guides, e-books, "white papers," and presentation slides. Finally, content creation also includes the development of "conversations" via social media, such as publishing posts and comments, and answering questions on LinkedIn, AVO, Twitter, and Facebook Business pages.

Adding content just to add content is wasted effort. What you write about or discuss on video and how you say it depends on what you want your website to rank for and on how people search for terms and information germane to the types of work you seek to bring in. Content creation, therefore, must always go hand-in-hand with your site SEO and social media strategy.

Metrics: Content Creation

1. What content was created in the last reporting period?
2. Why this content?
3. Where was it deployed?
4. What "short-tail" and "long-tail" phrase are you trying to get it to rank for?
5. How many people read or downloaded the new content in the last reporting period?

2. Search Engine Optimization



Website Visibility

Search engine optimization is the art and science of improving overall website rankings in the search engines so that you show up on page 1 of the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). But before you can look at your rankings, you need to know what your website should rank for.

Determining what your website should rank for might seem like an obvious early step but we have seen many instances where internet marketing companies put little effort into figuring out what search terms people use who are looking for what you do. The question you must ask your IMSP is "What specific terms are we targeting and why?" Many IMSPs will simply take a generic set of high-level terms related to one or more practice areas without drilling down into greater detail.

Backlinks

Once the pages on your site have been optimized with the research-based target words/phrases used appropriately in both the visible content seen by the reader and the "code-level" content seen only by search engines, getting backlinks is an important tactic for improving rankings. A "backlink" is when another website links to your website. This is not your website linking to another site; it's another site linking to your website. In general, all other things being equal, the site with more high-quality backlinks wins the rankings war.

A high-quality backlink is a link from another site which Google judges to have what it calls high domain or page "authority." Your IMSP should be using a backlink analysis tool such as Moz or AHREFS.

Google can tell the difference between a high-quality link and a low-quality link. High-quality links can't easily be bought and come from a wide range of reputable websites, blogs, and publications such as your major area newspaper's website, your or a law journal website. Some high-quality backlinks can be purchased (such as a BBB.org listing), but low quality links can also be bought by the thousands from the proliferating world of general-public and legal directories, or by leaving comments on blogs. Your IMSP must tell you what links they got, why these links, and data to prove they're high-quality.

Metrics: General SEO

1. Key phrases (aka search terms) being targeted
2. Competition data (aka how many websites are trying to rank) for each key phrase
3. Current rankings for all key phrases
4. Previous rankings for all key phrases
5. Position change for each key phrase
6. Strategy for improving rankings in next reporting period

Metrics: Backlinks

1. Total number of high-quality backlinks with domain and page authority scores
2. Change since last report
3. URLs of new links
4. Strategy for getting new links

3. Local SEO



"Rankings across the Web" refers to how your website ranks regardless of the location of the searcher. "Local Rankings," on the other hand, refers to what shows up on a searcher's mobile device depending on where they are physically located.

Most law firms want clients from specific geographic areas so local SEO can be more important to them than SEO in general. While general SEO practices impact local rankings, there are additional tactics that need to be employed to improve local rankings.

Metrics: Local Rankings

Have you:

1. Verified that all data is correct in all existing citations?
2. Evaluated the local competition to determine what needs to be done to outrank them?
3. Checked all reviews and flagged less than positive reviews for action?

The main tactic is to get more citations for your business. Citations are listings in the various online business directories such as Google Maps, Yelp, Super Pages and many other smaller or regional directories. Citations are similar to backlinks except a citation may not include a link to your website. Citations include "NAP information" – your firm's business name, address, and phone number.

Ongoing Local SEO Reporting:

1. List of citations
2. New citations since last report
3. Content and website of reviews
4. Change since last report

It is critical that your firm's NAP information is consistent in all existing citations. Search engines tend to rank websites lower if they see conflicting NAP information across citations. Before doing ongoing local SEO, your IMSP should do an audit on all existing citations and clean up any conflicting information.

4. Technical SEO



As its name suggests, this deals with increasingly (and frequently updated) technical specifications and protocols promulgated by Google that impact overall site visibility and rankings; these include hosting and page-load speeds, meta-data compliance, site map construction, and esoteric – yet important -- search algorithm criteria such as "schema" and "semantic markups." Your IMSP should be able to tell you how, specifically, they're incorporating Technical SEO techniques.

Metrics: Technical SEO

1. What actions were taken in the current reporting period in response to Google's latest Technical SEO-related protocols?

