



SEO Guidelines and Best Practices for Law Firms

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SEO Guidelines and Best Practices for Law Firms

Let me guess. You downloaded this eBook because you are either: 1) not ranked high, 2) been burned by other SEO providers, or 3) starting your new law practice and want immediate inquiries.

This guide can help. The following is a very detailed, and very long, tutorial of practical tips and information to help your law firm grow in 2019 and beyond. Keep reading to see how it all works.

Law Firm SEO Basics

First off, why should you listen to us? Our SEO campaign management started with our Founder, Peter Boyd, an attorney. He began building and ranking websites in 2001 as an associate at his intellectual property firm in Florida. We have continued that tradition now almost two decades later and added attorneys and other digital marketing experts to our team. We currently help hundreds of firms with ongoing SEO campaigns.

You can grow your practice by doing the five simple things below. Yes, you can do all of this yourself, but why should you? It will take time to write, build links and share your information. Time you could be working on cases and billable hours. But if you invest, then you will become an authority online. If you need help, then contact us; we would be glad to assist you. In the interim, here are our top five tips to start you off.

1. **Write. Write. Write.**

Writing long-form content is the most important thing you can do in 2019. Make sure you turn your 250-word articles into 2,500-word articles. Turn your website into a Law Hub but make sure you are targeting potential clients as your audience. Think about what your clients need from you and what are the common issues they face.

2. **Don't Spam.**

Don't try to trick the search engines. Don't engage in manipulative tactics. Don't engage in techniques that will eventually get banned. Check out Webmaster Tools if you think you have participated in shady practices in the past. Stay white hat for the best results.

3. **Build Quality over Quantity**

Backlinks are still important. But realistically, you only need the best ones – so go for quality, not quantity. Nail down the best legal directories and get your firm listed. Nail down all your local citations and make sure your NAP (Name Address Phone) is all the same. Nail down article writing and outreach to other websites with quality ideas. Finally, obtain media mentions from other sites when you win big cases or have important announcements.

4. **Focus – Don't Dilute your Website**

Start focusing your SEO campaign on a few phrases within your practice areas, then branch out once you have nailed the process to rank high for those. For attorneys, law firm SEO works best when you target your most important practices areas first, and then expand to the other areas when you are satisfied with those results.

5. **Build a better website that focuses on Bounce Rate, Time on Site and Good Usability**
Google's RankBrain takes into account time on site, bounce rate and click-thru rates. That means that you need to have a listing that draws attention so that people click on your search result AND keeps the users' attention once they visit your page. Your goal is to become the authoritative person in your area with the most comprehensive discussion on your practice area. You will rank if you do this correctly. Make your website easy to use. Make your website easy to find information. Make it easy to contact you. Check your website logs for your bounce rate and time on site. Make sure there are no errors.

Common Law Firm SEO Issues and Complaints

Law Firm SEO is hard. Anyone telling you otherwise does not have a client dominate in the top search results of a major market. Getting ranked high in search is challenging. You are probably reading this copy because you are either:

1. **Ranking Low** – You search results show on page two or below. In short, you are not getting any traffic, and you need to rank higher.
2. **New to the Game** – You're just learning about best practices and want to start with good content and useful links.
3. **Trying to Grow Beyond Word of Mouth References** – Happy clients help grow your practice, but won't reach the audience that SEO can.
4. **Penalized** – You had great results, but suddenly fell out of favor with Google. You probably need help with a disavow file, backlink cleanup or editing your copy to stop over-optimization.
5. **Going Broke** – You are wasting money monthly on a team and want to know how you can improve.
6. **Too Busy** – You want to be practicing law, not worrying about writing about the latest news in Corporate Law or reaching out to journalists to pick up backlinks.

In any market, there are at least 10 firms that would love to be on page one of search for your practice area. Sometimes there are hundreds of firms vying for the coveted first page in your area. Firms like yours are all vying for only 10 slots. Realistically, law firms are all vying for about five slots, as Google seems to put at least five legal directories in the first page of search for any phrase.

Each year Google is making it more challenging to grab searcher's attention by promoting paid listings and directories to fill out all the first page slots. In fact, on most searches, there are only between three and five slots available for any area.

So you are limited to being THE best resource for your community or practice area (or at least in the top three). You end up with confusing advice from a variety of vendors. Tactics may be on the cutting-edge but could get you banned eventually. Some tactics and information is simply outdated.

What is SEO?

"Let me Google it." In the age of digital media, these four words have become synonymous with settling debates, answering tough questions and, most importantly, tracking down reliable businesses.

- Am I at fault for a side impact collision? Google it.
- What is the statute of limitations for wrongful death? Google it.
- Looking for the "top car accident lawyer near me" in Florida? Well, you get the point.

SEO is a Science

Search engine optimization is the science of making your web pages relevant to keyword phrases that a prospective client may use to search for and find your firm. You start by defining what keyword phrases we should target, then obtain top rankings for each of those keyword phrases through our proven methods.

Is SEO Needed?

