



OVC's Top 10 Tips to Grow Your Law Firm

Since 2008, OVC, INC. Lawyer Marketing has helped many attorneys and law firms grow their practices. The progress we have witnessed can be measured in several ways including increased revenue, the quantity of attorneys on staff, and the number of office locations for these successful clients.

As an online marketing firm, our first line of business focuses on options such as websites, blogs and content, Search Engine Optimization, social media, and legal directory partnerships. However, successful lawyers also participate in activities and investments beyond what OVC offers. Included here are other suggestions we highly recommend based on what we have seen time and time again from successful attorney clients. In fact, the most important takeaway from these tips includes what do not offer in our product line, but without exception, is the number one factor required to grow a prosperous law firm.

Tip 1: Invest in Strategic Marketing

One of the most successful clients we have seen open his firm in 2014. Even as a newly formed entity, in the course of just one year, he was bringing in 10 to 30 clients per month. His success was based on his willingness to spend money to establish and grow his business. He went from a home office to a shared workplace, to a brand new office condo in seven months.

This attorney did several key things that were factors in his growth:

- He purchased more than a basic website. He understood that a static website was not going to get the traffic he wanted. His online marketing included blogs, press releases, and legal directories.
- He went beyond what OVC offered. In particular, he bought Avvo ads in markets that no one else was interested in. By doing this, he showed up Avvo search results for practice areas and geographic areas where there was minimal competition.
- He joined bar associations and got involved by chairing committees.
- He invested his time in addition to his money. Overall, he was one of the most involved clients we have worked with. He paid attention to every detail of the content on his site, and he reviewed his site numerous times for design changes and tweaks long after it launched.

Tip 2: Conversion Is Key

If you are afraid of closing a deal or have people working at your firm who could care less when a potential client calls, you are probably not converting as many clients as you could. It does not help conversion to have a fantastic website and show up on page one of Google search results for top keyword searches if the staff member answering phones and emails has no stake in your success.

We have seen many successful websites with great traffic generate minimal clients. Why? In one particular case, it was because the person responsible for answering website contact forms told potential clients sending in requests that they did not set up appointments via email and should call the office instead. If the potential client took the trouble to submit a contact form, then that is the way he or she prefers to do business. It should be up to the attorneys and staff at a firm to follow up with the lead, not the potential client's problem to cater to the law firm's requests.

In another case, an attorney was not responding to contact form submissions for over a week. By the time the forms were answered, potential clients had moved on to a more responsive attorney. The most successful attorneys we see are the ones who are willing to answer emails or phone calls themselves. Or the attorneys have staff that are trained and incentivized to contact potential clients in a way that converts callers to clients.

Another word for conversion is SALES. Many attorneys feel that is beneath them or not something they are comfortable with. However, if you think about what a good sale really is, it is when a buyer and a seller connect, and both parties mutually benefit in the exchange. In the case of an attorney-client relationship, a client is getting much-needed legal help, and the attorney is getting paid.

Tip 3: Take a Long-Term View

Occasionally, we see a client start a firm or purchase a website for a minimal investment. Then, after a few months, they wonder why they are not on the first page of Google. Worse yet, after a year, they may pull back on their marketing budget to save money.

Building a firm, in most cases, takes longer than a year. Turning around online performance or building up the strength of a domain name also takes time. The Internet is not a static venue but rather one that is always changing, particularly Google and its infamous algorithm. It takes consistency of effort and investment over time to build up a successful online marketing presence using a variety of tools including fresh content, online reviews, videos, blogs, awards, press releases, and more.

Tip 4: Be Involved

Whether it is in the development of your website or the local bar community, getting involved is key. The most successful attorneys keep a hand in their marketing, even as their firm gets bigger. The most successful new firms were started by attorneys who joined bar association, gave talks at seminars, made connections at events, and paid attention to the details (not just in their legal work but the marketing of their firm as a whole).

Once, we had an attorney sign a contract and make a deposit on a new website. After many emails and phone calls with no response from the lawyer, we were finally able to reach him after a year of getting started. Surprisingly, he wanted to get started immediately because he had just been to a marketing seminar and wanted a website that really reflected who he was and the message he wanted to convey. However, he didn't have time to talk that day. We set up a conference the following week in which he did not show up for either. He has not returned any calls or emails since.

