



The Lawyers' Guide to Marketing on the Internet

2nd Edition

Gregory H. Siskind, Deborah McMurray & Richard P. Klau

Publication date: October 2002, ISBN 1590311183

Marketing your firm on the web is no longer a novelty; it is fast becoming a business necessity. However, marketing yourself *well* is the real trick. To a potential client your website will be their first impression of the firm, so what do you want that impression to be? And how do you get them to visit your site in the first place? Furthermore, a website is now only part of an online marketing strategy that can now include email lists, blogs, extranets and 'webinars'.

For a firm thinking about entering this world, the *Lawyers' Guide to Marketing on the Internet* will be a valuable resource. This is the 2nd edition of this title originally written by Greg Siskind in 1996. He is an immigration lawyer in Memphis who was one of the first to set up a law firm website in 1994. He has been joined by Deborah McMurray, a marketing consultant to the legal industry and Richard P. Klau, president of a company that provides customer relationship software and services.

The first chapters of the book deal with the questions firms should consider when developing a web marketing plan. Who is your market? How much to invest in brand consultants, web designers, development firms and copy editors? Which internal staff will oversee the project going forward? The authors explore the various options that firms of different sizes and resources can take advantage of.

Now that a plan is in place, the next chapters explore what content a firm may wish to make available to current and potential clients, and how to effectively present it. A website can highlight the firm's areas of expertise, list pro bono work, offer virtual 'tours' of the office and highlight news articles featuring the firm. Some go further and offer case studies, newsletters and discussion boards as a way of attracting traffic to their site.

For existing clients, some firms are now creating extranets; password protected areas of the website where clients can review their cases, download important documents and correspond with their lawyer online.

Not all of these features are appropriate for every firm, and the authors discuss the pros and cons of each, as well as how to walk the fine line between getting out your firm's message and turning people off (for instance, the difference between informative emails to a particular audience and annoying spam). There are also ethical and legal issues to consider when a firm offers its services online (the book was written for an American audience, so Ontario lawyers will have to consult the laws and Rules here). The book is full of screenshots of some of the more effective law firm websites, and the addresses of those sites are provided as well so you can explore them for yourself.

This book will be invaluable to any firm wondering where to start in terms of using the potential of the web to raise the firms' profile and increase business. It does an excellent job explaining new technologies and website features in layman's terms, so even the most techno-phobic will not be daunted. Marketing a firm has come a long way from putting an ad in the Yellow Pages, and this book will help firms choose from among the increasing possibilities the web now offers.

Tim Lemieux is the practicePRO Coordinator at LAWPRO