When we meet with new attorney clients, we're often met with the same question: Is SEO really necessary?. Maybe. Some law firms will rank naturally on their own due to the power of their domain and their quality content. Of course, they probably had help writing content, building a good website and getting mentioned online. Those are the key elements of SEO. If you do that naturally, awesome.

If not, then search engine optimization is becoming more and more competitive every day. Attorneys are increasing their spending on digital marketing, and those who don't follow suit often suffer the consequences.

How to Start a SEO Process

- **Research and Strategy** – Start by determining which keyword phrases will be more effective by looking at past searches. You can use Google Keyword Planner as a great resource (you just need a free Google account). Narrow down your keywords by selecting those that are within reach AND will help your law practice grow in the practice areas you care most about.
- **Site Architecture and On-Page Changes** – Next you need to organize your website to be search friendly and easy to navigate. Keep your site as close as possible to flat, with a small pyramid of pages. You also need to create friendly URLs, tags and code.
- **Authority** – You need to obtain links, thus ensuring that you are well positioned to rank high. Law firms do this in several ways:
 - Legal directories;
 - Regular directories;
 - Local listings;

- Writing content and publishing offsite;
 - Getting PR and media mentions;
 - Getting social;
 - Sponsoring local events;
 - Sponsoring national events;
 - Outreach to bloggers; and
 - Building such a great website that people want to link to it as a resource.
- **Content** – Search engines award points to websites that offer relevant information. You need to make sure your main practice areas have between 1,000 and 5,000 words per topic. Become THE dominant resource online.
 - **Social Media** – You need to not only publish your content but get others to notice your content. Digital marketing for social media evolves every day, and more and more platforms need to be utilized.
 - **Analysis of Campaign and Consulting** – Search rankings change constantly. Each month you should review your bounce rate, impressions, time on page, exit pages and of course sessions.

Research and Strategy

When you start a campaign for your law practice, the first part of our project is always research. You want to understand your firm, competitors and where you can improve results. You should create a detailed strategy that involves website updates, authority through links, content writing, social media and a focus on analytics for conversions.

Site Architecture and On-Page Changes

Once the strategy is finalized and you determine what keyword phrases to target, you should build a new site architecture and plan to support your content needs. In short, we recommend changes to your existing site, new pages to be written and any other updates that can help. This includes title tags, meta descriptions, rich snippets, XML sitemaps and more.

Authority and Link-Building

In the world of SEO, authority is everything. Without high-quality citations and links, your website will not be able to outperform your competitors. Despite popular belief, it's not about quantity when it comes to link-building. You should focus on fewer, high-value links.

You want your backlink profile to be as substantial and natural as possible so that it will withstand the test of time – not just make a quick jump in rankings until your site is penalized for spammy backlinks. You can focus your team on local listings, testimonials and reviews, video marketing, social media, blogging opportunities, events, seminars and more!

Custom Content

You need to produce unique content. Period. Yes, you can write 1,000 to 2,500 words on very niche topics. We have produced niche articles on FATCA that rank at the top of search. If we can do it on a single tax area, then you can do it on your key areas.

Social Media

Social media is everywhere! If you're not utilizing your Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and other social accounts, you're missing out on an easy way to increase brand awareness and interact with potential clients. Get signed up for Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn at the very minimum. We also recommend a YouTube account for videos, Instagram and Pinterest. A key account is also Google My Business.

Analysis of the Campaign and Consulting

Stay in the loop! Each month you need to review your current rankings and traffic and pitch fresh, exciting new ideas for your website.

A Typical SEO Campaign

If you want a successful campaign, you need you to do the following things. No exceptions. You need to have a vested interest in your campaign.

- **Maintain an Active Blog with Optimized Content** – Topical content is key to ranking higher.
- **Your Keywords** – Examine your keyword phrases quarterly and ask yourself the following questions: Is this all still relevant to my firm? Is something not working? Do I need a change? Are my keywords casting too wide of a net and not as honed in as they can be?
- **Your Content** – Do you have valuable content embedded into the pages of your website that are specifically for your targeted keywords? Are these pages core content pages (part of the main architecture of the website) and does each page have 500 words or more, including landing pages and blog posts, and are they incorporating your targeted keyword phrases several times throughout?
- **Bloggng** – Blogging is crucial and develops relevancy to your website. Do you blog? Do you know what to blog about? When was the last time you posted new content to your website? When blogging, there are a few things that can be done though to make them stronger:
- **1,000+ Word Count** – Google wants to see at least 500 words on any page of content, and most top ranked sites have about 1,000 words per page, which includes blogs too.
- **Relevant Content** – Keeping word count in mind, the more you write, the more opportunity you have to weave in the keywords of your campaign into your content. The more you do that, the more relevant your posts and website becomes.