It is difficult to run a business and be the business, especially for sole practitioners. Marketing can seem overwhelming when you do not know much about it. Online technology can seem daunting. Nevertheless, if you are not involved in the marketing of you, how can it possibly grow? Maybe the attorney mentioned above had enough business and did not need marketing or is not interested in growing. However, if you are interested in success, you need to be involved.

Tip 5: Trust the Experts

Trusting the experts may, at times, may seem in direct conflict with Tip 4. The struggle may be due to the fine line between the two points. The most successful clients are involved, ask many questions, and have a good understanding of their marketing. However, they also know when to stop managing every detail or when they are over their heads. They also realize that what they think is true may not be correct for the audience they are trying to attract. As an attorney, your expertise in law has been developed over years of training and experience. So too with your marketing company.

Tip 6: Go Where No One Else Will Go

Without deviation, when we are interviewing a new client about their marketing strategy and they say they want to attract the same clients: The ones who pay.

While that is true, it is virtually impossible to sort potential clients viewing your online presence so that only those with money will contact you. A better strategy is to find that unique niche that the competition is not targeting. Finding your niche and becoming the master of it will help you hone your skills and business strategy.

The best way to find your niche is to think about what makes you unique. For example, what helps you connect with others? What makes someone want to hire you over the competition? Do you know real estate better than anyone? Then connect with realtors and title companies. Are you a divorced parent who went back to law school because you wanted to advocate for people like you? Then make sure your message gets out in every way it can.

We have seen successful growth strategies based on religious affiliation, language and ethnic groups, hobbies, or just the willingness to go after several smaller markets rather than the big market. Everyone wants to show up on the top of the search results for “Chicago personal injury lawyer” or “DuPage County divorce attorney,” but in a saturated market that is not always possible.

Tip 7: Invest in People

Investing in the people who work for you can bring large rewards. Going the extra mile to build loyalty and offer incentives can exponentially build your business. The most successful firms reward their staff and recognize them as their greatest asset and investment. Even small firms can give a bonus based on performance, offer flexibility, and build teamwork through in office events like chili cook-offs, happy hours, and birthday celebrations. When your employees have a stake in your success, it can be amazing how quickly your business can grow.

Tip 8: Let Go of Control

As you become busier and your firm grows, there is only so much of you to go around. Know what tasks and activities you are willing to give up control of and then do it. If your billable hour rate is \$250 and you are spending hours every month or week doing tasks that you could pay someone \$20.00 an hour to do, outsourcing that work will free up more billable hour time. Also, if you are spending your time on work that you are not an expert in, such as accounting or marketing, hiring an outside expert that lets you focus on what you know.

Tip 9: Timely and Accurate Billing

You cannot make money if you do not collect it. Having tens of thousands of dollars in receivables due to inaccurate or untimely billing systems restricts your growth because the money you could be investing in your firm has not been collected.

Tip 10: Embrace Technology

Whether you are a newly-minted attorney or have been practicing for 30 years, technology is essential to growing your practice.

Here are a few tech areas that top attorneys focus on:

- They are accessible and go the extra mile by giving out their cell phone number and personal email to clients.
- They answer emails and calls within 24 hours. They check email and respond regularly on their phones.
- They invest in technology for their office including secure email, IT, and equipment.
- They have a way to regularly bill and collect the money they earn.
- They invest in a powerful online image that is targeted at their audience and updated regularly.
- They make it easy for potential clients to reach an attorney or set up an appointment by having chat and online contact forms easily accessible on their websites.

Conclusion: You Can Have It All Too

A firm's success is built on a balancing act of time management, consulting with experts, and dedication to growth. You can become more prosperous if you commit yourself to these ten ideals and are eager to learn more. For additional information about website marketing, or to set up a free evaluation, call 630-480-2897 or visit our website at www.ovclawyermarketing.com. Having developed hundreds of websites for attorneys, OVC's knowledge of law firm marketing has helped many lawyers establish online presences and grow their businesses.