



## Top 5 Law Firm Marketing Mistakes

*... and How to Avoid Them*

Presented by:

Yodle, Inc.

[www.yodle.com](http://www.yodle.com)

[info@yodle.com](mailto:info@yodle.com)

800-406-2515

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>
#5 – Trying to Build a Website on Your Own	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
#4 – Creating a Site No One Visits	<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>
#3 – Not Knowing if Your Marketing is Really Working	<a href="#"><u>8</u></a>
#2 – Using Directory and Referral Services	<a href="#"><u>9</u></a>
#1 – Not Turning Calls into Clients Effectively	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
Conclusion	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
About Yodle	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>

## INTRODUCTION

The goal of every law firm marketing initiative – and the goal of this guide – is to help you drive new clients into your office. ***Top 5 Law Firm Marketing Mistakes*** was created to help you avoid common local marketing pitfalls, and to shed light on new tactics and strategies that can make a positive impact on your practice. The challenges and solutions discussed in this guide come from years of experience in guiding marketing strategies for law firms.

In today's economy, it's more important than ever to keep your office busy with a constant, reliable source of new clients. This is especially true when you are dealing with one-off, sudden-need cases such as bankruptcy, divorce, DUI or personal injury.

Think about the last few marketing programs you launched to find new clients. How much time and resources did they cost you? Were the results worth the effort? How are those tactics working for you these days?

Now think of how the majority of potential new clients would find you. In cases where the situation is private, or the need is urgent, the first place a lot of individuals turn to is the internet. It's anonymous, it's fast and it's convenient.

Yet, few law firms have been able to maximize this targeted and profitable channel for their marketing. Some firms, in fact, wind up making costly mistakes when they try.

With that in mind, here are the top five law firm marketing mistakes ...

## #5 – TRYING TO BUILD A WEBSITE ON YOUR OWN

Your website is an important piece of your firm’s local marketing efforts – today’s clients expect that you’ll have one, and chances are that you already do. But it can’t just have a “nice design,” some photos and list your services. Your website needs to do one thing well – convince visitors that you are the best lawyer for their needs.

Many law firms create a website that **they** think is well designed, or purchase a template that is “customized” with their business information. It may seem like an easy solution requiring little time and effort, but in fact this step is as critical as choosing your practice area. Just because it feels easy, doesn’t make it so.

### **It’s a science.**

Enticing a website visitor to call your business is quite literally a science – something easily done incorrectly. Every word and image plays an important role and requires a specific skill set not commonly found in your average web designer or creative individual. Here are a few common website design pitfalls to avoid:

- Not making it clear what you want the visitor to do (i.e., make an appointment)
- Not using web-friendly copy – too much, brochure style
- Not satisfying various types of visitors (age, need, etc.)
- Not optimizing your website based on feedback, new services and usage data

### ***What can you do to avoid the #5 law firm marketing mistake?***

We know it’s hard to resist using free web design software, ready-made site templates or your tech-savvy niece or nephew to build your website. It could even be tempting to hire a costly design agency. Resist the urge!

On the internet, people are easily distracted and are always one click away from visiting your competition. Every choice made with regard to headlines, buttons, photography and colors can drastically alter its effectiveness. Help is available in the way of [online marketing service providers](#) that can ensure you're guiding as many people as possible toward calling or emailing you for an appointment. Unfortunately, most web designers, friends or family members don't know how to create a site that does this, robbing you of clients that could have been yours.

## #4 – CREATING A SITE NO ONE VISITS

So, you spent lots of money and time creating the perfect website for your practice, but no one ever visits it! These days, there are many great ways to get people to your website. You can include your web address on your business cards, brochures, and display it in your office. These are all good ways to drive traffic, but what about getting prospective clients there – people who have never met you before?

After all, you want new prospective clients learning about your practice and coming to your site. If they do, it's likely they will contact you for more information and hopefully, become your client.

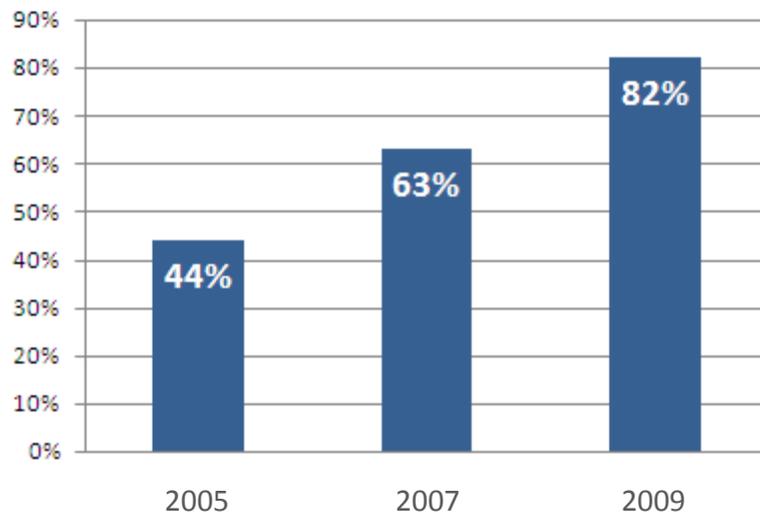
When publishing a website, a common misconception is that people will just show up. Unlike a personal referral or premium office location – where you can receive occasional walk-in traffic – over 100 million other websites are competing for site visitors. Unless you take action to drive traffic, the only person visiting your site will be you.