- **Frequent Content** – Ideally, we tell clients they should be blogging daily or weekly or, at the very least, monthly. We realize that it might not be possible, but the point is to post as much as you can.
- **Social Media** – Are you active on your social media accounts? Do you reply and respond to comments? Are you engaged and networking within these accounts? Being active on Social Media is the light version of blogging. It is literally networking with your audience and being active on your social sites can help establish your firm’s brand. It also really helps Search Engines connect relevant content leading to your website. Posting on Social Media is not enough though; networking and searching within the social networks to find users can help to drive business.
- **Videos/YouTube Channel** – We highly recommend doing videos and setting up a youtube.com channel for the firm. Videos, particularly YouTube channels, are really valued at this point. They carry a lot of relevancy and authority. Google (who bought YouTube) wants to see video submissions and your relevancy within your submissions.
- **Link Directories, Press Release and Article Submissions** – On May 22, 2013, Google rolled out its next generation of the Penguin algorithm update affecting its searches. Directories are now occupying most of the top slots of any given phrase. We have always recognized the power of these listings; however, they have been given even more importance after the update. Another great way to gaining even more authority is to join these website directories.
- **Relevant Domain Names** – Do you have valuable content embedded into the pages of your website that are specifically for your targeted keywords? Are these pages core content pages (part of the main architecture of the website)? Does each page have 500 words or more, including landing pages and blog posts, and are they incorporating your targeted keyword phrases several times throughout?

Need help maintaining your blog? We can do that. Need help managing your social media accounts? We have a person for that. Need advice about how to implement proper blogging and social media practices? Let us help you. All you have to do is ask.

What Should NOT be Included

There are a lot of bad SEO tactics. If a firm is offering you any of these techniques or tactics, you should simply walk away. In fact, your firm should avoid these items at all costs (some may harm your campaign for years):

- **Bad Backlinks** – This can include reciprocal linking, link schemes, paid links and the worst of them all – low-quality directory links. The good news is if you do run into bad backlinks, you can always disavow (although it may take months to update).
- **Short Blog Posts** – The days of 250-word posts are definitely gone. The days of 500-word posts may be coming to an end too. Instead, focus on long-form content that can truly dominate in search results.

- **Outsourcing the Work** – Make sure the agency you sign with is actually doing the work and simply not referring business.
- **Long-Term Contracts** – Avoid any agency that locks you into a long-term deal.
- **Duplicate Content** – Creating the same content on your own site (or others) can lead to massive quality issues in your website and dilute your key pages.
- **Not Adhering to Google's Search Engine Guidelines** – Google has its own webmaster guidelines that should be followed. Check them out [here](#).
- **Using Old Techniques** – There are hundreds of techniques that are now outdated, some mentioned in this top list. If your firm is using old techniques, be wary.
- **Keyword Stuffing** – Jamming your copy full of stuffed terms makes it hard to read and does not help your campaign.
- **Doorway Pages** – Creating multiple, copycat pages to rank high for various phrases is typically not allowed. Instead, create unique content for your topics.
- **Cloaking** – The ability to show one page to users and another to search engines has been around for a while now but violates Google's guidelines. It can lead to a penalty.
- **Slow Loading Website** – If your website scores low in Google's Page Speed Insights and other tools, you should invest in a website upgrade.
- **Not Focusing on Mobile** – If you do not focus on mobile and mobile indexing, you are going to hurt your website long-term.
- **Webmaster Tools Errors** – Check your webmaster tool login and make sure you don't have any penalties or indexing errors.
- **Anchor Links** – Don't get spammy with inbound anchor text links. You can be penalized with too much of a direct match between your anchor link, title tag, H1 tag and content.
- **Over-Optimized Domains** – You don't need to have a domain with keywords to rank high. Any site can rank high with proper content and authority.
- **Stuffing Keywords into your Meta Description and Title Tags** – Make your content fit naturally. In fact, your title tag should be a key selling point, and your meta description should back up with a good reason to click on the article. If you can include the keyword phrase, great, but if not, don't force it into the tags.
- **Too Many Similar Pages** – Just like duplicate content, you should not have too many pages targeting the exact same keyword phrase. You can naturally include lawyer, attorney and law firm into the same page talking about corporate law. You don't need to have three pages on the same topic of corporate law.
- **Multiple Websites** – While not a violation, be careful of multiple websites. Often it is more cost effective to put all content into one website, so long as the topics make sense. Don't just create multiple websites to fool the search engines.
- **Automated Link Building** – Don't fall for the trap of automatic link building through a paid service. You will get burned.
- **Guaranteed Results** – Often the guarantees have severely limiting clauses (i.e., for only niche keyword phrases), or a really long timeline, or the promise to only work harder. Work with an agency that has a good reputation and promises to be professional and help your site.

Typical SEO Process and Plan

Strategy and Process

SEO for lawyers is simple. You need to demonstrate that your firm is an industry leader. Using only ethical tactics, you do this by developing high-quality content and promoting your website with links.

Strategy: Relevancy and Authority

Google determines search rankings primarily on the relevancy of your content and authority of your backlinks. There are also other additional ranking signals to determine these rankings such as social, engagement, domain and page-level metrics, but the critical two are relevancy and authority.

