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DIGITAL

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Best Practices for Law Firm Websites

"Ultimately we get your message in front of the people you desperately want to work with. We maximise conversion rates and provide you with a string of leads ready and willing to work with you."

Phil de Gruchy
Owner, Innocent Digital

Content

CONSIDER THIS:

When you want to find a hotel for the night, the best restaurant for a business meeting, a personal trainer to help you shed your Christmas weight, or a professional such as a private physician or tutor, where is the first place you look?

Nine times out of ten, you are going to be turning to the Internet—so are your potential clients. Long gone are the days when asking around colleagues and close friends for recommendations or turning to the Yellow Pages (which doesn't exist anymore, by the way!) would be someone's first port of call when trying to find a lawyer.

The reality is that your potential clients are turning to search engines and social media first and then making their decisions based on your online presence. Everything else comes after. Without a strong, fast, and stable website, you are virtually giving away potential business to other firms that do. That's why website design for law firms is now more important than any other factor when it comes to growing your client base.

However, it's no secret that when compared with firms in other industries, law firms tend to fall behind when it comes to their digital presence. There are many theories as to why this is the case. Some point to the inherent antiquated nature of the legal sector while others blame law firms for relying too much on their historic professional reputations to bring in new clients.

In our experience, there is also the issue of complexity: Law firm websites tend to have a very high volume of pages that house nuanced content requiring significant subject matter expertise to produce. This increases the scope for human error, a lack of optimisation, and straight-up bad design to alienate potential clients and send them elsewhere. Poor marketing and failing to consider the demands of their target clients are also major problems.

Good law firm website design can grow your client base

According to the [2019 Legal Trends Report](#) by legal case management software provider Clio, 57% of consumers in search of legal services looked for a lawyer on their own—i.e., without asking for recommendations or referrals.

The most common research methods used by these consumers were online search engines like Google and Bing (17%) and visiting a firm's website directly (17%). Indeed, it's through their own websites where 70% of law firms now generate new cases and leads according to [Capterra](#), who say that it's critical for law firms to identify, anticipate, and satisfy the requirements of current and future clients—this is something that begins with your online presence.

With [17% of lawyers](#) say that the most challenging aspect of their job is generating new clients, and given that an overwhelming majority of new leads come organically through search engines, prioritising and solidifying your law firm's online presence is a no-brainer.

To help legal decision-makers get ahead with their online presence, we have put together this brief checklist of eight best practices for law firm websites.

It draws on our many years' worth of experience in designing modern, impactful websites for our clients. It includes key considerations that should be taken into account when it comes to website design for law firms.

Whether you are looking to build a brand-new website for your law firm or whether you want to improve the website your firm already has, our eight-point checklist is a great starting point and includes many of the fundamentals for a strong, future-proof law firm website.

8 BEST PRACTICES
your law firm website needs to be meeting

1. Put your visitors first

Although it's true that your website is your firm's main marketing tool, it's important to keep in mind that it also needs to meet what your potential clients are looking for. You therefore need to strike the right balance between marketing your legal services and answering your visitors' questions.

Think for a second about who it is that you want to attract to your website and, ultimately, your services. Ask yourself questions like: "Who is my ideal client?" and "What are they looking for?" You will know the answer to this better than anybody else. You know who they are, their backgrounds, where they live, and why they come to you. You can leverage this information to communicate better with them through your website.

It's also worth considering how your visitors might be feeling and what their intentions are. If you're a personal injury lawyer, for example, it's likely that your visitors have recently been involved in an accident and are feeling hurt and angry. They probably want help sooner rather than later but, in the meantime, they want to find out whether they will be eligible to claim compensation and if so, how much.

You can use your answers to questions like these to inform how your website is built and what your visitors will see when they land on it.

