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DIGITAL SCALE

BY MARY KATE SHERIDAN



Tips For Measuring Your Firm's Digital Marketing Efforts

If a tweet is sent into the Twitter-verse and nobody retweets it, did it have an impact?

Maybe or maybe not, depending on your firm's marketing strategy and goals. But how do you determine marketing success in a digital world filled with so many intangibles and potential tools? "In a lot of ways, digital communications efforts can be measured in an easier fashion than traditional marketing efforts such as print advertising or outdoor advertising," said Jeffrey Berardi, Chief Marketing Officer at K&L Gates LLP. "The tools have changed so much over the past several years that tracking and measuring is a lot easier now than it has been in the past."

Of course, "easier" does not mean "easy." Understanding the big picture requires the right combination of tools to assess both quantitative and qualitative factors. To choose appropriate metrics, a firm should first establish its marketing strategy and then select the best tools to evaluate success.



STRATEGY

Before deciding how to measure its digital marketing efforts, a firm must delineate its goals and priorities. Below are some approaches that firms may consider.

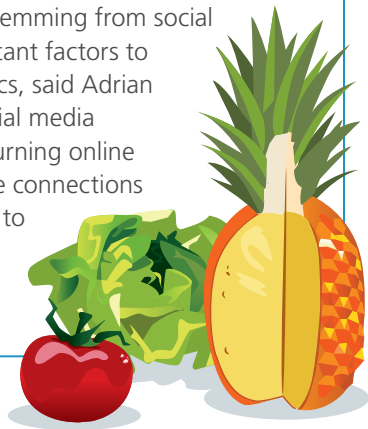
1. Set Goals

Without specific goals, metrics are merely numbers and words. Once a firm specifies exactly what it is trying to achieve through its digital marketing plans, it can choose the right tools to measure those specific goals. "Make sure you're measuring against what you're trying to accomplish," said Les Altenberg, president of A.L.T. Legal Professionals Marketing Group. "That's key." Among the marketing goals that firms may target are:

- Attracting new clients
- Retaining clients
- Recruiting talent
- Achieving brand recognition
- Obtaining media and speaking opportunities.

LAWYERS LUNCHING

Counting lunch dates probably isn't on the top of your marketing metrics list. But maybe it should be. Lunches and meetings stemming from social media activity are important factors to consider with your metrics, said Adrian Dayton, speaker and social media strategist to law firms. Turning online engagement into real-life connections is valuable and may lead to more business.



2. Have a Plan

Once firms establish goals, they should carefully plan how to measure their progress in achieving those goals. "We took a long time to analyze the situation and understand what others were doing and determine what our strategy was before we jumped in, and once we jumped in, we jumped in with both feet and really put a lot of time and effort into it," said Berardi. "I think as a result we've shown quicker gains because there's a system and process in place."

But don't expect to have the perfect process immediately. You may have to try different tools and start on a smaller

scale, especially if your firm plans to measure the digital activities of your individual attorneys.

"The biggest advice I have is just to start small," said Adrian Dayton, speaker and social media strategist to law firms. "You don't need to track the metrics of all of your lawyers. Pick a half dozen of your lawyers who are writing blog posts, and take a hard look at their metrics over time."

3. Focus on the Big Picture

As a firm measures its digital marketing efforts, it should also assess them as part of the firm's larger marketing scheme. Sometimes, the danger lies in separating the analysis of different marketing spheres – everything is related, said Altenberg.

4. Look Beyond Numbers

Numbers aren't everything when it comes to gauging marketing success. Firm management may be most comfortable hearing that x actions produced y results, but various qualitative factors may contribute to the effectiveness of a campaign, as well.

Instead of strict numerical targets, a firm may strive towards growth and progress each year, based on its specific goals. "It's hard to really put your finger on success or really have some equation for it. My view is to really try to improve every year," said Berardi. "Growth is a great indicator of success, and that can be measured in a variety of ways."

5. Eye the Competition

Another useful benchmark is competitors' use of the digital marketing space. This approach can be especially helpful with social media because firms can easily view certain metrics like followers and content sharing, and can gauge competitors' type and level of engagement.

"The first step for law firms is really doing an audit and really understanding 'Where are we in the space, and how do we compare to our competitors in terms of our use of LinkedIn, Twitter and blogs?'" said Dayton. "Once you have an idea of who's using social media, you can start measuring the cause and effect of these efforts."

TOOLS

After establishing a digital marketing strategy, firms can select the tools that align best with their specific goals. Below are some mechanisms that may assist in analyzing your firm's digital marketing activities.



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1. Digital Ads

When it comes to digital ads, firms can use metrics like clicks and views to better understand an ad’s effectiveness.

- **Digital ad clicks:** The most obvious way to measure the effectiveness of digital advertisements like banner ads and promoted tweets is the click-through rate. Assessing how many people click on an advertisement – and taking it a step further to track their activities once they land on the firm’s website – can give the firm insight into how many people were attracted to its ad, the proportion of people who saw the ad and clicked on it, and how people proceeded once they were redirected to the firm’s site.
- **Page views:** If brand awareness is among a firm’s marketing goals, then the firm may be interested in the number of people who viewed the page on which the ad was displayed, even if those people did not actually click on the ad. Additionally, firms that use interstitial ads, which require users to view an advertisement before accessing a particular web page or video, can likewise measure the number of views.

2. Social Media

Firms may use social media to promote content and firm news, engage particular audiences, build brand awareness, and more. Both hard and soft metrics can be used to measure the effectiveness of social media campaigns, depending on what a firm’s goals are.

- **Hard Metrics:** One benefit of many social media resources is that they include transparent metrics, such as number of followers, shares, views, “likes,” and comments. How much you rely on these numbers depends greatly on what you are trying to achieve. If your goals include exposure, expanding your reach, and building new connections, concrete numbers may be important in your analysis. And understanding who you attract can help you in connecting with your target audience.

