



Digital Marketing for Small to Mid-size Firms

Cost-Effective Strategies to Build Your Online Presence and Attract Clients

As clients become increasingly accustomed to technological solutions and digital engagement, law firms can face the dual pressure of investing in advanced legal tech (like document automation, AI tools for research, and e-billing systems) and preserving the personalized service and trust that clients expect from their legal advisors.

Many small and mid-size firms at the same time are operating in the most competitive legal landscape they've ever faced.

While larger firms often have dedicated marketing teams and substantial budgets, small to mid-size firms typically operate with limited resources. They may lack expertise in the digital marketing strategies required to establish a strong online presence and effectively market their services.

There are several forms of marketing that use digital channels to promote a firm's brand visibility and services. Some strategies (like paid search or digital ads) require a larger

investment, while others - such as content, SEO, and social media - can be managed with lower spend and don't require a department full of in-house experts.

While there are myriad ways to approach this on a shoestring, we share below a basic foundation that firms can use to get started and build on over time. The concept here is to use content as your medium and leverage three digital marketing channels to get it in front of your target audience. Let's drill down on this a little further.

Start with Written Content

Content, often referred to as thought leadership, can take many forms, but in the context of this conversation, we're narrowing down to the written form. While even written content requires an investment of lawyer time, it can be handled in-house with limited to no external expertise required. A well-structured content plan can start with small, manageable contributions - even one article per quarter can demonstrate value and build momentum.

Establishing a blog on your firm's website where you can share legal insights, updates on relevant legal issues, and firm news, helps build credibility and provides value for your target audience. This content can include formal articles, downloadable guides, checklists, or FAQs that address common legal questions. The key word here is "relevant". Avoid publishing content just for the sake of it. Instead, focus on your clients' needs and write with those in mind. Set a realistic schedule that you can sustain – consistency, even at a slower pace, builds credibility.

Infographics, short videos, and podcasts are other appealing formats for packaging content, but we encourage firms to start small, and as you produce written content with consistency over time, then explore additional options and budget.

Digital Marketing Approaches

With the content engine running, get it on the road, so to speak, and in front of the right audience.

1. Website Optimization and SEO
2. Leverage Social Media
3. Email Marketing

Website and Search Engine Optimization

Website optimization is about improving the overall performance of a website to help convert visitors to leads. It calls for focus on things like ensuring the website is user-friendly (UX), mobile-responsive, and contains clear calls to action. UX is influenced by a variety of things like page load speed, site accessibility, and broken or missing links. Most of these items can be built into your site at the development stage and monitored and/or enhanced over time. If working with an existing site, an audit based on these

factors would be a good step as most of these elements can be addressed without a full rebuild. In either case, in the absence of an in-house resource, you'll require some external support.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) focusses on increasing your site's visibility in search engines like Google or Bing, with the ultimate goal to rank higher in search engine results, drive organic traffic and capture the attention of your target audience. It addresses things like keywords, on-page optimization, link building and dynamic content. Again, aspects of this can be built in at the development stage, or on a go forward. Websites are living things and require time and attention on an ongoing basis to optimize performance. While free tools exist, SEO is an area where outside expertise can help deliver stronger, more sustainable results.

By optimizing site and search, you give your website its best chance to be found online and for users to have a good experience when they get there.

Leverage Social Media

The universe of social media platforms is broad. Focus on platforms where your target audience is most active. LinkedIn is particularly effective for B2B interactions, while Facebook and Instagram can help reach individual clients. As a small to mid-size firm with limited resources, focus your efforts on one or two platforms; choose settings that match the level of moderation you can reasonably handle, and ensure aesthetic and content align with your overall brand. Share your content, encourage firm members to engage with posts to broaden your reach, and build relationships and trust with your audience.

As a recommended best practice, if you don't already have one, create a social media policy that clearly sets out the firm's use case and guidelines for your team. This will help to ensure everyone understands their role and responsibilities. Even a simple social media policy can reduce risk and ensure your team presents a unified, professional presence online.

Email Marketing

Email marketing is known for strong performance when it comes to reaching target audiences and conversion. There is a wide range of options for marketing tech to send regular newsletters, updates about the firm, and educational content to keep your audience engaged. The offerings and fees vary.

For firms unable to invest in such tools, regular email can be a practical short-term solution; however, purpose-built tools generally come with superior deliverability rates (i.e. not caught in spam filters), as well as analytics with data insights such as open rates and content engagement; and helpful list management features (think, data hygiene and compliance with applicable jurisdictional data privacy legislation such as Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation).



With approximately half of all email opens happening on mobile, be sure to take a mobile friendly approach - keep subject lines brief, avoid large image files, and place your key message close to the top. And, if using Outlook (as opposed to email marketing tech), limit large batch sends to avoid spam filters, use mail merge or BCC to protect recipients' privacy, and be sure to include an "unsubscribe" option to comply with applicable anti-spam legislation. As strategy and volume mature, consider a purpose-built platform.

Putting it All Together

- Optimize your website for user experience and visibility
- Create content that's relevant to your clients and prospects
- Share it via your website, email, and social media
- Measure what matters and refine your approach over time

Do Not Stop Short of the Finish Line

The above approaches can help build a robust online brand that enhances your firm's visibility, engages potential clients, and attracts new business. Focus your efforts, start small, and aim to do a few things consistently and well.

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Terry was the Chief Marketing Officer at a top Atlantic Canadian law firm (200 lawyers, nine offices) and among the senior most professional services executives in Atlantic Canada dedicated to strategy, business development, and marketing.

Over the last twenty years, she has held senior leadership roles with strategy as a core function supporting marketing and business development objectives. From the financial services to legal services industries, she has worked alongside client-facing colleagues, leadership teams and boards alike to plan and execute brand and business building strategies.

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He has been advising law firms for over 15 years on a wide range of issues, including - strategic action planning, leadership, understudy (succession) planning, compensation - both Partner and Associate, organizational / governance structures, partnership arrangements, business development, capitalization of partnerships, partnership agreements, lawyer & staff engagement, marketing, key performance indicators, competitive intelligence, finance, mergers, and practice transitions.

Applied Strategies Inc.'s website contains references from clients describing the value of the services rendered:

<https://www.appliedstrategies.ca/references.php>

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