

Marketing

Marketing for lawyers and law firms: The evolution | Marly Broudie

By **Marly Broudie**



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(January 28, 2020, 11:24 AM EST) -- Legal marketing has gone through a major shift and notable evolution over the years. There was once a time where the law society prevented lawyers and firms from marketing themselves and in some cases even forbade many forms of marketing and soliciting business via means of advertising strategy. Lawyers were not allowed to advertise on TV, billboards, buses, via Yellow Pages, radio, etc.

There was reasoning behind these restrictions: protection of the legal industry and profession as a whole and preventing the power of advertising persuasion and influence.

Law firms and lawyers today must adhere to and obey the *Rules of Professional Conduct* by the Law Society of Ontario. Chapter 4 addresses marketing of professional services. Section 4.2-1 states that: "A lawyer may market legal services only if the marketing a) is demonstrably true, accurate and verifiable; b) is neither misleading, confusing or deceptive, nor likely to mislead, confuse or deceive; and c) is in the best interests of the public and is consistent with a high standard of professionalism."

In today's world, marketing strategy is now not just the norm, but a necessary practice embedded in most successful firms' business development plans. Traditional marketing now co-exists with in-person networking and digital marketing — and most large national firms today implement a holistic strategy comprised of various marketing, technology and business development tactics. This has been pegged as innovation.

Today we see all sorts of legal marketing happening in mainstream media, magazines, e-newsletters, direct mailouts, but also online on blogs, social media, websites, YouTube, podcasts and more. In fact, marketing has now become an essential element of a law firm and lawyer's practice.

In the late '90s and early 2000s, the Internet era started rolling and businesses started to use the power of the world wide web to market their business. Law firms started to create their own websites. Over the next decade, out came paid digital advertising practices, search engine optimization tactics and social campaigns. Lawyers and law firms were slow to the race, however; by the time we reached 2012-2013, we started to see law firms beginning to adopt.

As a marketing and business development co-ordinator at a mid-size Toronto boutique litigation firm, part of my role in 2014 was conducting a competitor analysis and online audit of digital best practices among other firms. Launching the firm blog, getting the firm's lawyers using LinkedIn and debuting a solid social media strategy fell within the scope of my work and by 2015, the firm was utilizing the power of online marketing to raise awareness of the firm and its lawyers.

Modern day legal marketing

We still see billboards, we still hear radio ads, we still advertise in magazines and newspapers. Traditional marketing and advertising still exists and there are definitely ways of getting exposure in all traditional media opportunities, whether earned or paid.

Today, however, law firms and lawyers are utilizing online marketing strategy to gain exposure, target a market and raise their profile. The power of the Internet cannot be ignored and while at the end of the day, word-of-mouth and in-person networking are crucial, in today's world, reputation is not enough on its own to build business, attract clients and grow.

Legal discussions and engagements are happening on platforms like Twitter in real time, a platform largely attended by lawyers. It is becoming more and more important to be part of the conversation as a means to understand the landscape and be part of this online community.

Technology is ever-advancing and each month there are new strategies, platforms, tactics and best practices to consider: from Facebook to LinkedIn to YouTube and now platforms like TikTok, innovation and modernization is necessary to evolve, adapt and reach new audiences.

With change comes opportunity, innovation and the ability to reach clients like never before and establish authority, leadership and credibility.

Digital marketing's competitive advantage

There is no doubt that business development tactics like taking a client for lunch, attending networking events, staying in touch with contacts and referral sources are important practices. These practices should be maintained.

Traditional media also still has significant value and weight. Exposure via traditional marketing is a valuable tool for brand exposure and profile.

Digital marketing is a whole different ball game when it comes to analytics and target marketing. A magazine and newspaper have distribution numbers, readership demographics and circulation rates; social media analytics disclose reach, click-through rates, cost per click results, cost per acquisition; website analytics provide time spent on page, page views, bounce rates and consumer behaviour data. Taking things a step further, social media and digital media buys allow users to target their market by demographic: geographic location, age range, interests, occupation, job roles and more.

The digital revolution is a powerful marketing tool

Stay tuned for part two of this article, which will touch on the power of analytics, target marketing and tips to optimize digital marketing strategy for your legal business and practice.

Marly Broudie is the founder and CEO of SocialEyes Communications Inc., a digital marketing agency based in Toronto. Broudie started her career as a paralegal and then worked at a litigation firm in business development and marketing, where she honed her skills in social media, marketing, content creation and Internet marketing.

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