



## Social Media Marketing for Attorneys: Make Your Clients' Choices Easy

A recent article on forbes.com points out a growing disconnect between what marketing and business executives think consumers want and what those consumers actually want when it comes to interacting with companies online. While business leaders talk of building a community and engaging users, most consumers are just interested in getting some sort of perk or discount for following companies online. Being a part of a community is not their top priority.

This presents a unique challenge for attorneys who cannot rely on inventory blowouts, buy one get one specials or other retail-oriented gimmicks to get clients to engage with them online – and by extension to use their services.

Attorney marketing is similar in some ways and distinct in others from retail-oriented marketing. Attorneys are selling both their services and themselves; personal branding is inexorably linked with firm branding. However, attorneys can take lessons from studies in retail consumer habits. Ultimately, a consumer's interaction with the market on a daily basis shapes his or her expectations about interaction with service oriented firms, for good or for bad.

So, how do you convince clients and potential clients to follow or connect with you online?

The answer lies in part in an interesting concept that the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) has dubbed Decision Simplicity. In a paper featured in the Harvard Business Review, the CEB interviewed thousands of consumers to determine what they really value in communications with the brands and companies that are vying for their business online. What they found is that consumers overwhelmingly want the buying process to be easy.

Decision Simplicity is exactly as it sounds: distilling the decision-making process down to the point that consumers hardly think about making a choice at all. But what does this mean for attorneys? A central tenant of Decision Simplicity is trust. Potential clients must trust you and they must trust the information that you are presenting to them through your online marketing efforts.

Studies on client behavior indicate people will choose the person they like and trust, even over other attorneys who may have more experience. Take advantage of blogs and social networks to establish yourself and your firm as a trusted thought leader. Comment on relevant current events and draw parallels to legal issues your clients could face. Demonstrate how you provide real benefits to clients and how they can trust you to help them.





It is also important to simplify your message for potential clients. Make researching your firm and learning about your services – and the benefits of those services – easy. Give followers useful information. What you write and present online should strike a chord with potential clients and their peers, not necessarily other attorneys. You may not be able to give actual advice online, but you can make it obvious from your postings that you are a trusted, accessible resource.

Consumers are bombarded with messages at every turn. Sometimes, it takes not shouting the loudest to truly stand out. Simplifying the decision making process for potential clients by establishing trust and presenting a clear, concise, consistent message will help your online marketing deliver for your firm.

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