

From the Great Jakes Blog

Should your website be solid like a rock – or flexible like a gymnast?



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I was recently speaking with a legal marketing consultant who said that a client — an AmLaw 200 firm — wanted their new website to be “rock solid.”

Ugh, I thought. *They're headed in the wrong direction.*

Having a website that won't break and requires little recurring maintenance is a fair thing to ask for. In fact, those things should be basic criteria for any new website. But these days, all the legit website development companies working with law firms have “rock solid” technology.

This firm's focus on “solid like a rock” technology is distracting them from what they really need — a website that's “flexible like a gymnast.” Let me explain.



Rapidly Evolving Demands

The days of the static “brochure website” are drawing to a close. It's now commonly understood that your website needs to constantly evolve to meet ever-changing needs and circumstances. For example:

- ▶ **Web-savvy Clients** – As your clients have become increasingly web-savvy, they expect your website to contain content that's more relevant, engaging – and of course, always up-to-date.
- ▶ **Web-savvy Attorneys** – Attorneys increasingly see the firm's website as a platform that they can use to market themselves. This means having bio sections tailored to their specific marketing needs – which are constantly changing.

So, what makes a website flexible?

What does a “flexible gymnast” website look like? Sometimes it’s tough to tell how flexible a company’s technology is unless you spend some time examining their backend functionality. That said, here are some questions to ask when evaluating a website development company:

- ▶ **Open Source** – Do they build websites using an open-source CMS, enabling you to inexpensively leverage new features built by others?
- ▶ **Core Code Updates** – Do you automatically get new modules, CMS features and core code updates as they are developed for other clients? Or does the website development company want you to buy an entirely new website every few years in order to obtain new functionality?
- ▶ **New Pages** – Can you easily add any new page you want, to any section of a website? Can you do it with a click of a button?
- ▶ **Social Media Integration** – Can you direct Tweets and blog posts that attorneys are generating, to various practice areas and attorney bio pages?
- ▶ **Re-sequencing Items** – Does the CMS allow you to re-sequence practically any item on any page? Does it use drag-and-drop functionality?
- ▶ **Age of Codebase** – When was their code originally written? If it’s more than 3 or 4 years old, it might be “rock solid” – but chances are that it was built using a rigid paradigm that can’t easily accommodate the changing needs of firms today.

Technology changes fast — and people’s expectations rise in tandem. The law firm website of today needs to be flexible enough to accommodate new and different demands as they emerge. Today’s challenges may be oddball content like videos, podcasts and social media feeds. Who knows what tomorrow will bring? But as *long as your website technology is flexible — it won’t matter.*

Flexible is the new “rock solid.”