

GOING MOBILE WITH YOUR PRACTICE'S ONLINE MARKETING

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Last year marked the first time that smartphone sales eclipsed those of PCs—and it's unlikely that this trend will be reversed anytime in the near future, if ever. In the United States alone there are already more than 100 million people using smartphone devices, with adults spending more time looking at media on mobile devices than in print newspapers and magazines combined.

As the use of mobile devices substantially increases, so too does the number of consumers using them to find local businesses online, including legal practices. According to industry analyst BIA/Kelsey, by 2015 mobile search is expected to exceed desktop search for local business information. In the same way that the last decade saw consumers increasingly—and now predominantly—searching for local business information using their desktop computers, they are now turning to mobile devices to find that same information. Now and for the foreseeable future, in order to effectively capture consumers searching online for the legal services you offer, your practice needs to be mindful of consumers' mobile experience.

There is a widely held, but incorrect, belief that people only search for restaurants and bars on mobile phones. Most small businesses, including law practices, are actually

seeing significant mobile search volume. These mobile searches could mean a lot of new clients for your practice, particularly when you consider that the percentage of people who call or email a business after finding it on a mobile device is nearly double the rate for when they find a business through a desktop website. This makes mobile search a particularly strong channel to reach prospective customers who have a high level of purchase intent.

A survey from the American Bar Association found that 52 percent of solo-practice lawyers have a website, while 81 percent of small firms—two to nine lawyers—have taken this step. However, BIA/Kelsey and vSplash research shows that fewer than 10 percent of local businesses that have invested in a web presence are actually optimizing for the mobile channel. In some cases a legal practice's site simply isn't "findable" through searches on mobile devices. More frequently though, consumers may find the website, but what they find is a desktop-only version, which, on a small mobile screen, is likely to be very hard to read and interact with. The cost of this poor consumer experience can be significant. According to a survey by Google, a majority of people searching on a mobile device (67 percent) are more likely to buy or convert after a visit to a mobile-friendly site, while the opposite is also true of a non-mobile-friendly site: 61 percent say they'll "move on."



WHAT DOES “OPTIMIZING FOR MOBILE” ENTAIL?

So, what should a lawyer do to make sure that he or she is taking maximum advantage of mobile search trends for his or her practice? Two important words to remember: (a) distribution and (b) conversion—or in other words, can consumers searching on mobile devices find your practice, and once they find your practice will they eventually contact you? Here are a few tips to make sure you are optimizing for both of these areas:

- **Elect mobile distribution for search advertising campaigns.** Most search engine advertising platforms like Google Adwords allow advertisers to opt-in to have their advertisements show up on mobile searches. Make sure you select this option. If you aren't advertising your practice on search engines, now may be the time to start. Of course, if you are running your own campaigns it's important that you carefully monitor and optimize performance to make sure you are spending your advertising dollars effectively.
- **Verify business information on popular directories.** Consumers aren't just using popular search engines like Google and Bing to search for businesses on mobile devices. “In-app” searches on the apps of popular mobile Internet brands like Yelp and Citysearch are becoming popular channels through which consumers look for local businesses. Thus, it's more important than ever to make sure your practice information is accurate on these and other directories.
- **Make sure your website renders properly on mobile devices.** Given the smaller screen sizes of most mobile devices, unless you have a mobile-optimized website, visitors viewing your site from a mobile device are likely to have a poor, and perhaps confusing, experience. With 40 percent of consumers turning to a competitor after a bad mobile site experience, not having a mobile site could be very costly for your practice.
- **Get to the point.** Mobile searchers aren't visiting your site to read about the long and storied history of

your practice. They want to know whether or not you can help them with their needs and how to contact you. Make sure that the mobile version of your website features this contact information prominently and doesn't have a lot of unnecessary text.

Although thinking about mobile marketing for your practice may seem a little intimidating, it doesn't have to be. There are companies out there that can partner with you to provide a mobile site and distribute it to the most popular places for mobile searches. At the same time, these companies can also ensure that all of your online content is consistent and built in an optimal fashion for search engines to secure inclusion in the first page of search results. Regardless of whether or not you use a vendor or go it alone, making your marketing mobile can offer your practice a serious advantage over the competition and is definitely worth your consideration.



Louis Gagnon is Yodle's chief product and marketing officer. Yodle partners with more than thirty thousand small businesses—including several thousand lawyers—to market their services online. You can find more information at www.yodle.com or www.yodlelawmarketing.com or by contacting the company at info@yodle.com or 877-276-5104.

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