

Using Avvo to Market Your Law Firm on the Internet

By: Stephen Fairley

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Unless you have had your head under the proverbial rock the last two years, you have probably heard of Avvo.com. Plain and simple, they are a ranking system for lawyers.

Now before you get all upset and pester me with nasty emails telling me about “it's not right for Avvo to post my profile on their site without my permission,” let me state clearly for the record: I don't want to hear about your complaints. I AM NOT Avvo. I'm not here to defend Avvo.

They have not in any way asked me to write this post. Avvo has plenty of sharp people on their team and can mount a more than adequate defense without my help.



As a legal marketer, I am “platform agnostic.” I **only look at tools from an effectiveness standpoint**—Does this work? How much does it cost? What's the Return On Investment (ROI)? I am constantly on the lookout for ways my law firm clients can leverage both online and offline tools to build their online platform and attract more clients.

Recently, the *ABA Journal* wrote an article about the fact that [Avvo is now ranking lawyers from all 50 states](#). There was a lot of vitriolic commentary about the article, so I know feelings run hot and cold about them. As I said, it's not my place to defend them, their “ethics,” or whether you like the fact that your personal “profile” is on their site. By the way, I believe the majority of the information they put on your “profile” comes directly from your state bar so if they have something wrong on your profile, it's a good guess that maybe your state bar also has that information wrong.

I get it—one of the major reasons why a lot of attorneys don't like social media sites like Avvo, is that they CANNOT CONTROL IT.

Just like someone can go to Yelp.com or Ripoffreport.com and write a positive or negative review of your business, so they can go to Avvo and do the same. At least Avvo has a clear mechanism whereby you can dispute a false or misleading review and they will even remove it if proven false (which most other sites don't do). These types of consumer review sites are becoming more and more popular and influential with the search engines.

If you're thinking about ignoring your profile on Avvo, here's something to consider: **Avvo is very good at search engine optimization**. So in all likelihood, when you type your name into Google, your Avvo profile will often come up on the first page of results. I believe they are quickly becoming a major force in Internet marketing for attorneys.

Here's my advice: **You don't have to like Avvo to benefit from Avvo**. They are here to stay

and are becoming a force to be reckoned with so...learn how to use them to build and influence your law firm's Internet presence and generate more business!

How to Use Avvo.com for Law Firm Marketing

Avvo is one of the 6 major social media sites that attorneys should pay attention to. In future posts, I'll talk about the other 5. When you are ready to get started with Avvo, here's the steps you should take:

1. **Claim your profile.** This process is free and allows you to update your contact information and add information about you and your law firm.
2. **Put your ENTIRE resume into Avvo.** This can go a long way to improving your rating.
3. **Add all the seminars you have given, awards you have received, and articles you have written.** These items can also improve your rating.
4. **Add your photo!** I have heard reports that profiles with a photo are clicked on up to 10 times more than profiles without photos.
5. **Add videos.** If you have videos put them into your Avvo profile. While they won't improve your rating, it will give potential clients who are checking you out online an opportunity to see who you are, how you articulate your answers, and will position you as more of an "expert." The production quality of your videos does not matter nearly as much as the information you include in them. It's all about education-based marketing—educating your prospects.
6. **Answer user's questions.** Over 5,000 consumers every week ask legally related questions on Avvo. Please be sure to put a standard disclaimer on each response, i.e., that your reply does not constitute legal advice or the establishment of an attorney-client relationship, etc.
7. **Create Avvo "Legal Guides" for your top 10 questions.** If you're like most attorneys, you constantly get asked a common set of questions. Write down these FAQs and write a short (1-3 pages) response to each one. Make each question a legal guide. Keep the questions and answers highly focused on a specific topic. Be sure to add a disclaimer on each guide.
8. **Ask all your attorney friends to endorse you.** This can make a big difference in your rating. Just like a referral from another attorney in the real world makes a big impression on a prospect, so having a reference from another attorney or a judge on your Avvo profile can improve your rating.
9. **Ask your clients to write a testimonial for you on Avvo.** Client testimonials do NOT have a positive or negative impact on your rating. However, I assure you, potential clients read them! I can't remember the last time I bought a book or other product off Amazon.com without reading a few of the user reviews. Yes, I know several states, like Florida, do not allow the usage of testimonials by lawyers. However, the Florida bar association has "[agreed to exempt online directories like Avvo from most of its ad rules](#)" because attorneys cannot control endorsements posted on 3rd party websites like Avvo.
10. **Put your Avvo badge on your website or blog.** Avvo allows you to create a "badge" with your profile score on it that links directly to your Avvo profile.
11. **Consider signing up for Avvo Pro.** There is a small monthly fee for this, but it provides you with all sorts of statistics like, how many people clicked on your profile, etc. Avvo

has also recently launched an ad campaign (I wondered how they were going to start making money). If you read my blog frequently or have attended our [law firm marketing](#) boot camp, you know I'm not a big fan of advertising. However, I've heard anecdotally from two attorneys now who are finding some success with an Avvo ad campaign in their local area. In fact, one of my criminal defense clients signed up his first client within 6 hours of his Avvo ad going live. Please note, I'm not saying those results are typical because I'm sure they aren't. However, if you have the budget, I think it's worth testing it out.

So there you have it. You can either ignore Avvo and hope they will just go away or you can learn how to leverage them to your benefit.

Now, before you think about sending me one your nasty emails, please reread my second paragraph.

Stop Wasting Precious Time and Money

Feel like you don't have time for marketing? Let us show you how to make a plan that runs on "autopilot" – one that attracts new and lucrative clients while you focus on your practice.

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Stephen Fairley is a nationally recognized law firm marketing expert and has helped

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more than 6,000 attorneys from hundreds of law firms across the country to discover the secrets of generating more referrals and filling their practice.

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