A common method used by law firms is to create separate landing pages for each of their practice areas and sub-areas (i.e., personal injury which is then split into things like motor accident personal injury or slip trip and fall personal injury) and optimise these for common search queries. These pages will provide the reader with the information they are looking for while including calls to action to prompt the reader to get in touch for a free, zero-obligation quote.

2. Keep the design simple & on brand

Your website's design plays a huge role in how your potential clients perceive you. You need to strike a balance between doing enough with it and not doing too much. The last thing you want to do is overwhelm visitors with a cluttered, clunky website that's teeming with complex information and difficult to use.

While addressing a visitor's immediate needs is important, their visit also must be functional and hassle-free. As potential clients come to your website looking for answers and solutions, make it as easy as possible for them to find what they are looking for, or to contact somebody if they can't.

The best law firm websites are responsive and intuitive on both desktop and mobile devices. They are readable, easy on the eye, and keep things like pop-ups, over-the-top animations, and audio/video elements to a minimum. They are also very functional and easy to navigate. At a minimum, your website should include the following pages that are easy to find:

- The main homepage and landing pages for different practice areas
- An 'About Us' page that defines your firm's mission, values, and unique selling point
- Humanised lawyer bios that highlight relevant experience
- A 'Contact Us' page that helps to capture leads and keep things moving
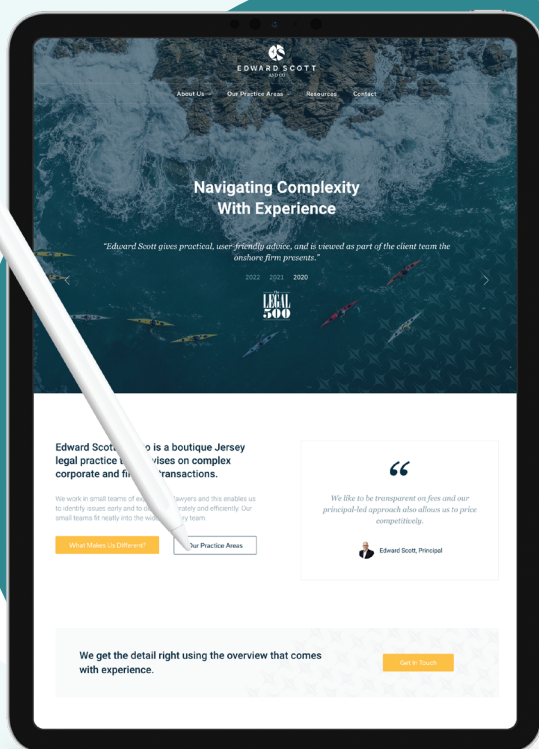
As for any content, keep in mind that while legal content can be very heavy and technical, your prospective clients are not subject matter experts. Heavy content should be broken up with quotes and testimonials from your team, former clients, or publications like the Legal 500 or Chambers UK. Since visitors tend to scan content and very rarely read it word-for-work, simple, easy-to-read messaging like this is important.

Your website design also needs to be on-brand. This is what makes your firm stand out among your competitors and how your clients will remember you. On top of the obvious such as including your logo and firm name in the design, use your brand colours. They can be used as a background, on buttons and menus, and in calls to action. This is a great way to make your design stand out.

When we design websites for our legal clients, we delve into their core business to determine how they are different from their competitors and what their clients come to them for. This allows us to build websites that act as sort-of matching services: Prospective clients instantly know that they have landed in the right place.

3. Don't underestimate lawyer bios

You can have the world's fastest and most beautiful website, but there's another element that plays a hugely important role for any law firm website—lawyer bios. According to Above the Law, 56% of visitors to law firm websites will visit attorney profiles.

Law is very much a people-first business. A firm's lawyers make it what it is, and when clients are looking for representation, they are looking for the best individual lawyer for their needs. Your firm's name comes second. This means that your lawyers' biographies are arguably more important than any other type of page on your website.