Our goal is to make your site rank high through quality, in-depth content and to build your authority through quality backlinks (and sometimes usability). Relevancy is making your webpages relevant to the keyword phrases that a prospective client may use to search for and find your firm. Authority is getting backlinks, or essentially a quality and relevant endorsement, from another website back to your site.

Further, to stay competitive, you must engage in building a better web presence for your law practice. Our Internet marketing plans are also about forming a partnership to grow your business. By following our guidelines and investing in new content, links and upgrades, you will succeed long-term.

The Process

To obtain top rankings, our proven four-step process is outlined in the details below:

1. **Keyword Targeting (Strategy)** – The foundation of every SEO campaign is to establish a hyper-focused keyword phrase list that you are targeting for your campaign. You run this research based on your competitors' analysis and searches for effective keywords. If you work with us, our team presents our keyword research and irrelevant of rounds, you ultimately finalize what to target specifically.
2. **Content Analysis and On Page Optimization (Relevancy)** – For your website to demonstrate that you are who you say you are, you need to prove that to users and search engines alike through content. A comprehensive content plan of core content and monthly content will signify your relevancy.
3. **Link Building (Authority)** – This essential part of the process is where you get backlinks (an incoming link from another website to your website) that are built off of quality – and not quantity. These industry-specific endorsements count as "votes" in the eyes of search engines and the higher the quality, the better.

4. **Reporting and Consultation (Monitoring)** – Each month, you need to check your Google Analytics traffic report. These reports show the progression of the campaign.

Content Analysis and On-page Optimization

Relevancy is all about your content. In search marketing, you need the proper website content to support your campaign, rank high and drive business. Unique, valuable information and educational content drives traffic because people want to read it, respond to it and share it. Here are some tips for content marketing:

- **Structure Pages** – Make sure pages are structured for the web and establish an ongoing content plan.
- **Content Analysis** – In this analysis, you are essentially auditing the website's content. You will review the current existing content is strong enough to be compliant with the latest search engine standards upheld by the various search engines. Also, during this time you complete a competitor analysis to see what content your competitors have that you do not. At this point, you should outline and suggest new pages and new valued content (or the amplification of current content) that is particularly focused on demonstrating that your firm is the quintessential resource in your target market. Once all new content is prepared, giving your website a competitive advantage, you move onto on-page optimization.
- **On-page Optimization** – Optimizing your content includes editing and amplifying the campaigns' keywords in your content. It establishes the relevancy of your website for the keywords you are targeting, as each page is assigned a keyword. You will organize your website's architecture to be search-friendly. On-page optimization includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - **Tags** – The creation of unique and optimized title tags and meta descriptions.
 - **Sitemap Submission** – Submit sitemaps (both technically and superficially), so all the pages of your website are correctly indexed by the search engines.
 - **Technical Compliance** – Ensure the technical aspects are compliant with usability (site architecture), including a spam check, domain redirections, technical and site build modification and content.

Adding content regularly is also important. Companies that blog attract 75 percent more traffic to their websites. Most of our SEO plans include turnkey monthly blogging services from topic conception through writing and posting. Our blog posts are optimized and customized to your practice area and geographic market.

Link Building – Building Authority to your website

Simply put: You no longer build links; you build an overall authority. In the past, getting simple and direct links was all it took to lead authority to your website. Those days are gone. Building a proper backlink profile is now multi-faceted and more intensive than simple link building and

requires more research, legwork and time to complete and mature. While you produce fewer links per month, your links will be much higher quality.

Authority is based on the quality of backlinks to your site. Even though direct linking remains part of the equation, these links no longer hold the exclusive power. Developing a backlink profile in 2019 and beyond means whatever leads back to your website must be of substance and quality; and not just a simple link. It is not about quantity; it's about quality. A quality backlink requires that it is natural (not forced) and makes sense to your practice or industry. Also, a diverse backlink profile is more valued than not: a multitude of backlinks from separate sources or domains has more value than a multitude from the same location.

Based on your SEO level and your involvement, the progression of your backlink profiles may include (but are not limited to):

- **Strategy and Setup**
 - Backlink Analysis
 - Research New Links
 - Social Media/Google Listing/YouTube
 - Assistance with Online Business Reviews
 - Inclusion of "Star Rating" (with reviews once established)
- **Fundamentals**
 - Specified Links (Legal, Industry, Associations, etc.)
 - Local Listings (Top listings first)
 - Competitor Analysis
 - General Links (Generic business/personal profiles; continued location citations)
 - Paid Listings
 - Article Submissions ([hg.org](#), [Quora](#), [medium](#), etc.)
- **Intermediate**
 - Local Community Activism
 - Social Posts/Networking/Engagement/Bolstering Presence
 - Scholarships Opportunities
- **Advanced/Small Business PR**
 - Brand Mentions
 - Guest Blogging/Referral Blogs
 - Article Pitches
 - HARO/Media Mentions

Consulting and Reporting Partnership

If you do decide to hire an SEO company, then plan on a partnership. Attorneys who regularly meet with us and act on our ideas rank higher. While we will handle the majority of the work, we will need your input on content, obtaining some link building and for feedback, assistance. Once

rankings and traffic reports have been sent, during the second week of the month, we will need to meet with you as part of a standing meeting to pitch ideas and gain your approval to proceed.

