

Everything You Need to Know About Law Firm Content Marketing

Most law firms understand the value of content marketing, but struggle with creating a plan that produces results and works within their resources. Content marketing will help raise brand awareness for your firm and showcase your attorneys' knowledge and expertise in their practice areas. However, creating relevant content takes time, so being strategic is essential.

There are six steps to developing a content marketing program. These steps should give you the framework you need to execute an ongoing and effective content marketing model.

Define Goals

Start with overarching goals for your content marketing program. Examples are, "Build brand awareness for the firm in the New York market" or "Increase the visibility of the firm's attorneys." Then get more granular with your goals by looking at individual practice areas, geographic regions or industries. An example could be, "Build brand awareness for the firm's commercial real estate practice by developing informational content targeted at real estate developers" or "Increase the visibility of attorney A and attorney B in the intellectual property arena, specifically in the automotive industry."

A defined list of goals will inform and support the measurement plan.

Outline a Measurement Plan and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Once you've set the goals, determine how you will measure success for each one. Ideally, you will have objective metrics that you can track over time, but subjective indicators are also important.

Objective measurements which also would be KPIs can include Google Analytics pageview metrics for a blog or section of your website, engagement or reach of social media posts, keyword rankings (SEO results), or online advertising click-through numbers.

Subjective indicators can include anecdotal feedback from attorneys who have received comments about their content, new prospects who report having read an article or referral sources who contact attorneys for more information about a related subject.



Melanie Trudeau

Vice President

Digital Marketing

970.376.7746

mtrudeau@jaffepr.com

Determine Content Marketing Channels

Take a strategic approach to which channels you are going to focus on with an understanding of the resources you already have. While it may be tempting to overreach and want to do it all, try to stay grounded and approach your channel selection pragmatically. Look at the channels the firm has used in the past and assess whether they're still viable and if you have the bandwidth to add new channels.

Channels can include:

1. The firm's website or blog
2. Public relations or other third-party publishing sites, including professional membership associations
3. Social media
4. Paid content placements

You will have to break down each of the channels you include in your plan into sub-channels. For instance, identify which social media platforms reach your desired audiences and are manageable for your team to maintain.

Next, determine the types of content (blogs, client alerts, e-books, videos, images, etc.) you will develop for each channel and the frequency you will aim for. A content calendar is the best way to organize this part of the plan. A simple shared spreadsheet will suffice for most law firm content marketing programs. Include columns for content type, topic, author, deadlines and publishing date, but don't overcomplicate the calendar or no one will use it. The more granular details will be identified for each individual piece of content but don't have to be tracked in the overarching content calendar.

Select Topics

When determining what to write or design, it's helpful to research the demand for your subject area. One trick is to identify the questions that people are asking in search engines. Try using online tools like [Google Trends](#) or [Answer the Public](#) to explore questions and problems facing your current and potential clients.

For each topic you identify, determine your target audience and what their common characteristics are. If you're writing about a personal injury topic, the voice and tone will be different from if you're writing for general counsel at Fortune 500 companies.

Plan and Create Content

Once you have chosen your topic and identified your audience, create an outline of all the elements you will need for a given piece of content. Obviously, this will be determined by the type of content you're creating. An outline will keep the piece and you organized as it is drafted.

If you are considering a blog for your law firm's website, creating a reusable template will help guide your writing and ensure you have all the necessary components for each

post. Your blog template should include headline options (write at least three), links to external resources and related content on your firm's website, sub-headers to show the organization of the blog, meta tags (title tag and meta description) and keywords to use for SEO, social media snippets for each of your platforms, an image to use on the web page and on social media sites, and other visuals (charts and graphs) to support the text.

For third-party content, make sure to have the editorial guidelines or specifications in hand before you start creating content. If a publisher requests an 800-word bylined article, you don't want to write a 2,000-word piece and have to cut it down (or worse, send it in and expect the publisher to do the editing!). For earned media, you may have to sign a contributor's contract and provide a brief bio and headshot. Having everything organized in advance will help you focus on writing rather than worry about the other details.

Writing Headlines

An effective, attention-getting headline is one of the most-important elements of your written content and often one of the most overlooked. It's the first thing people see, and it determines whether they click and go further. Don't just go with the first thing that pops into your head. Once the article is done, brainstorm multiple versions of the headline and play with word choice and order. Copywriters often refer to the "Four U's" of crafting effective headlines:

1. Make it UNIQUE.
2. Be ULTRA-SPECIFIC.
3. Create a sense of URGENCY.
4. Convey USEFULNESS.

Execute a Distribution Plan

Once you've created your content, there's still more work to do. Getting it out there to the widest audience possible is part of the battle. A solid distribution process is often repeatable for similar types of content, so you won't have to reinvent the wheel every time. The most-common distribution channels include social media; email marketing; and legal news distribution and syndication sites like JD Supra, the *National Law Review* or Lexology.

Consider repurposing strategies that can add to your content marketing program with minimal effort. Perhaps a firm blog could be turned into a webinar or used to pitch the author as a source for media. Maybe a series of client alerts could be combined to create an e-book that you put behind a sign-up form as a lead generation strategy. Get creative with it and find processes that are easy to repeat.

Implementing an ongoing content marketing program is a monumental task, but taking a strategic approach will help you minimize wasted time and have the tools to measure and adjust your strategy to achieve maximum benefits.

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