



The Brief□

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Member White Paper

In a continuing effort to share best practices in legal marketing, *The Brief* features “white papers” from LMASE members. This month’s article covers successful biography writing and Web site content overhaul. Written by Liz Bard Lindley, Director of Jaffe’s WritersForLawyers™ and by LMASE Board Member Monica Smith, Account Supervisor at Jaffe Associates, this article explains the potential benefits of partnering with an outsourced service to improve your Web site’s effectiveness as one of your key business development tools.

Best Practices: Web Site Management and Content Overhaul

A primary tool for marketing, as we all know, is the firm’s Web site. While design certainly plays a role in a site, the more important component of any Web site is its content. Some firms, particularly those with only one or two marketing professionals on board, suffer with an ongoing problem regarding Web site content: it becomes outdated quickly and no one has the time to keep the information current and crisp. Some firms may worry that the cost of rewriting content is too high. However, as competitors modify their sites, freshen their content, and draw more prospects in, it’s imperative that your firm isn’t left behind with an outdated site. More than an online brochure, the site is a window into your firm, giving visitors a connection to your lawyers and practice areas. It should be viewed internally as a foundation for business development.

Often, it makes sense to select one aspect of a site, and overhaul it first. For example, a firm could begin with revising all of its attorney biographies. Most firms initially think this will be an easy process. The marketing

committee or marketing department will send out an email and request that everyone edit their bios by a certain date to coincide with a selected launch date for the Web site. This process frequently proves to be disappointing, as lawyers send incomplete information in a format that's not usable, and possibly well beyond the due date, if at all. While the marketing staff tries its best to collect information, make edits, and try to stay within the launch deadline, other marketing initiatives may be negatively impacted.

Writing new biographies or updating existing ones is time consuming and can take valuable time away from regular business-development tasks. You may want to consider outsourcing the project to a group who will work collaboratively with you, and one that understands your firm's business development strategy as whole.

Let's say your firm has 100 lawyers, a marketing director and a marketing assistant. Conservatively, it may take three hours to write one biography (scheduling, interviewing, writing, editing, proofreading, etc.). That translates into 300 hours for your marketing team to take on those 100 biographies.

Maybe all you need is just a simple update of exiting biographies. Again, being conservative, let's say it takes 1.5 hours to update a biography. That is 150 hours just to complete a "simple" update. Of course, these numbers only apply to the marketing department; they do not include the time required of the support staff and the attorneys, which can be just as great. For some firms, outsourcing biography writing could possibly save time, money, and headaches.

When outsourcing the writing of bios you need a service that works with your existing marketing department (or staff tasked with the responsibility) and follows a comprehensive, systematic approach that produces outstanding attorney biographies on time and at a reasonable cost. You continue to focus on your firm's daily marketing requirements, such as seminars, events, responses to RFPs, media relations, etc.

Take a look at your Web site. Ask whether it tells enough about your firm and its attorneys to encourage a prospect to hire you, and to remind a current client why they hired you in the first place. When looking at all the

attorney biographies, do they have a consistent feel and tone? The most effective Web sites, whether in law or in other industries, are those that present compelling and consistent content. If your in house marketing capabilities cannot be focused on revisions needed to keep your site fresh, consider the alternative of outsourcing the project. In a relatively short period of time, you'll be more pleased with your site and how it sells the firm. □

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