The main objective is to get a solid return on your investment – turning that higher traffic into clients. By conversion tracking of contact forms and mobile phone call clicks, we assist with this conversion tracking and "close the loop" of what we are targeting to help demonstrate the return of this effort into a new customer.

As part of our consulting relationship, we will work on any of the following items on a monthly basis. The work will vary depending on the objectives and results of the campaign. In some months we will consult more, in others, we will conduct more on-page optimization or site architecture or write content. Examples of our work, include:

- **Consulting**
 - Set monthly meetings to assess the website and discuss strategy
 - Report on our monthly findings
- **Research**
 - Research industry trends as they relate to the firm and their goals
 - Help your firm determine what is best to do and not to do
- **Content Analysis and Writing**
 - Provide a core content strategy to enhance contextual relevancy of the website
 - Determine strategy and frequency of continual blogging
 - Consultation on the on-page optimization for title tags and meta descriptions
 - Editing and writing content, as needed
- **Analytics**
 - Review your website traffic
 - Highlight popular content on your website to the target market
 - Provide feedback in traffic trends to determine where your users are navigating on your site
 - Compare and contrast your overall traffic, bounce rate and visitor behavior
- **Directories / Associations**
 - Audit the firm's and attorney's profiles to make sure they have a complete profile with A+ quality legal directories and citations. These include, but are not limited to [Avvo](#), [Findlaw](#), [Best Lawyers](#), [SuperLawyers](#), [Findlaw](#), [Cornell](#), [Justia](#), [HG](#), [Martindale](#) and others.
 - List the top 100+ websites and local citations that can bolster your authority
- **Firm Citations**
 - Continual audit of firms' backlink profile, making sure the firm maintains top quality links only
 - Check bad and broken backlinks and remove them
- **Social Media**

- Make sure the firm is set up, branded and active on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Ensure all social media profiles are complete and the firm is engaging with their audience
- **Technical Consultation**
 - Establishing Schema Markup code on website (helping search engines promote your content and enhancing presentation in search results)
 - Continual check of the health of the website through Google Webmaster Tools
 - Continual internal review of the broken link check

SEO FAQs

Do you have a SEO Process Chart?

We have a very detailed SEO process chart for working with law firms. [Learn more about our SEO Process](#)

SEO ROI Calculator

Will SEO work for your firm? Use our calculator to estimate the return on investment (ROI) on our services. [Learn more about our ROI calculator.](#)

What are some of the Reviews Best Practices Guide?

Not sure how to obtain online reviews for your business? [Learn more about online reviews.](#)

Do you have a Google Analytics Quick Guide

Want to know how to use and understand Google Analytics quickly? [Learn more about Google Analytics.](#)

Do I need an SEO company?

In short, maybe. While we can provide resources to help you understand the "basics," SEO is far from simple. The guidelines and standards for what works and what doesn't is constantly changing and evolving. We view them like a puzzle or a code that we need to crack, and it can sometimes be challenging. It takes expert knowledge and experience to get the results you need, and more than anything, it takes time. As a lawyer, we know you're busy handling cases and clients. They need your utmost attention. Leave the technical stuff to us.

What are meta descriptions and title tags, and do I need them?

Title tags and meta descriptions are the on-page elements that appear on search engines. This typically includes a short title that links to your page and a brief description as to what potential clients will find. Writing good title tags and meta descriptions are one of the easiest ways to give

your on-page SEO a little boost. While it obviously doesn't guarantee a #1 ranking, having properly optimized meta tags will ensure that Google knows what terms or keyword phrases you're trying to have your website rank. Organic titles and thorough, attention-grabbing descriptions will also lead to more clicks from readers, and more traffic is always a good thing.

How do I recover bad rankings?

It's okay; we won't judge you. If you've engaged in unethical SEO practices in the past, it might take some time for your site to recover from penalties from search engines. Thankfully, there are a few things you can do that can help repair your relationship with Google. This includes:

- **Cleaning Up your Backlinks** – Remove and disavow those spammy, paid directories and replace them with high-quality links.
- **Writing Better Content** – Google favors original content (which you can find more information on below), so start writing and revising. Clean up your spam copy and create information that people will want and like to read.
- **Checking Out Algorithm Changes** – I know, I know, we've said it a lot, but Google's guidelines for good SEO are always changing, and you need to stay up-to-date on the latest policies to ensure the most success for your website.

What is good content?

There are many questions to ask when you're writing and reviewing content:

- Is it easy to read?
- Is it written for your audience?
- Does it naturally include our keywords?
- Is it linkable to other pages on our site?
- Does it drive readers to take action?
- Is it better than our competitors?

