

Amy O'Donnell

# 7 Mistakes Attorneys Make When Creating A Website

SEOForLaw.net

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## Introduction

In the old days, lawyers and law firms hung out a shingle and put an ad in local Yellow Pages, hoping to be found by the right clients. Word-of-mouth was one of the most common ways to bring in new clients and revenue. But in many cases, there was a constant need to keep finding new clients in order to stay in business.

Fast-forward to the 21st Century--it's not enough to have an ad in the phone book. In fact, why bother? Many lawyers and law firms advertise on TV, but you need considerable revenue to pay for that time. Large or small, legal services providers of all types need to be online to be found by their ideal clients.

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Digital marketing levels the playing field for small- and medium-sized law firms. No longer do you need a huge marketing department (and a huge budget) to have a respectable website that shows you and your firm in the best light. A well-made website with a good UX (user experience) that's easy for potential clients to find has taken the place of the billboards and phone book ads.

Traditional advertising targets everyone a potential client--but you know they aren't. Instead of advertising to everybody, digital marketing focuses your advertising right where people are--online, and looking for you.

## **How They Find You**

Does anyone use a phone book anymore? Not really. Online searches, primarily on mobile devices, are the usual way people find what they need and where to get it.

Putting up a website doesn't mean a steady stream of clients. Websites need to be optimized for search engines so that when a potential client is researching his or her legal matter, your website shows up in their results--preferably on top.

The most common search engine in the world is, of course, Google. Most digital marketing is geared toward your website being found in the search results. It's not easy to get a search engine to find your website, and you can make some costly mistakes if you don't understand SEO. I can help you avoid the pitfalls of search engine optimization.

## **Who Am I?**

I'm Amy O'Donnell, content creator for the legal industry. I'm not an attorney myself, and my "legal advice" is usually the same: *"You need an attorney who specializes in. . . ."*

If you're wondering what makes me an authority on legal websites, I'll tell you. I write web copy and content for attorneys and law firms across the US. I've written copy for a range of attorneys whose practices include:

- Personal injury law
- Family/divorce law
- Traffic ticket defense

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- Criminal defense law
  - Disability law
  - Estate planning and elder law
  - Civil rights law
  - Consumer law
  - Financial services malpractice, such as investment fraud

I've also written content for legal-related companies:

- Process service company
- Paralegal outsourcing company
- Animation company that produces visualization videos for court cases
- Consumer dispute resolution
- Online prenuptial agreement service (part of a bigger divorce law firm)
- Website offering law students paid online internships

Whatever kind of legal service you provide, it's important that leads, prospects and potential clients be able to find you when they need you.

### **Mistake #1: A Stale, Static Website**

Ever find a website that hasn't been updated since before 2010 or even earlier? It happens. Outdated websites also tell Google and other search engines that the site isn't important enough to pick up and show people.

It's important that your website is regularly updated with articles, blogs, news, and other topical content that potential clients will find interesting and want to read. Keyword-rich content helps your website look fresh so that search engines see it as valuable and useful to readers. It doesn't have to be a complete website re-write every day. But weekly or bi-weekly blogs and other content tells the search engines that your site is valuable to people.

### **Mistake #2: A Non-Optimized Website**

It's not enough to just have a website with you or your firm's staff pictures and professional bios, and maybe what kind of law you practice. Your website needs to tell readers what you

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do, have a menu where they can find what they need quickly and include a call to action on every page.

For instance, if you're a lawyer or law firm who focuses on family law and estate planning, mention it. If you're a general law firm that happens to handle small things like wills, bills of sale and notarizations, you should mention that too. Don't assume that the reader just knows who you are and what kind of law you practice.

Does your firm handle more than one or two specialties? Highlight these specialties with links on the page and in a dropdown menu that indicates your practice areas.

You'll also want to make sure your website is optimized for the geographical area where you want to be found. Is it just one city, like Phoenix, or do you also want to be found in Mesa, Scottsdale, Gilbert, Chandler, and Peoria? Your website then needs SEO optimized pages for each of those cities--and they can't be duplicated.

