



WEBSITES VS. BLOGS: WHICH IS BETTER FOR ATTORNEYS?

[This post](#) is a friendly rejoinder to Kevin O'Keefe's [recent blog post](#) entitled *Are law firm websites where you want to spend your time and money?* [Update: Kevin has posted a [response to this article](#), which is worth a read.]

Before I critique his post, let me say that I think that Kevin is a sharp guy. He has done a lot to help attorneys use the internet to bring in business and has been one of the more prominent voices in the discussion about internet strategy and social media for attorneys. I'd recommend following him on Twitter or subscribing to his RSS if you don't already.

But in this post, Kevin misses the mark. He begins by noting that he has seen a "flurry of blog posts and articles" about how to use law firm websites to bring in business. Although he decided to share some of those articles with his network (out of a sense of *noblesse oblige* to the misguided but "good folks" that wrote the articles), he contends that "websites are not where *good* [my emphasis] lawyers and law firms get their work."

That sort of condescension colors the entire post. People who rely on website marketing are "too lazy to build relationships" and "don't believe [that they] can create [a] positive word of mouth reputation." They are likened to the kind of people who advertise on "signs at airports, billboards on the sides of busses [sic], and late night television." They "foolishly" believe that their firm website is "a measure of relationship building and reputation enhancement." They are "looking for an easy way out."

Kevin believes that the internet simply provides more efficient way to do the sorts of things that attorneys have traditionally done offline: "Lawyers and law firms get their work via relationships and word of mouth. Period." But is that always true?

A Case Study

I could point out a number of examples from my own experience that shows that *good* attorneys can do very well with a law firm website. But let me use a firm that I have had nothing to do with (and which also has a blog on the LexBlog network).

The law firm of Clark Skatoff is one of the more visible Florida probate law firms on the internet. They currently rank number 2 for "Florida probate attorney" (just behind an exact match domain) and number 3 for "Florida probate lawyer." Their website is pretty much a static site of the kind that Kevin denigrates. It was developed by [PaperStreet](#), which I consider to be one of the better design companies in our industry. Here's what [the firm had to say](#) about their website:

We are getting 3 to 6 new web inquiries per day and are signing up about one new client per day. We have to turn away business because we are so busy. Rankings look pretty good in Google. Good enough so that when the Nancy Grace show on CNN was looking for a Florida commentator on the Anna Nicole Smith case, they Googled Florida probate lawyer and found me. I have been on air the last several nights. It never would have happened without your [PaperStreet's] help.

How did they get those results? Not with a blog, but with a static website that is optimized to rank well in search. Although (as I mentioned) the firm now has a sporadically-updated blog on the LexBlog network, that review was written before Clark Skatoff started the blog (the earliest blog post is from 2010 and Anna Nicole Smith died in 2007). If the firm had to choose between giving up the blog or giving up the website, which do you think they would choose?

The Truth About the Website vs. Blogs Debate

So which is better: a law firm website or a law firm blog? The answer, unsatisfying though it may be, is “it depends.” More specifically, it depends on the nature of the practice and the time and money that the firm has to invest.

The truth is that word of mouth and reputation are not as important for some practice areas as they are for others. If you want to build an employment law practice, for example, most of your work will come from relationships you build with HR departments and businesses in your state. This type of client doesn't usually do a Google search and call the firm that shows up at the top of the search results. For this type of practice, attorneys should focus their energies on all of the things that Kevin advocates (networking, relationship building, thought leadership, etc.).

But not all practices are like this. The person who is looking for a DUI, bankruptcy, or divorce lawyer may not be interested in a long-term relationship and probably doesn't care whether their local attorney is a thought leader. He just wants to know that [the attorney understands and can solve his problem](#).

Consumer-oriented practices of this nature can do very well with a website, as long as it (a) shows prospective clients that the firm can solve their problem and (b) is visible to those prospective clients in search. Of course, not many websites do this (which is probably why Kevin has a low view of them). Too many law firm websites focus too much on aesthetics without regard to quality content and search visibility. Law firms are so jaded with all of the bad SEO advice out there that they think that it's all snake oil. So they slap up a quick brochure website that doesn't produce results. But, as the above example proves, this failure doesn't mean that there isn't opportunity.

Could a blog help the consumer-oriented law practice? Absolutely. I would even go so far as to say that most solos and small firms should have a blog ... if the attorneys have the time to do all of the work that is required to make a blog work. This point is sometimes glossed over by the blogging advocates. The blogosphere is awfully noisy these days. It is becoming harder and harder to be heard. Just having a blog — even a frequently-updated blog with great content — isn't the panacea it may have been 5 years ago. To reach your goals, your blogging should be combined with commenting, content curation, and social media strategy.

In other words, there is no “turn-key solution” for law blogs. Blogging can be a real time drain. And (unlike SEO), blogging is not easily outsourced. The attorney needs to be prepared to put in hours of work per week (I spend about 6 to 10 hours per week on this blog). And even if the attorney does all this work, the attorney may still find that the [blog just doesn't work](#) due to market conditions. At the end of the day, the blog may underperform a search-optimized website. Both a firm website and a blog would be best, but in some cases the website may be the better choice if the attorney had to choose only one.

And let's not forget that the line between blogs and websites is blurring every year. As search engines give increasing attention to fresh content and social signals, I believe that the blog-website distinction will no longer be relevant in several years. To use [Hugo Guzman's](#) line, eventually all marketing will be interactive marketing. The question shouldn't be, “Do I focus on a blog or a website?”, but “How can I best show my clients that I can meet their needs?” Interactivity is simply one way to add value to prospective clients.

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