Unfortunately, there are plenty of examples of bad lawyer bios. They focus intently on endless lists of schools, accomplishments, and cases. While these are obviously important, they are not the be-all and end-all; it is far more important that a potential client likes the look of a lawyer because if they don't immediately like them, they won't hire them. It's that simple.

Your lawyer bios therefore need to include a human factor, and you can do this by incorporating other elements in addition to endless lists of achievements and facts. While expertise and education are important, these will mean very little to a potential client if your lawyers don't come across as likeable and approachable in the first instance.

A solid biography will introduce each lawyer as an individual first before concisely presenting relevant expertise and experience (no, that award for writing the best contract law essay doesn't count!) Communicating individual strengths and passions for certain areas of law is also a good idea, as is including a warm, friendly recent headshot to hammer home the point that your lawyers are real human beings, not soulless cogs in the legal machine.

Be sure to include information like:

- Practice areas
- What makes each lawyer stand out
- Their experience and education
- A professional headshot
- Anything newsworthy, such as notable cases or professional awards
- Hobbies and interests

All these elements together help to paint a bigger and more balanced picture for potential clients, and connections will begin to form as a result, even before they have made contact.

4. Showcase your services

As a law firm, you are essentially a service provider, so make sure that you are clearly showcasing your legal services on your homepage.

Ultimately, your prospective clients are looking for two things when they visit your website: What services you offer and which of your lawyers offer them. And in our fast-paced digital world where alternative options are just a few clicks away, you have just a few seconds to make a positive first impression and capture the visitor's attention.

It's therefore important to immediately tell your visitors who you are and what you do. If this matches what they are searching for, they are likely to continue exploring your website. If it doesn't, they will move on. If they don't know what you do and can't quickly figure it out, they will also move on despite your services potentially being a perfect match.

There are many ways you can go about showcasing your services and key people on your homepage. A clever mixture of imagery and short, snappy content, including a call to action, is the preferred approach.

5. Make it easy for clients to contact you

Encouraging potential clients to contact you is perhaps your website's most important objective. A good website makes this very easy and painless with high visibility contact details available on all pages.

Your website should offer a range of different centralised contact options—phone, email, online contact form, and even live chat if that fits your business model —in addition to direct contact details for each lawyer in their respective bios. Including prominent contact details throughout your site increases the likelihood that a potential client who has come to it for information will take the next step and reach out.

Where it's appropriate, also consider other calls to action. For example, you might opt to include a pop-up box at the bottom of a personal injury blog post encouraging the reader to contact your firm if they have been involved in an accident.

Simply displaying contact details on your website doesn't necessarily make it easy to contact you, though.

What good is a phone if it goes unanswered? What's the point of encouraging email contact information if it takes three to five days to receive a response? Potential clients who are reaching out to you likely want answers there and then, so only offer methods of contact if you are able to fulfil requests that come through them relatively quickly.

Also consider providing contact options through your social media pages, for example, Facebook Messenger. Consumers now expect to be able to do this, it's far faster and more convenient for them, and firms that make it a possibility naturally position themselves ahead of the competition, especially among small-to-medium-sized firms who are more apprehensive when it comes to the digital transformation when compared to larger practices.

Finally, embrace modern tools like Zoom and integrate them with your own calendar so that prospective clients can arrange their own initial discovery calls with you. Leads are best captured when they are highly engaged, and you are far more likely to retain a lead if they can instantly schedule a call rather than having to request one and wait up to 48 hours or more for a reply.

6. Build a social media presence

Your potential clients are already on social media. Many of them will use it every single day and they expect you to have a presence on it, too. These days, this rule applies to any company operating in any industry, and the best law firm websites integrate social media naturally into their layouts.

Now, we're not saying that your lawyers should be uploading pictures of their lunch to the firm's Instagram account. However, spending time to get a page set up on platforms like Facebook and Twitter can make a huge difference by providing yet another way for potential clients to reach out to you and find out more about your services. It also allows you to start building a following of prospective clients who might not be ready to utilise your services now but could be in the future.

