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How To: A mobile-friendly website is essential

By: [Nancy Crotti](#) April 24, 2017 0

What can you do for your website so it will do more for you? We asked a couple of experts and learned a thing or two.

Matthew Horn is an attorney and co-founder of Legal Services Link, a Chicago-area company that helps consumers nationwide find lawyers online. Clint Danks founded ThinkSEM in Roseville 10 years ago to build websites for business clients and to show them how their web marketing strategy is working.

Each offered advice on how to generate more hits on an existing website and how to organize a new site. Every law firm website needs certain features, according to Horn. It must be mobile-friendly, with readily available contact information. It must contain attorney profiles and practice areas. Testimonials and reviews help guide site visitors, while regular blog posts bring them in, he said.

Law firm websites are similar to those of other professions, but they're much more competitive, according to Danks. Solo practitioners and small firms that have had websites for three to five years have built some equity in their domain name. They can compete best if their site contains all original copy and has a well-thought-out site map that lists all of the site's pages.

"If you're a solo or small firm and you're just getting started, I hate to say it, but you're kind of up against it," Danks added.

He advises these attorneys to start small with their sites and build equity, such as acquiring links to the site from third-party profiles such as Avvo.com. Rather than making a big investment in a new website, these attorneys would be better off using pay-per-click marketing, such as the paid ads on Google. Doing so assures the firm of positioning on a search results page and of visitor traffic more than waiting for prospective clients to find them.

Pay-per-click costs about \$10 per visitor for family law and \$60 to \$100 for personal injury law, Danks noted.

"Every time somebody clicks on your ad, you're actually charged, but if you do it well, it's a great way to get consistent leads," he said. "With pay-per-click marketing, we have the ability to control where we route the traffic. As a general rule, we don't direct people to a home page of a website. We build custom landing pages to support pay-per-click."

Mobile-friendliness is an absolute necessity for business sites, as the use of desktop and even laptop computers continues to dwindle. If your site isn't optimized for viewing on smartphones and tablets, it might look like you're not even in business, according to Horn. He recommends making your website mobile-compatible from the get-go. Adding that compatibility to an existing site will cost "at least a couple thousand dollars," he noted.

Another way to ensure your website is mobile-compatible is to make it responsive, according to Danks. A responsive website responds to the size of the screen on which it is being viewed. For example, a site that has multiple columns when viewed on a desktop computer will appear as one column on a mobile phone, with each page's information stacked vertically.

In addition to attorney profiles and practice areas, Horn recommends professional head shots. A biography without a photo is incomplete, and a cellphone photo will look shabby and detract from your credibility.

Testimonials can also help drive business. They should be on the first page, and changed frequently. Finally, the blog. Yes, you have to write more, and differently. Omit the legalese. Horn advises posting at least once a month, and ideally, once a week. Your headline can contain keywords, but don't sprinkle those words throughout the post just to drive up views. That's called black-hat SEO, and it will be obvious and less readable.

Not only does your website need all this stuff, but where you put it can make a big difference. For example, bios are important, but not so important that they need to be on the home page. Your contact information, however, should be at the top of the home page.

"I can't tell you how many websites I have visited where you're searching around for the contact page," Horn said. "If you make people click on two or three different pages until they can get to an action item, you're going to lose them."

Danks added a couple more best practices that many don't consider.

He suggested creating local business listings away from your website through Google my Business and even Yelp. Presenting your firm's name and contact information with the exact same wording and punctuation in every online reference also ups your chances of showing up on Google Maps.

"It's really important for small law firms," Danks said. "The way Google is structured, unless you've been online for 15 years, it's really hard to compete with the big firms."