In general, we recommend that all optimized content be at least 500 words. We actually recommend it to be above 1,000 words. It should all be original and feature information that is of value to your readers. This includes general legal website content and marketing materials, blog posts, attorney biographies, legal articles and more! Beware of duplicate content or (even worse) template content, as these will hurt your rankings.

How much content should I produce?

This answer is highly dependant on your market and your competitors. Our new recommendation is over 1,000 word pages. Yes, that is a lot of content, but those tend to rank high (just like this page). We want you to be the expert in your area of law, so we obviously want you to have the most complete and valuable resources. Essentially, anything your competitors do, you can do better. For every two pages that they have, you should have two. This doesn't mean cranking out

low-quality content just to be the best. This means creating content hubs and building out your practice areas so that you are the go-to source for potential clients.

What are some top SEO violations, according to Google?

- **Keyword Stuffing** – Including your keywords is important in any SEO strategy. However, including them too many times can result in a penalty for keyword stuffing. If your key phrases are appearing in every header and every other sentence, you should prepare yourself to see a serious drop in rankings.
- **Hidden Text** – To avoid keyword stuffing, some black hat SEO companies will hide their keywords. Whether they are sneaked in your website's HTML code or hiding in plain sight by matching the text color to the page background, hidden text violates Google's guidelines and should be avoided.
- **Paid Links** – It might be tempting to resort to paying for links when building a backlink profile for your website. It's easy, right? Just pay a fee to have your practice added to a variety of online directories. Wrong. Spend the time building organic links, or you're going to be penalized.
- **Cloaking** – When a site is modified to display different content based on who (or what) is viewing it, this is known as cloaking. The version of your website that an average, day-to-day user sees is the same one that should be shown to search engine bots. Anything else is considered a serious SEO violation.
- **Doorway Pages** – Doorway pages are created to increase the chances of a website appearing multiple times in Google's search results. These spammy pages redirect users to an internal page without them knowing.

What is a conversion?

Every web page is created with a goal in mind. One goal achieved = one conversion. Clothing retailers want you to purchase their products. News websites want you to subscribe to their publications. For law firms like yours, the goal of your website is to get potential clients to contact you for a consultation. From eye-popping images to attention-grabbing headlines, there are [many strategies](#) we use to make sure our lawyers convert.

Does page speed matter?

You bet! We've all been through the struggle of waiting for a slow website to load. Studies have shown that more than one-third of internet browsers will abandon a site that takes just three seconds or more to load. Even a one-second delay in page response can lead to a [7% drop in conversions!](#) And that means you're losing clients. Not only is a slow website annoying, but it can also affect how Google views your website. Google has stated in the past that site speed, and page speed is used by its algorithm to rank pages.

If you're struggling with the load time of your website, there are a few things to consider. Are plugins bogging you down? How about your code? Are your graphics taking too long to load? You can find more information on how to speed things up [here](#).

Do blogs still matter?

Yes, they do. Companies that blog regularly are shown to attract 75% more traffic to their websites! Google loves seeing fresh, valuable and well-optimized content being added to your site, and what better way to do this than with a blog? In addition to boosting your rankings, these informational posts also help establish your law firm's credibility, authority and online usability. Potential clients will spend more time on your site, which increases the chance of them contacting you about your services. It's a win-win situation!

What is a slug and does it matter?

A slug is the part of your website's URL that explains what each page is about. For example:

www.paperstreet.com/internet-marketing/

The slug for our Internet Marketing page is internet marketing. This communicates to users and search engines alike the focus of the page. The best slugs are short and to-the-point, and they should closely match the keyword phrase you are targeting for that page.

What directories should I have my law firm listed?

Only high-quality directories matter. Please DON'T sign up for 1,000+ link buys. You will actually kill your rankings and require more work for a massive disavow file. You can check out our detailed article about this topic [here](#). Link building is an important part of dominating Google rankings. If you are new to link building, the list below will be helpful as you begin your journey to the number one spot in the rankings. At a minimum, we recommend a profile for each of these local directories, legal directories and social media sites. However, we always recommend making sure each site is relevant to your business.

Should I disavow bad links?

Yes, but only as a last resort. Disavowing bad links is a great way to clean up your act when it comes to low-quality links. But sometimes a website, like one of those spam directories mentioned above, might ask for you to pay them to remove a link. [This isn't necessary](#). Disavowing a link sends a clear message to Google that you no longer associate with the website in question and don't want it to count toward your ranking. However, they will want to see that you made an effort to have the link removed the old-fashioned way.

What is duplicate content?

Duplicate content is just what its name suggests – content that is found in more than one place online. We see this most often with SEO companies who reuse content for various clients, or – even worse – plagiarize content from other websites. Duplicate content isn't always intentionally malicious though! It's important to check your site for unintentional violations that could occur from fault URL variations and code.

What is the difference between paid and organic results?

The difference between paid and organic results is easy to understand. Paid or inorganic results are search results that advertisers pay for to receive a placement. They typically appear at the top or the side of the page, above the organic listings. Organic listings are free, and their ranking and position depend entirely on Google's algorithms.