“It shows that people are interested in the content that we’re producing, and we can look at who the people are that are following us,” said Berardi whose firm is active on LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Google+, and YouTube.

In addition to using their own proprietary metrics systems or third-party platforms, firms can turn to the social media sites themselves, many of which offer metrics analysis tools. Among the metrics firms might track include:

- Number of followers
 - Number of subscribers
 - Number of people who have viewed a post
 - Number of shares
 - Number of likes or favorites
 - Number of clicks
 - Number of comments.
- **Soft Metrics:** But numbers may not fully capture a firm’s social media marketing success. Through social media, firms can interact with clients, potential clients, talent, colleagues, and other contacts, which can help them develop relationships and gain insight into how their content is received. “The nice thing about social media is you do get feedback, and you can see if people are engaging with the content,” said Berardi. “And it gives you reasons to see if what you’re writing is effective.”

When evaluating the effectiveness of social media campaigns, firms may consider non-numerical factors like:

- Quality of engagement and comments
- Social media relationships that translate into offline connections, new clients, and new hires
- Interest in content posted.

Firms should keep in mind, however, that lack of engagement does not necessarily translate into social media failure. According to Dayton, many in-house



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counsel – a target audience for a lot of law firms – use social media to gather useful content but don’t engage: “They don’t want to comment on your blog. They don’t want to chat with you on Twitter. They just want the content that makes their lives easier,” said Dayton. “Just because you’re not having a conversation doesn’t mean you’re not having success.”

In fact, the 2013 In-House Counsel New Media Engagement Survey – distributed by Greentarget, InsideCounsel, and Zeughauser Group – found that 74 percent of in-house counsel surveyed were “invisible users” who listen to the information on social media but don’t engage.

Instead of focusing entirely on engagement, therefore, firms may examine the type of followers they’re attracting and whether they are providing quality content to their target audiences.

3. Blogs

It’s no secret that attorneys’ time is precious, so it’s not enough to simply load their blog posts on to the firm’s

website. In addition to promoting the posts, firms should also measure readership to maximize attorneys’ efforts. Some potential tools include:

- **Internal Metrics:** A firm that uses a platform to monitor its website activity can gauge how many readers are viewing the firm’s blogs in general and how many are reading each individual post. In addition, firms can track how many people comment on the blog posts if personal engagement is among their goals.
- **Third-Party Platforms:** Firms may also step outside of their own website to measure whether and how much particular blog posts have been mentioned across the web. Through services like Google Alerts and Cision’s Online Media Monitoring, firms can set up tailored searches that continuously monitor the web for mentions.
- **Social Media:** Once a firm has shared a blog post via social media, it can track its reception by measuring how many people “like,” share, and comment on it (keeping in mind that lurkers may find the content

SIMPLY ASK

Sometimes the simplest way to find out which – if any – of your digital marketing efforts have been effective is to ask. Whether it’s a new client, a recruit, a journalist, or some other contact, it is useful to learn whether they were attracted to your firm because of a blog post, an online ad, social media presence or some other marketing push.

“One of the easy things – and it’s often overlooked – is to ask the client,” said Les Altenberg, President of A.L.T. Legal Professionals Marketing Group. “Train whoever is picking up the phone to ask ‘How did you hear about us?’”



useful without engaging). A firm can also employ social plugins to track which posts people share directly from its site.

4. Website

From the copy to attorneys' bios to blog posts to recruiting materials, a firm's website is arguably its most important digital ad. Firms can create their own monitoring platform or use an outside platform – like Google Analytics – to track trafficking trends. Some areas that firms may want to monitor include number of visitors, page views, how long visitors stay on the site, downloads of white papers or other materials, and organic visitors versus visitors directed from social media, ads, or other sources.

"For the website, we look very carefully at our web traffic trends," said Berardi, who explains that he doesn't put too much emphasis on month-to-month numbers. "I look at it more from the view of the long-term trends," he said. ■

About the author



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SIZING UP SOCIAL MEDIA

Followers, likes, comments and shares – social media is overflowing with data to measure. The good news is that firms don't have to look much further than the social media sites themselves – many of which offer analytics tools. And if firms decide to seek tools elsewhere, plenty of third-party resources are available.

Facebook Insights: Facebook Insights provides metrics on how users interact with an individual Facebook page. Among the measurements available are the number of people who have viewed a post; the number of people who have clicked on a post; and the number of people who have shared, liked, or commented on a post.

Google Analytics: With Google Analytics, firms can track activity across multiple social networks. Possible measurements include how content is shared and which sites referred visitors to you.

LinkedIn: Firms can create a company page on LinkedIn, which features an analytics tool that offers insights into followers, visitors to your page, and activity relating to posted content.

Twitter: Firms can use Twitter's @Connect feature to stay abreast of new followers, mentions, retweets, tweet favorites, and direct conversations. In addition, the firm's profile page indicates the total number of followers, making that metric easy to track.

Hootsuite: Hootsuite is a social media management tool, which includes an analytics feature. The service consolidates Facebook Insights; Google Analytics; and statistics from Twitter, Google+, and ow.ly. Users can create reports summarizing their metrics.

Analytics Platforms: Third-party monitoring platforms offer a variety of tools to measure social media activity. Options include Expion, IBM Social Media Analytics, Radian6, SimplyMeasured, and SproutSocial, to name some.

Klout: Firms can gain a sense of their influence online and within social networks through their Klout score, which is derived from an algorithm that evaluates a variety of online data.

Link Shorteners: Services like ow.ly, bit.ly, Hootsuite and Google URL Shortener allow firms to track the clicks on the links that they share.