5. Social Media



Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have exploded in importance as an internet marketing tactic in the last few years. However, doing social media because everybody else is doing it is a waste of time and money. It is especially important to tie social media back to strategy. This will profoundly impact the type of content you share via social media.

While Twitter will require additional (free) software, all the metrics cited below for Facebook and LinkedIn can be found within Facebook and LinkedIn. There are also dozens of third party web based software programs such as HootSuite and TweetDeck that will automate social media posting and reporting. You should have a detailed conversation with your IMSP before launching a social media campaign where you clearly define goals.

In addition to "The Big Three" (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn), YouTube is fast becoming an important social media platform for attorneys. Since Google owns YouTube, it gives significant weight in its algorithm to videos providing useful content in response to search terms entered by the user. Videos also generally provide a higher level of viewer engagement; that is, they can be more effective in building rapport and conveying credibility than printed content. Far more

Metrics: Social Media

Facebook Business Page

1. Page & Post Data
2. Total number of Page Likes
3. Change from last report
4. Total number of fans who Unliked the page
5. Total number of page impressions for the month
6. Total number of unique users who saw content associated with the page.
7. Number of times links shared were clicked
8. Average number of People Talking About Post for the month

Demographics

1. % Gender of those who like the page as of the last day of the month
2. % by Age of those who like the page as of the last day of the month
3. % Gender of those engaged with the page as of the last day of the month
4. % by Age of those who engaged with the page as of the last day of the month

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important than fancy production values is, again, the *quality* of content provided. Ads for your firm (where you're talking about your people and your values) are far less effective than providing useful, timely information on the subject the viewer searched for.

Two other fast-growing social media platforms include Google+ and Slideshare. Google+ is overcoming its rocky first few years and is gaining new users at an extremely fast pace. Slideshare lets you upload PowerPoint presentations (as well as slide presentations created in other programs) which, when properly labeled with keyword/key phrase descriptors, will show up in search engine searches, and thus help your overall "web presence."

Twitter

1. Number of Followers
2. Change from last report
3. Total number of Tweets sent
4. Number of @ replies
5. Number of Retweets
6. Number of clicks on links
7. Estimated reach and exposure of last 50 tweets within the last 7 days of the reporting period

LinkedIn Company Page

1. Number of Followers
2. Number and content of Updates liked and shared
3. Number of clicks on Updates
4. Number and content of comments on Updates
5. Number of impressions from Updates

AVVO

The following analytics data requires AVVO Pro at \$50 per month.

1. Number of profile viewers
2. Number of viewers to each element of your profile (Answers, Legal guides, etc)
3. Number of click-throughs to your site from the profile

YouTube

1. Views per video
2. Average length per view per video
3. New subscriptions to your channel
4. Shares/Likes per video
5. Click-throughs to your site or social media channels
6. Referrals (clicks) from other videos on your channel or other YouTube videos

6. Paid Advertising



Pay-per-click (PPC) is a way to pay for placement on a website or search engine results page (SERP). Every time a viewer clicks on your ad, you are charged for that click, irrespective of what the viewer does after clicking the ad. There are many varieties of PPC but law firms typically use Google AdWords and Bing/Yahoo paid advertising. PPC can be a good internet marketing tactic especially for competitive practice areas such as personal injury where organic rankings acquired through SEO would take years and/or cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

PPC campaigns need to be watched closely because they can get very expensive if they are not run efficiently. Google's Search Network (aka, AdWords) is by far the most popular form of PPC and with some advanced configuration, your AdWords campaign can be tracked in Google Analytics thus giving you important data about what search terms potential clients use, how they find your website, and what they do once they get there.

Bing, the next most important search engine, also sells ads. Because it's a smaller network compared to Google's, their ads are less expensive but can still reach a meaningful number of targeted viewers.

Metrics: Paid Advertising

For each ad group:

1. # of impressions
2. # of clicks
3. Cost per click
4. Cost per conversion
5. What are you doing to improve ROI?

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Display advertising allows you to place an ad on a website through an online ad network such as Google Display Network; (this is different from Google's Search Network, which presents your ad in a SERP). Ads can be placed on countless websites either in the left or right page margin or within the body of the page text itself.

Boosted/Promoted posts refer to posts or ads on social media sites such as Facebook which you pay to make visible to a wider group of target profile users. Essentially, since Facebook and other social media platforms mine every bit of information a user includes in his or her profile or uploads or reads on a daily basis, you could paid to have your family law-related post appear in the "newsfeed" of users in specific zip codes who have written or read anything with the words "divorce mediation" in the last two months.

