Why local SEO is important for lawyers and law firms

Finding your business

There’s been a 500 percent increase in “near me” mobile searches. We’re in the middle of a local search explosion. According to Google, nearly one-third of all mobile searches, 1.1 billion+ searches per day, are location-specific search queries.

These searches continue to climb.

The numbers from Google’s report shows a staggering change taking place, one that lawyers and law firms may not be prepared for.

Why Local SEO is essential for your law firm

Local search is a way of life for your clients. More and more, your clients are conditioned to search for the specific things they want, regardless of what it is. Research from Think with Google shows:

- A 500 percent increase in "*near me*" mobile searches (e.g., real estate attorney near me, tax attorney near me)
- 150+ percent growth in mobile searches for *"___ near me now."*
- Search volume for local places, *without* the qualifier "*near me,*" has grown by 150 percent
- 26 percent of searcher clicks go-to brands that appear first in Google (ads not included).
- 3 in 4 smartphone owners turn to search first to address their immediate needs (e.g., DUI attorney, gun rights lawyers Chicago)

This is why local SEO is so essential. Most lawyers are familiar with SEO; a savvy few are even familiar with the ins and outs of local SEO. Most do it badly.

If you'd drive like a reliable stream of eager clients to your law firm, you'll need to focus your attention on local SEO.

What exactly is Local SEO?

Local SEO is a subset of Search Engine Optimization that focuses on local intent.

- Lawyers near me
- Real estate attorney in Chicago Loop
- DUI lawyer in Milwaukee
- Affordable Small business lawyer in NYC

Those results can be displayed in a special table known as the local pack or their usual results.

Google uses signals called *local search ranking factors* to determine which law firms are displayed first/prominently in its search engine. The better your local search ranking factors, the better your rank in Google's local search results.

Here's a list of these signals:

- **Google My Business (GMB) Profile:** A free profile that helps you to drive engagement via Google Maps, Google Reviews, and other services on Google. A GMB profile is a must-have for strong local SEO performance.
- **Link Signals:** Who links to you, the number of sites that link to you, the words they use to link to you, etc. Each link functions like a vote. The more votes you receive from high trust or high profile sites, the easier it is to rank for your desired keywords.

- **Review Signals:** The number of online reviews you have, review recency (recent reviews are more valuable), review diversity (i.e., reviews on a variety of other sites), review velocity (how fast do you accumulate reviews?). The stronger your review portfolio, the easier it is to attract new clients at a lower cost.
- **On-Page Signals:** Your website's reputation, your name, address, and phone numbers are consistent with information available online. The amount of traffic coming to your site and more.
- **Behavior Signals:** Do visitors click on your links/listings? What's your click-through rate? These behavior signals tell Google a lot about the relevance of your page and whether it's something searchers are looking for.
- **Citation signals:** Consistent name, address, and phone numbers across the internet, on each of your profiles. Listings on a variety of relevant, local sites and directories.
- **Social signals:** Engagement on social media platforms (e.g., likes, hearts, shares, etc.) also function as votes. They're challenging to game and provide Google with a helpful measure of a lawyer's brand reputation and credibility. If you're consistently trending on Facebook or Twitter, you're worthy of more attention.

Optimize your law firm around these local search ranking factors, and you improve the volume of traffic and leads you receive from Google.

> Try MyReviews to improve your local SEO visibility

Why Local SEO is a problem for lawyers

Savvy lawyers are aware of these concepts, that isn't the problem. It's merely a good understanding of marketing.

This isn't your fault. Several barriers make it challenging to draw clients to your law firm successfully. I'm talking about cultural programming, perceptions, and myths that shape how lawyers promote their firm.

Let's take a look at a few of these.

1. **It's unprofessional to sell.** This is a bit of a paradox — rainmakers are revered in law firms, but selling is often viewed as a sin. This discomfort with selling has a lot to do with the social and political class requirements of the profession. That's a tough position to be in because, like it or not, selling is a necessity in the legal industry.

2. **My law firm isn’t a business; it’s a calling.** This is true, but you can’t help clients with your calling if they don’t know you exist.
3. **Clients hate being sold.** In reality, clients hate being pushed, bullied, or manipulated into something they don’t want. They want to be treated fairly and to be given a choice. Doing this the right way is what selling is.
4. **My time is best spent focused on client matters.** No problem, find someone to handle the business development and marketing concerns for you. Get someone else to solve this problem for your law firm.
5. **I want to practice law, not run a business.** You can’t have one without the other. At some point, you’ll be expected to attract clients, whether you’re a solo lawyer or a hungry lawyer who’s looking to make partner.
6. **We get clients through referrals.** This is good news, but it’s also irrelevant because your competitors are overtaking your firm on Google, Facebook, Yelp, and other platforms as we speak. Eventually, you’ll be forced out of the client conversation.
7. **We already have rainmakers.** You have rainmakers until you don’t. It’s common for law firms to depend on rainmakers; what these firms don’t realize is the fact that these rainmakers hold their firms hostage. They use their ability to generate business as a bargaining tool to make unreasonable demands. What happens when their firm fails to meet their needs? They take the clients they brought in elsewhere, leaving your firm exposed and unprotected.

Here’s the good news.

These issues are relatively easy to overcome. With a little bit of preparation and the right strategy, you can use Local SEO to attract clients to your law firm, with minimal, direct, one-on-one selling required.

Local SEO isn’t an optional add-on, it’s a must-have

It’s an essential requirement if you want to stay in the game. Google says the demand for local search is growing. Your clients are spending more time on Google to find the services and providers they need.

Can they find you?

Local search is a way of life for your clients. Your clients know what they want, more and more, they’re turning to Google to get it. In my next post, I’ll show you how to build a strong local SEO campaign that produces traffic, generates leads and boosts

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