### **Mistake #3: Not using good keywords**

Keywords are those terms and phrases that potential clients are using when they're searching for an attorney, such as:

- DUI attorney in Chicago
- Divorce attorney in Dallas
- Adoption lawyer in Los Angeles
  - Adoption lawyer in Los Angeles who handles international adoptions (this is a more specialized long-tail keyword)
- Car accident attorney in Miami
- Slip and fall lawyer in Philadelphia
- Civil rights lawyer in Chicago
- Police brutality lawyer in Mississippi
- Small business law firm in Seattle
- Business incorporation lawyer in Houston

Anything people type in the search bar that relates to your firm is what you should use as keywords and long-tail key phrases, such as the ones above. Notice it's not just "lawyer," it

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what kind of lawyer and where. Consider what your firm does for your clients and start there. What would they need to search for in order to find you?

#### **Mistake #4: Writing Your Website's Content For Lawyers**

Think about it: when a potential client is in need of legal help, they're looking for information that will lead them to a decision. Most people don't hire a lawyer every day. So how does your website speak to them?

*State law §7894.81 requires that all parties to the litigation are required to submit to prior arbitration and submit a series of affidavits to the court for review before filing the petitioner's request for depositions in order to comply with the local tort rules that regulate the filing of such a lawsuit.*

Or:

*Before you can request a deposition, your attorney is required to submit one or more affidavits for the court to review. These affidavits are required from all the parties in the lawsuit, in accordance with state law §7894.81. The court reviews these affidavits in advance of any depositions that you request. Once the affidavits are reviewed and approved, you can file your lawsuit.*

You and your colleagues understand both paragraphs easily. But they're not your target market, because you're not looking for lawyers. To someone who isn't fluent in legal language, it's a turn-off. They'll go to another website with a conversational style that helps them understand what they need to know.

#### **Mistake #5: "I can do that myself"**

If you're meeting with clients, writing briefs and other legal documents, spending time in discovery or in court, do you really have time to write your website content, too?

Having a legal content creator who understands SEO writing for your website makes more sense for two reasons:

1. A writer can take a complicated subject and make it digestible for non-legal readers
2. Delegating content creation leaves you free to practice law and take care of your clients

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## **Mistake #6: Not enough content**

I'm not saying you need to write a newspaper every day. But regular content postings such as blogs and/or articles, firm news, law changes or updates, new lawyer hires, and other up-to-the-minute topics that are properly keyworded for SEO not only keep your website updated, but also catch the attention of the search engines when prospects start searching.

Does your firm do case studies of your clients? Why or why not? Case studies in a PDF format let your potential clients download your success stories to read later.

Other types of client-focused content can include topics such as:

- Checklists, such as *"what to do after an accident"*
- Things to remember if you're arrested
- What to do if your spouse wants a divorce
- Downloads like this one that discuss a specific topic your ideal client is interested in reading about

Of course, you will always have a disclaimer stating that the content is general information, and does not establish an attorney-client relationship. Just make sure to include an obvious and clear call to action everywhere so they can easily get in touch when they're ready.

## **Mistake #7: Not keeping in touch with clients**

When was the last time you said "Hi" to your client list?

One of your divorce clients from last year is getting re-married in a few months. Should she consider a prenuptial agreement? Do you think she would be interested in talking to you before the wedding?

Another client whose company declared bankruptcy two years ago is starting another company and will be forming an LLC, to begin with. Can you help him, and more importantly, does he know you can?

A small-business retail client found themselves as defendants in a slip-and-fall case last year, and you helped them prove that the claim was false. Now they've been sued a second time for the same reason. Do they know to call you again for help?

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Sending a monthly or bi-monthly e-newsletter to everyone on your client list can keep your clients updated on law topics that they feel are important. Some of your clients may want to know how changes in the law can affect their cases, such as an additional burden of proof as a plaintiff or a change in the statute of limitations. A small business needs to know how recent changes in your state's tax law will affect their bottom line.

You'll also stay "top of mind" when your clients need an attorney or know someone else who does. The newsletter also helps you build trust and offer social proof that your firm can offer them the help they need at a difficult time.

### **Is It Time To Work On Your Website?**

As a legal blogger and content creator, I help lawyers and law firms make their websites more user-friendly and SEO-optimized. Since 2017, I've helped over 40 attorneys, law firms and legal services companies with content, including website copy, blogs, and articles, as well as other non-legal businesses.

You can contact me today at 281-993-6375 or at [amycopywriting@gmail.com](mailto:amycopywriting@gmail.com) to discuss your firm's website and content needs.