7. Client Reviews



Positive reviews from past clients are an increasingly important aspect of internet marketing referred to as "social proof"; especially for businesses that rely on reputation such as law firms that primarily target individual consumers and small businesses (as opposed to large corporate clients). While negative reviews probably won't hurt your website's rankings, they will have a negative impact on potential clients. It is important that your IMSP stay on top of reviews on the general review sites such as Google, Yelp, Super Pages AND lawyer specific websites such as AVVO and Super Lawyers. Increasingly, IMSPs are offering "reputation management" packages as a subset of their social media services.

If you have few or no reviews, your IMSP should talk with you about how to get positive online reviews from existing clients.

Reviews on Google are especially important because they tend to rank businesses higher that have more reviews. NOTE: ABA Model Rule 7, as well as most state RPCs, do allow "testimonials" but make sure to consult your state's specific requirements with respect to online testimonials/reviews.

Metrics: Client Reviews

1. Number of new reviews
2. Text of reviews
3. Are there any negative reviews we need to worry about?
4. Which review sites are we going to target to get more reviews on in the next reporting period?
5. What do we need to do to help get those reviews?

8. Directories



There are two main types of directories: general business directories (Yelp, SuperPages, etc), and lawyer directories such as Lawyers.com, Findlaw, Avvo, Justia, and HG.org. Both typically offer free listings and paid listings (which provide enhanced functionality). Some directories (such as Avvo) are also considered social media platforms because, unlike online Yellow Pages, you can "join" them by creating user accounts which allows you to upload content, search content, etc.

Metrics: Directories

Many directories, particularly the ones that also serve as a social media platform (such as Yelp and AVVO) include build-in metrics reporting. If provided by the directory, your IMSP should give you information on:

1. How many views/visitors in the reporting period?
2. How did they get to your listing/profile?
3. What did they click on?

9. eNewsletters



eNewsletters, or "electronic newsletters," have become less popular since the rise of blogging but they can still be an important internet marketing tool. One of the main benefits of an eNewsletter over a blog is that you have control over when people see it because an eNewsletter winds up in their email inbox instead of waiting for readers to find your blog.

All popular eNewsletter providers such as AWeber, IContact and MailChimp include metrics beyond just number of subscribers. They can also tell you things like how many people opened the eNewsletter and what

links readers clicked on. Once recipients get to your website, Google Analytics can tell you things like whether newsletter recipients were more likely to fill out a contact form and what content they read.

Metrics: eNewsletters

1. How many people subscribed to the newsletter? How has that changed since the last report?
2. Who unsubscribed from the newsletter?
3. How many people opened the newsletters sent in the last reporting period?
4. How many people clicked on links in our newsletter and which links?
5. How many newsletters bounced (aka didn't get delivered)?

10. Press Releases



Though there is general consensus among internet marketers that online press releases do not significantly elevate online website visibility, when executed effectively, they can lead to valuable secondary visibility; i.e., professional written and deployed press releases can get you in front of mainstream journalists and bloggers who might contact you for comment and refer to you (and, if online, include a link) in their story.

Metrics: Press Releases

1. Number of online and indexed "pick-ups"?
2. How many "impressions" did the ad receive?
3. Google News stats?
4. How many "reads" did it get?
5. How many click-throughs?
6. How many shares/forwards?

SEO Glossary for Lawyers

<http://www.attorneyrankings.org/glossary>

A Word about Internet Marketing and Legal Ethics

It's a given that changes in web-based technology will consistently outpace the ability of the ABA and State Bars to set and promulgate Rules and Opinions regarding social media advertising. As with all advertising, off-line or online, law firms should check with their State Bar's Ethics sources. You can also find useful information, of course, by researching the topic on the web. Here's a Slideshare presentation on Social Media for Lawyers by Attorney Jennifer Ellis, a national thought leader in the field: <http://www.slideshare.net/jnferellis/social-media-marketing-and-ethics-for-lawyers-in-2014>. You can also get her excellent ALI-CLE program "Legal Ethics and Social Media: Advertising, Communications, and Other Traps" (program TSXJ01).

Here's an excellent article from the ABA:

10 Tips for Avoiding Ethical Lapses When Using Social Media

http://www.americanbar.org/publications/blt/2014/01/03_harvey.html.