



## Explore the possibilities of interactive website design

Static brochure websites are quickly becoming a thing of the past. People now expect frequently updated, current content and interactive design elements, even from an attorney website. Dated sites with links to old articles from your law school days do not connect with potential clients. As attorneys, you have a wealth of knowledge built from years of experience that you can harness to speak directly to the needs of the people visiting your site. The challenge is to merge useful content, responsive elements, social updates and modern design in a thoughtful way – a way that avoids throwing in fancy effects just for the sake of saying you can. When trying to come up with the right balance for your site, consider the following:

Function is a critical design element. A website's design is more than just the colors, pictures and words on the page. These things all add to the experience and help create a connection with the user that is, ideally, in line with your firm's identity. You do want your site to look good. Beyond that, however, it must be functional. A beautiful website without an obvious phone number, for example, will likely be of limited use to your firm. People need to be able to quickly find what they are looking for when they land on one of your pages, and they must be presented with action items that prompt them to take the next step and contact you.

The user experience should be the basis for layout decisions. A website design is the totality of the user's interaction with the page. Try to put yourself in the position of a new visitor to your site. What are you looking for? Is it easy to navigate? Is the text readable? Are links obvious? Decisions about menu items, menu placement, font size, headlines and graphics must take user expectations into account. They must create a flow that gives a visitor obvious direction. Contrary to what consumers may think, they do not actually crave choices. They are more likely to take action when options are clear and limited.

HTML 5 offers possibilities that allow you to stretch the limits of your creativity. The most common HTML 5 based effects are things like slideshows and floating menus. Many firms find these items useful, and you may, too. But what about doing something totally new? What is HTML 5 really capable of? The website form follows function (fff) shows off some of the lesser known effects, like 3D rendering, animation, and user-controlled cursor effects. Clicking through its collection of color-coded samples is a fun way to delve into unexpected possibilities.

Admittedly, these examples are abstract and seemingly irrelevant to a law firm website. But it is important to look outside of your industry and outside of the traditional way of thinking about website design in order to jolt your mind into coming up with new ideas that do match up with your design needs. Just knowing what programmers are capable of creating helps remove constraints in your own thinking, allowing you to visualize in terms of what is possible rather than impossible.





When developing a new website, one of the most difficult aspects of the design process is conveying a sense of how the programmed, final product will behave. In the first stages, you are usually looking at only static comp images. Designers can spend hours upon hours in Photoshop creating examples of hover effects, slideshows, menus, links and any number of interactive elements, and this is often helpful. Ultimately, they are creating an experience in their own minds that they must be able to communicate in order to keep everyone involved in the project informed and on the same page. Looking to examples of imaginative design elements can help you visualize how your website will function when it is still a mere .jpg on your desktop.

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