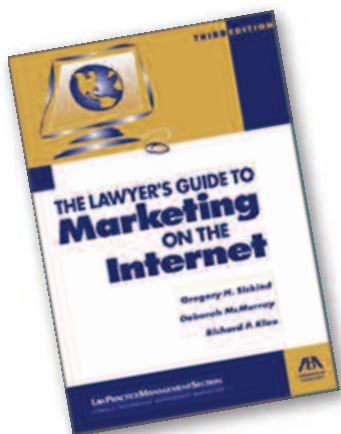


Lawyers' Guide to Marketing on the Internet

Greg Siskind, Deborah McMurray, Richard P. Klau, Published 2007, 192 pages



Marketing your firm on the web is no longer a novelty; it is a business necessity. However, marketing yourself *well* is the real trick. To potential clients 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 include all manner of web and social media tools: email lists, blogs, extranets and podcasts.

For a firm wondering how to best position itself in this world, the Lawyers' Guide to Marketing on the Internet will be a valuable resource. This is the 3rd 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, a technology entrepreneur now working with Google.

There are many questions firms should consider when developing a web

marketing plan. Who is your market? How much should you invest in brand consultants, web designers, development firms and copy editors? If going with internal staff, who will oversee the project and keep content fresh going forward? The authors explore the various options that firms of different sizes and resources can put to use. Generally speaking, potential clients viewing your site want to know what you've done, for whom you've done it and what you can do for them.

Now that a plan is in place, firms must decide what content they wish to make available to current and potential clients, and how to effectively present it. This content is either promotional or informational. Promotional content would highlight the firm's areas of expertise, list *pro bono* work, offer virtual "tours" of the office and highlight news articles featuring the firm. Informational content makes your website into a resource by offering case studies, newsletters, discussion boards and blogs.

The marketing potential of your firm's website is not limited to the information on the pages of your site itself. The web allows you to use interactive tools to reach out to clients in the form of surveys, instant messaging options for enquiries, downloads of informative documents or PowerPoint presentations, and email marketing.

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 (e.g. sending informative emails to a particular selection of clients versus annoying spam). There are also ethical, etiquette and legal issues to consider when a firm markets its legal services online that are covered in great depth. (As the book was written for an American audience, Ontario lawyers should also consult the Law Society's Rules of Professional Conduct.)

This book will be invaluable to any firm wondering where to start in terms of using the potential of the web to raise the firm's profile and increase business. Screen shots of some of the more effective law firm websites provide real-world examples, and web addresses are provided so you can explore the featured sites for yourself. It does an excellent job explaining new technologies and website features in lay 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 many possibilities the web now offers.

The practicePRO Lending Library has two copies of Lawyers' Guide to Marketing on the Internet. To borrow it, go to www.practicepro.ca/library.

Tim Lemieux is practicePRO coordinator with LAWPRO. He can be reached at tim.lemieux@lawpro.ca.