Facebook may seem like a bit of a questionable platform for a law firm to use, however, it is important to at least have a page set up for it. Facebook is a top 'local citation' and having a page will help to boost

your local search authority. It can also be helpful for sharing news and for advertising purposes.

Meanwhile, many lawyers and potential clients use Twitter to keep up with current affairs, build their influence, and engage in conversations. Create a Twitter profile for your firm and encourage your lawyers to make personal ones if they don't already have them. Begin by following relevant profiles and sharing news with your followers. Over time, you will build out a name for your firm as its following continues to grow.

It has never been easier to keep on top of your social media presence, either. Thanks to services like Hootsuite, all your firm's social network accounts can be managed from a single centralised dashboard. Just stay away from 'TikTok'!

Social media aside, don't disregard the importance of old school email lists and newsletters. Plenty of people still sign up to these and they are a brilliant way to share updates and distribute communications documents such as white papers, firm news, and your latest awards and accolades.

7. Pay attention to search engine optimisation (SEO)

We could write an entire guide on this subject alone, and it's one of the main reasons why it's a good idea to outsource your firm's website design and implementation to the professionals. Building a website that's fit for the modern Internet, its many users, and the different devices that are used to access it is a mammoth undertaking.

In short, your website needs to be built and optimised for search engines so that you can enjoy a steady stream of organic traffic. This involves accounting for a myriad of different elements, from building your website so that it is mobile-friendly to ensuring that your pictures and graphics are uploaded in the right format and size. Content also plays a very important role, hence why most of the highest performing law firm websites feature an in-depth blog that's constantly being updated with new posts.

Here are some of our tips for staying on top of your site's SEO:

- Don't stuff your pages and blog posts with keywords; this can harm your site
- Make sure all images have proper file names and descriptive alt tags
- Check regularly for broken links and duplicate content
- Add internal links to new pages you create
- Keep older blog posts updated (which is especially relevant in the legal sector!)
- Monitor page load speed and keep it under two seconds

The goal with SEO is to keep everything in ship shape so that your website stands the best chance of ranking highly in Google's organic search results. That way when somebody searches something like "<practice area> lawyer in <location>", you are more likely to be seen.

8. Finding the right agency to build your firm's website

If you are a very small firm that mostly relies on word-of-mouth referrals and repeat client business, you could build yourself a basic website in just a few days and be done with it.

If, however, you are a growing firm that relies on a steady stream of inbound leads, you need a robust website that will stand the test of time and showcase to your prospective clients why you are the right firm to represent them. This is where the decision of DIY vs professional developers comes in.