How do you decide which keywords to use?

At PaperStreet, we rely on in-depth [keyword research](#) to determine which keywords will be the most relevant, most competitive and most lucrative for your law firm. Some of our steps for this process include:

- **Establish your Geographical Area** – Determining the region you want to focus on – whether it's a specific city, county or sometimes even nationwide – is the first step to creating an effective list of keywords.
- **Identify Keywords Based on Content** – Content-based around keyword phrases is viewed as more relevant by search engines and will help improve your rankings.
- **Add Keyword Suffix Terms** – Don't just focus on one term! In the legal industry, there are so many options available to you. Use the terms "lawyer," "lawyers," "attorney," "attorneys," "law firm" and "law firms" for the best results.
- **Use Suggestion Tools** – Tools like Google Adwords' Keyword Planner and other sites like Ubersuggest are a great resource for generating ideas you might have missed. Adwords' Keyword Planner and other sites like Ubersuggest are a great resource for generating ideas you might have missed.

How many times should I use a keyword on a page?

Unfortunately, there's no magic formula for how many times a keyword should be included in your copy. At PaperStreet, we don't believe in complying to strict keyword density percentages. Keyword stuffing can lead to significant penalties from Google, and it's jarring for readers, which could turn them off from your website completely. We like our copy to be organic and readable, and we rely on natural opportunities for our keywords that will only enhance our content.

Does my domain name matter?

When it comes to achieving high search engine ranking, your domain name does matter. However, you should avoid keyword stuffing, just as you would with your content, and opt for a professional, memorable and keyword rich domain instead. PaperStreet can provide detailed hints and tips on [how to choose a great domain name](#) for your law firm.

How does social media impact my SEO?

Just because your practice's Facebook page has thousands of likes doesn't mean you'll skyrocket to the first page of Google. However, social media marketing campaigns, like Facebook or Instagram ads, are a great compliment to a solid SEO campaign and can lead to increased traffic and even conversions for your website. More visitors, more backlinks and more engagement mean higher rankings, and that's exactly what we want to see.

Social media also allows you to build up a loyal community, which helps potential clients to see that you must be trustworthy and good at what you do if all of these people like you – literally!

What are "White Hat" and "Black Hat" SEO?

White Hat versus Black Hat is essentially the SEO world's version of good versus evil. Black Hat SEO strategies rely on unethical tactics like keyword stuffing and paid links to manipulate their search engine rankings, fast. Their techniques violate Google's guidelines and can result in your website being penalized or even banned.

At PaperStreet, we rely on White Hat SEO. While it might take more time and effort, these techniques can and will achieve long-term success. We focus on high-quality backlinks; original, reader-friendly content; heavily-researched keywords and more to ensure results for our clients.

Are internal links good for SEO?

Yes. Internal links, or interlinking, allows Google to establish a hierarchy of pages for your website. This leads to a better experience for users, and it also allows search engines to access all pages of your website when scanning for content. It doesn't matter how great your copy is, or how well it's optimized. If your pages can't be reached, they essentially don't exist to Google, and they can't help your rankings.

How long will SEO take?

The SEO process can take anywhere from 60 days to over a year. The time it takes depends on your existing website, its content, its authority and the same for your competitors. Niche keyword phrases can be ranked high typically quicker than the most highly sought after phrases.

Will PPC ads help?

No. Although AdWords and organic search results appear on the same page, Google keeps its AdWords algorithm separate from its organic algorithm. Buying ads will not help you appear in the search results.

Questions to Ask an SEO Firm

You should ask your SEO firm a lot of questions, including:

- Do they understand the legal market?
- Do they have experience in the legal market?
- How many campaigns do they manage?
- What are some client success stories?
- What are some client failures (you only truly learn through failure)?
- How long have they been in business?
- Do they have any pending litigation or criminal issues?
- What is their timeline for success?
- What is their key metric for success?
- How much time will be required from our firm?

Are backlinks still important?

Yes. Getting quality backlinks is still important. Ask us for our top 50 links and we can provide you a free report of links to obtain.

What are the best backlinks?

Quality backlinks are the key. We find getting media mentions in newspapers to be one of the best, although hardest to obtain. Next would be good quality legal directories. You also need a broad social media profile, sharing of your website content and links from city/community websites too.

Does page speed matter?

Yes. Google has indicated site speed (and as a result, page speed) is one of the signals used by its algorithm to [rank pages](#).

Do title tags and meta tags still matter?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Title tags and meta tags definitely matter. They directly correspond to your click-through rate.

How long should a page of content be?

We are recommending that your page content is above 500 words now. In fact, there is excellent research showing that 1,000+ word articles are now the default go-to size. Why? Typically this is enough words to answer the users' questions and provide a good amount of time on the website. This increases your dwell time and lowers the bounce rate of your site (if you answer the users' questions).

What is Short Tail vs. Medium Tail vs. Long-Tail SEO?

