

Top 10 Lead-Killing Mistakes Law Firms Make on their Websites

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The web pages of most law firms fail to take advantage of simple search engine optimization techniques, and as a result, their websites do not rank highly in search engine results when clients are looking for the areas of law practice that the firm is promoting.

According to **Jeff Lantz, Esq.**, CEO of Esquire Interactive in Tucson, AZ, if your firm website is not on the first page of Google search results, it could simply be a lack of simple search engine optimization techniques.



Jeff Lantz

Jeff is an Internet marketing expert and is the author of *The Essential Attorney Handbook for Internet Marketing*. He practiced law at Snell & Wilmer, one of the largest firms in the Southwest, was a senior attorney with BHP Billiton, and also served as Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary to Westar Aerospace and Defense Group, Inc.

He described ten common lead-killing mistakes law firms make on their websites, and simple search engine optimizations techniques to correct them.

1. **No Search Engine Metatags, or Metatags of Very Low Value.** Metatags are clues that give search engines (such as Google) information about what a particular web page is about. The first important metatag is the title tag. The text of the title tag is displayed just above the Internet website address area at the top of the page (when using Internet Explorer, the text is just to the right of the small “e” Internet Explorer logo in the blue or gray box.) The text for the title tag generally should be 40 to 60 characters long. In addition to the title, the other key metatags are the description tags (longer, more detailed information about the web page, which should be roughly two short sentences), and, less important, the keyword tags.

What GCs Look For on Your Website When They Want to Hire a Lawyer

You can learn more from Jeff Lantz in a webinar **this Thursday, January 27**: “What GCs Look For on Your Website When They Want to Hire a Lawyer” at <http://bit.ly/dSSw2l>.

Jeff Lantz, Esq., has seen websites from the view of a General Counsel, practicing lawyer, and internet marketing expert. He will reveal what clients look for on your website. All lawyers will benefit from with LIVE program, because their websites are the most powerful marketing initiative -- online 24/7/365.

Register today at <http://bit.ly/hKwQKl> and learn how to turn your firm website into a lead-generating machine.

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What's an easy way to spot a problem with metatags? Look at the title tags at the top of each web page within a website. If they're all identical, there's a problem. Even worse, when a site owner has not inserted title tags, the text area displayed reads "Microsoft Internet Explorer" (if this Internet browser is being used).

Often, title tags of extremely low value are used, such as "Welcome to XYZ Law firm," on every page. These title tags are of almost no value in searches aimed at finding a lawyer for a particular legal need (such as a search for a "Phoenix accident lawyer").

2. *Inconsistent and Confusing Page Content.* Instead of using title tags, description tags, and keyword tags consistent with the page content—such as "Phoenix accident lawyer"—the tags and page content are inconsistent.

You can see the header, description, and keyword tags for any web page by right-clicking on any page, scrolling down to the item "view source" in the pop-up window, and left-clicking on "view source." The title follows the tag <title>, the description text follows the <META name="description" content= tag, and the keywords (no longer considered by Google, but still used by other search engines) follow the tag <META name="keywords" content=.

For an example of metatag inconsistency and search engine confusion, let's look at the following tags:

Title tag: "Welcome to XYZ Law Firm—Windows Internet Explorer"

Description Tag: XYZ law firm is located at 123 Main Street, Anytown, Any State, 12345. The XYZ law firm was formed in 1984, and now has twelve lawyers practicing in a number of areas.

Keywords: Anytown lawyers, divorce lawyers in Anytown, Anytown criminal lawyers, Anytown accident lawyers, Anytown will attorneys, Anytown probate attorneys

Page Content: XYZ Law firm has five attorneys who practice in the area of accident law [more information about types of accidents the firm has handled in the past].

What does the search engine bot understand from these tags?

It first "sees" the Header tag, which indicates that the web page is going to be about "welcoming to XYZ Law Firm." Then, the next information it sees is that in the description tag, which indicates the web page is about "the location of the XYZ law firm." Meanwhile, the keywords indicate that the web page is going to be about a number of different practice areas (divorce law, etc.). Finally, the visible text on the page describes different types of accidents.

The result of all these conflicting signals is a confused search engine. Is the web page about a specific firm, a location, or different types of accidents? As a result, the engine will not rank the web page highly for the desirable search term— "anytown accident lawyers."

3. **Broken Links.** Search engine “bots” jump from one page to the next through links to “crawl” or “spider” web page content. When links do not go to the intended page, the link is said to be “broken.” When a broken link occurs, the spiders cannot continue to crawl to the other pages of the website; instead, they are said to “die” on the page with the broken link. When this happens, the search engine may not index the other pages of the website. If the pages are not indexed, then they can’t be displayed in response to a prospective client’s search terms.

4. **No Google Site Map.** A Google site map is different than a typical site map for a website. A Google site map is created by using a software program that generates a site map code for Google spiders. The code ensures that the spiders can crawl and index all of the relevant web pages of a law firm’s website.

5. **Not Submitting Website to Google and Other Search Engines.** Once your website is live, you should submit the URL for your firm’s website (i.e., www.mylawfirmswebsite.com) to Google and the other primary search engines. Search engines cannot and do not automatically “find” websites. Instead, they find websites through two avenues: the first (and the easiest) is by website URL submitted to them, and the second is by “finding” a site through a link from another website. If there is no such other website link, and if the website URL is not submitted, it’s unlikely that the search engine will find the website (at least not anytime soon). Remember—if the search engine doesn’t know your website exists, your website won’t be indexed, and your website’s links won’t be displayed in the search engine results when potential clients search for the same services offered by your law firm.

6. **Spam Metatags.** This problem is the opposite of Item 2 above, and it was popular in the early days of the Internet. Spam metatags consist of the repeated use of the same term, such as “Phoenix accident attorneys,” over and over. Search engines recognize this repetition as spam and penalize the website in search engine results by giving it lower rankings.

7. **Placing Too Much Page Content in Images.** Search engines can’t read text included in images. While some of the text in an image can be placed in what is called an “alt” tag included in the web code, search engines don’t give as much weight to “alt” tags as they do to on-page content because they can’t verify the text in the picture. The lesson here is that search engines like text: try to ensure that there are at least 400 or more words on any pages important for search engine ranking purposes.

8. **Flash Generally.** Flash is good if used sparingly; however, search engines generally have difficulty in reading (and thus indexing) content embedded in Flash. Similarly, Flash links can look awesome; however, because search engines have difficulty with Flash, they may not be able to follow the links to the right pages. If this happens, the search engine will not find these other pages, and they won’t be indexed. Use Flash sparingly.

9. **Overemphasis on Keyword Metatags.** A common misperception is that “more is better” when it comes to keywords, and some firms load the keyword metatags with

dozens of keywords. Google now completely disregards the keyword metatags; other search engines are placing less emphasis on the keyword tags.

10. ***Not Understanding the Importance of Search Engine Optimization.*** Search Engine Optimization (“**SEO**”) is the primary way that clients looking for your firm’s services will find your firm by searching on the Internet. If your firm’s website links are not listed high in the results pages (ideally on the first page), it’s unlikely that prospective clients will find your firm’s website, resulting in your firm not being considered.

In most cases, you should undertake a proactive **SEO** program to achieve high rankings: firms receiving high rankings usually do not receive them simply by accident.

The bottom line is that if you build a website, your visitors won’t come unless you prime it for them with consistent and compelling content and tags. Esquire Interactive’s **SEO** Program is designed to work with your firm’s website to help boost rankings in your practice areas.

For more on this topic, call:
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