While it's possible to DIY your own website, it is a lot of work, and there are some elements that you might not understand. This is especially true when it comes to making your website responsive and optimising it for search engines; these are relatively complex elements that people spend years perfecting, just like how you spent many years training to become a lawyer. This is why the majority of law firms--small and large practices alike-- outsource their website design, deployment, and ongoing management to specialist firms like Innocent Digital.
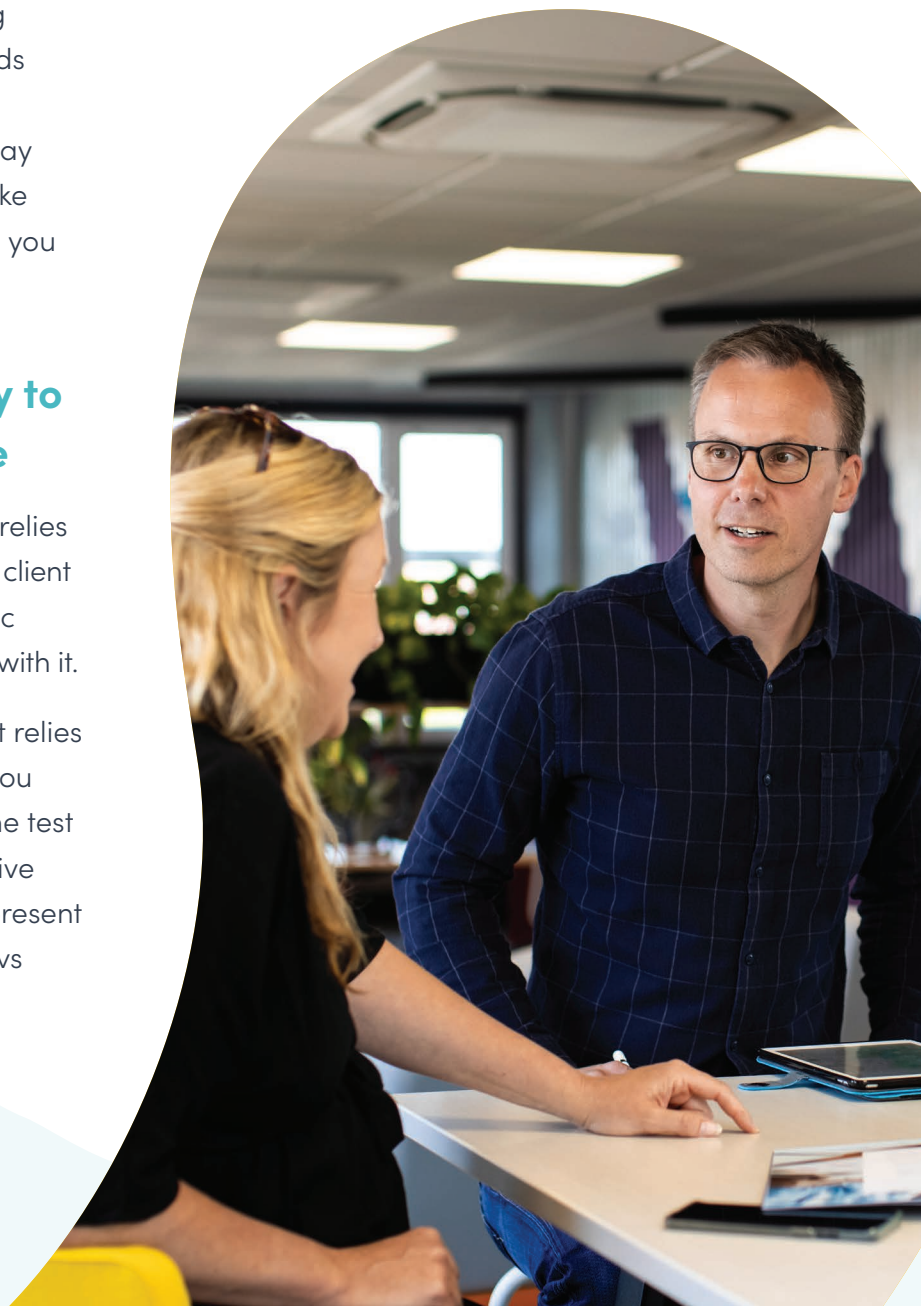
ABOUT INNOCENT DIGITAL

Just because you're a law firm doesn't mean you can't rip up the rule book and break away from tradition when it comes to your digital presence.

Innocent Digital is a Jersey-based, full-service digital firm with extensive experience in delivering world-class results for our clients. Through best-in-class design and supported by our strong marketing experience, the websites we design for our clients get noticed for all the right reasons and bring a fresh perspective to firms that want to stand out from their growing competition.

Our remote team has worked with everything from household names to small businesses and solo entrepreneurs, and we're proud to build lasting relationships with every new client that comes through our doors.

If you're looking to build an impactful digital presence and equip your firm with the right tools to beat your competition, get in touch with us today.

Take a step towards growing your law practice

Let's review your current digital landscape and look at ways to improve it and generate you more leads.

Call

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Schedule a 30 minute Zoom

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