Here are some examples:

- A short tail keyword phrase would be: criminal defense
- A medium tail keyword phrase would be: New Orleans criminal defense lawyer
- A long-tail keyword phrase would be: New Orleans criminal defense lawyer for DUI

You should optimize your website for medium tail keyword phrases, as often you will rank high naturally for long-tail and perhaps even short-tail.

What is On-site SEO?

On-site or on-page SEO is the technical optimization of your website. This can include title tags, meta descriptions, H1, H2, H3 tags, rich snippets, XML sitemaps, URL structure, internal linking, external linking, alt text, bold/strong, LSI, word count and even usability to some degree.

What is Off-site SEO?

Off-site SEO is pretty much any technique you take to optimize your website through another site. In short, it is building links. It is making sure your NAP (Name Address Phone) are consistent on all other websites and directories. It is making sure you have great backlinks to your site from high-quality sources. It is making sure you have a plan of action to write worthwhile content and become a trusted source on other sites.

What is Google Webmaster Tools?

Google WMT is a great tool for any website owner. You can see messages from Google, see crawl errors, search analytics, connection issues, robots.txt uploads, index new pages manually, upload site maps, see security issues, work with structured data and rich snippets, review AMP, see HTML improvements, internal links, links to your site, international targeting, mobile usability, blocked resources, remove URLs, XML sitemaps and a lot of other cool features. INSTALL this tool ASAP!

What is a Sitemap? XML? HTML?

A sitemap is a list of pages on your website. The best form of this is an XML sitemap which you can submit directly to Google via Google Webmaster Tools.

What is a disavow request?

When you believe you have low-quality backlinks pointing to your website, you should review them and perhaps submit a disavow to Google. Inside your Webmaster Tools console you can upload a disavow file which is a list of low-quality websites that you no longer wish to be associated with on your site.

How can I avoid Duplicate Content?

Duplicate content is having content that is too similar, if not identical to another page. You should only have one version of each page on your site. Sometimes issues with URL structure can create duplicate content issues. Sometimes just writing pages that are too similar can also have the same effect.

To help this first, have a site plan. Do not create thin content or doorway pages. Make sure that every page targets a variety of related keyword phrases. If pages are too similar, combine them into one long page. Overall, you can also check out Copyscape and Google itself to determine duplicate content. There are also some other reporting tools that scan and analyze for duplicate content (aHREFS).

SEO vs. SEM

SEO stands for search engine optimization. SEM stands for search engine marketing. In short, they are roughly the same phrase, although some vendors will qualify any marketing activities related to search as SEM. So SEM can encompass both SEO and PPC (Pay-Per-Click – Google Adwords).

What are the top ranking factors?

PageRank, Content and RankBrain. You can see articles on this [here](#).

Does Blogging work? How often should I blog? How long should blog posts be?

Yes, blogging can work so long as your content is engaging and worthwhile. We are recommending most clients switch to long-form blog posts vs. kicking out 500-word posts.

What is Blackhat SEO vs. Whitehat SEO?

Whitehat SEO is adhering to Google's guidelines. Blackhat SEO is running afoul of Google's guidelines. PaperStreet is a white hat agency. We build websites that get results through proven tactics of better design, better writing and better usability. We adhere to all of Google's guidelines.

What is negative SEO?

This is the black hat tactic of trying to penalize a competitor's website through offsite rankings factors (i.e., building links to your competitor's site that are spam and low-quality). Don't do this. It is a waste of everyone's time and money.

Does my domain matter? Do keywords in the domain help?

Yes, keyword phrases in a domain seem to have some effect. Don't force it though. A domain that starts with their target keyword has the edge over sites that either don't have the keyword in their domain or have the keyword in the middle or end of their domain.

Does an SSL certificate help or does my IP address matter?

Yes, an SSL can have a small impact on search results. However, the benefits of SSL/TLS go beyond just SEO. It helps secure your website, give trust signal to users and helps secure your web forms (and not give that unsecured notice). Transferring to SSL can be a bit tricky, as you need to get the right redirects in place or you end up with duplicate content. You also need to renew the SSL yearly (depending on the web host). Check out this really long article about [SSLs and SEO for more ideas](#).

What should I do with link requests?

Delete. You should delete most link requests that you receive. They are not worth your time or effort.

What is the best domain to have?

We have written [many articles](#) on [best domains](#). In our opinion domains should be:

- Short
- .com
- Include your brand or keyword phrase if possible
- Not be hard to spell
- Not include hyphens

What is a ping/website index request?

Anytime you update your website, it can take Google several days to weeks to notice the change. If the change is minor, then it may be cost effective for Google to update its index on its own. However, if you have access to Webmaster Tools, you can actually log in and instruct Google to fetch your page. This will force it to reindex your new copy.

Will SEO help my law firm?

Yes, so long as you follow the best practices guidelines, SEO can help your site. You can also seriously mess up your website and hurt your rankings if you try to scheme/scam Google.

Next Steps

If you need assistance, you can reach out to our firm for a free SEO consultation on your website.

Contact us at 954-523-2181 or email us at fun@paperstreet.com.