Simple Design Offers More to Law Firms

Simplicity can be difficult. Simplifying your schedule, your inbox, your wardrobe, your clutter, your to-do list: none of this comes easily. The same is true for design. Many people will say that they want a clean layout with simple navigation and good use of white space, but often they will balk at implementing the resulting design. There is an instinct to fill space – with text, or textures, or gradients, or pictures, or any number of things. Clean layouts can look under designed, leaving some to believe they have been put together with little effort. When you are paying for a professionally designed website, it is understandable to want results that appear to be utilizing the enterity of your team's skills.

From a design perspective, however, the most uncomplicated websites often take the most time to develop. A lot of thought must go into understanding how to best distill the information users need into the clearest, easiest to use configuration. It is much easier to just throw everything on the page and let the user figure it out. But that is not the best strategy for conversion.
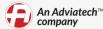
From a comprehensive perspective, the Internet appears to be entering an era of less: less filler content, fewer overdone graphics. Sites without a lot of copy, particularly on the home page, are becoming the norm. One large scale image and a few simple illustrations are often all it takes to make a website look clean and modern. Since Google is actively discouraging people from writing irrelevant, keyword spammy copy, you are now free to say more with less. You are free to explain clearly why you offer the best choice for clients and how you can help. You can direct them quickly to the most relevant pages with a few simple graphics and well-organized navigation. You do not have to clutter your page just to try to make search engines happy. Google's growing ability to understand context has the potential to make the web a much cleaner, friendlier, more genuine place.

Jay Taylor discusses this tangentially in his article, 5 Steps to Create a Website That Both Your Customers & Search Engines Will Love. He states that companies tend to develop websites that appeal to them, but the focus should actually be on the customer (or client). When working on a website design, his advice is: Do not try to create a work of art.

Designers may bristle at that – after all it is their job to create visually appealing, creative work. But his point is accurate. You want your site to look good, be easy to navigate and appeal to those most likely to visit in search of your services. It should not be over designed.

Clients will sometimes request that a design be Photoshopped up a little. To some extent, this is ok. Subtle patterns, lines and color variations can help organize a site and make it more visually appealing. Little details like this are not likely to be noticed individually, but the overall effect will be a polished, professional look. Putting too much into a site, however, whether it is too much copy just for the sake of filling space or too many graphics because you are trying to make the site look slick, has the potential to turn people away. Consumers are bombarded with stimuli all day.

Giving their eyes a place to rest can have a real benefit in terms of time on site and conversion. People do not want to have to filter to find what they need. They expect you to do that for them. It is a critical part of the design process.

The trend toward less has the potential to produce a more visual appealing, relevant and helpful Internet. When businesses stop trying to fool search engines and start trying to appeal to their ideal customers, everyone wins.

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