Eight Ideas for Refreshing Your Law Firm Website

Do you think your law firm needs a new website? Before you decide to undertake a complete website redesign, first consider whether refreshing design elements or upgrading functionality would bring your site up to date. With custom-built websites costing between $30,000 and $150,000, a scaled-down approach will be much easier on your marketing budget.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself when deciding whether to rebuild or refresh your law firm website:

- What don't you like about your law firm website?
- Is your website built on a platform that can support upgrades without changing the content management system?
- What are your long-term goals for the website? Can some changes carry you for a couple more years?

If you decide to go with a refresh, here are eight ways to upgrade your law firm website without doing a full redesign.

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Revise the home page hero area

Most (but not all) home page designs include an area with a strong visual element — something that has impact and importance and is intended to convey the firm's brand in a high-profile position. Changing this "hero area" can affect the way visitors experience your brand. Think about looking outside the legal industry for creative inspiration.

Consider using a video or image "carousel" with a powerful messaging statement as overlay text. Make sure to use a unique image that reflects the firm culture and brand. Avoid using cliché stock images like gavels, law books and courthouse pillars. These images will just make you look like any other generic law firm.

Most content management systems allow images and videos in the home page hero area to be easily switched, so you may not need to call on your web developer. However, if you're going with the "do-it-yourself" plan, make sure to optimize the image or video for maximum quality and minimum file size. A file size bigger than 1 MB could slow down your page load time and negatively affect the user experience. (More on this below.)

Update the navigation

Your business objectives may have changed since your website was built. Perhaps you added new practice areas or created a diversity committee. Maybe pages have been

thrown haphazardly into your menu over time. Take a step back by looking at your navigation from a first-time visitor's perspective. Is the menu intuitive? Does it align with your firm's business goals? Does it render well on mobile devices? The heatmapping tool Crazy Egg offers other great tips for assessing how users navigate through web pages. Instead of guessing how users behave, create a heatmap and use objective data to inform your navigation structure.

Remove old content

When deciding what stays and what goes, approach each of your content types independently. News pages about the firm and its attorneys probably are not relevant after four or five years at most. These pages can be archived or unpublished. Informational content like white papers and articles your attorneys authored years ago may still be accurate and relevant. Some pieces just need additional information or minor changes, so don't necessarily delete content based on the publication date. (Adding some updates can enhance SEO results.) Check your Google Analytics to ensure that pages you delete are not driving a high number of page views.

Shoot new bio photos

If your attorney bio images look outdated or lack consistency, it's time to get new portraits. Even if you can't schedule a studio shoot or bring a photographer to your office right now, consider using a virtual option, like the Gittings Global Virtual Photo Pro™ solution, to create high-quality, professional headshots for all your bio pages. As an added perk, new headshots can also be used in social media profiles and media pitches.

Revise attorney bio pages

While we're on the subject of bio pages, are your attorney bios current? Probably not. Send around an internal form asking attorneys to provide up-to-date information about their recent representative cases, published works, media placements, community service and pro bono work, and any other sections you include on your website. Make sure you set a deadline for returning the forms. Otherwise, you may never see them again.

Check how fast your top-visited pages are loading

If your pages aren't loading quickly, you're losing visitors. Not only do visitors drop off because of slow page-load times, but Google and other search engines consider speed a factor in ranking your website in search results.

Depending on the reasons for slow page-load times, speeding up load may be as simple as compressing high-resolution images on your pages. Use Google's PageSpeed Insights to see how your pages score. A web developer can evaluate the causes of slow page-load times and recommend tactics to resolve the problem.

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Assess conversion factors

Review conversion metrics — such as contact form completions and newsletter sign-ups — over time to see how submissions have changed or stayed the same. Tracking conversions through Google Analytics or another measurement platform can help inform your refresh. For instance, if your contact form has a high exit rate, you might have too many required fields, unclear directions or some other factor that makes a visitor leave without completing the form.

Is anything missing on your website?

Sometimes small details are missing from a site. Do you have an easy-to-find search field? Can visitors find addresses for all your offices? Is the firm phone number in the header or footer? Are your social media follow icons visible to make it easy for people to connect with your profiles?

If you aren't sure whether your law firm website needs a full redesign or just a refresh, reach out to me, Melanie Trudeau, at mtrudeau@jaffepr.com.