### ***What can you do to avoid the #4 law firm marketing mistake?***

[Online marketing](#) could be your answer. Today, over 82% of people use search engines to find local services, like a good lawyer. For example, there were over 3,600 searches containing the words “new york bankruptcy lawyer” in June 2009.

This audience also tends to be more affluent. Search engines are the only form of advertising where a potential client tells you exactly what they want – giving you the opportunity to fulfill their need immediately. Not only do search engines drive considerable website traffic, almost every search-based visitor is looking for your specific services. What could be better?

#### **Online Consumer Searches**



Online searches by consumers looking for local businesses have almost doubled since 2005.

*(Sources: Kelsey; Nielsen)*

Given these statistics, now is the time to take the initiative and start marketing online before the rest of your competition does.

### **Focus on your practice.**

You have a business to run and less energy to focus on decoding the mysterious jargon of internet advertising: terms like CPC, CPA, max bid, exact match, broad match or rich media. Unlike large national advertisers who hire expensive, dedicated staff members to guide them through the online world, you need a solution that is more cost effective.

Luckily, [experts in the field of online marketing](#) have begun offering unique services to local practices like yours. This takes the burden off of your shoulders and provides you with access to a virtually limitless source of potential clients.

### #3 – NOT KNOWING IF YOUR MARKETING IS REALLY WORKING

So, what if you are already marketing your practice? Maybe you put an ad in the yellow pages, put out a press release or sponsored a local event.

Do you know how many people visited your site or called or emailed your office as a direct result of these marketing tactics? If you are having trouble answering this question, don't feel bad – most other law firms can't either.

Your local marketing efforts can easily be wasted when you don't know the number of inquiries and clients your advertising is generating. Larger businesses have shifted more of their marketing budgets online for that very reason. Often, traditional media channels like print, television and radio are far more difficult to monitor and usually not as cost effective as their online counterparts.

#### ***What can you do to avoid the #3 law firm marketing mistake?***

There are many different techniques you can use to [monitor the performance of your local advertising](#). You could use a different phone number in each ad, set up multiple web pages and track "visits," or ask people how they heard about you. These methods work, but take considerable effort to coordinate and won't give you the confidence to answer questions like:

- Should I continue spending money on this marketing activity?
- Will it scale? If a marketing activity worked well on a small level, will it be even more successful if I spend more money on it?
- Was it profitable? After accounting for fixed costs plus the price of advertising, did the amount of additional revenue earned add to my bottom line?

Again, beyond its effectiveness at driving qualified traffic to your business, the great thing about online marketing is that everything is measurable. The best way to avoid failure is to make sure that you have a system in place to track the source of all website traffic, calls and emails. You'll also want to put

this information to good use by avoiding the advertising methods that are not cost effective and potentially spending more on those that are.

## #2 – USING DIRECTORY AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Another marketing option that law practices usually consider is trying directory services that charge for referrals and/or inclusion in their directory. On the surface, it sounds like directories can potentially reduce the effort of finding new clients. However, here are some insights into directory services you should know before paying that enrollment fee.

### **Market your practice, not a third party or competitors.**

Directory services need to drive a significant amount of client traffic to their websites in order to satisfy the many practices that have paid an enrollment fee to be listed there. How do they generate traffic? Most advertise their “matching” or “referral services” using search engines.

Let’s ask the obvious, or perhaps not so obvious, question:

If these experienced law directories are using search engine marketing to attract clients to their websites, doesn’t that make it clear that search engine marketing is a very effective method of attracting clients who are looking for lawyers?

Certainly it does prove the value of marketing on internet search engines. But are their marketing efforts effective for you, as the customer of such a directory? Why shouldn’t they be advertising your firm specifically?

When a potential client signs up with one of these directories to look for a lawyer in their area, the directory service then shows the client a list of several other law firms in the neighborhood. Perhaps you are one of the lawyers on their list. ***But so are your competitors!*** And all of you will be

paying a fee to the directory for the privilege of competing with each other there.

That's good news for the directory – but bad news for you. When a client is “window-shopping” in such a fashion, what are the criteria they're going to use to judge you versus your competitors? Pricing? Proximity?

Whichever law firm the client selects ends up being the sole beneficiary. What are the downsides?

- If you aren't able to respond quickly, the odds of getting the appointment decrease significantly.
- The individual looking for your services is more likely to judge you critically, due to all the other competing lawyers they are reviewing.

### ***What can you do to avoid the #2 law firm marketing mistake?***

Cut out the middle-man. Get to the source! You can take control by leveraging a system that [promotes your law firm services](#) directly to local prospective clients on the most popular search engines like Yahoo!, Google, Bing and the many dozens of other sites that clients search to find the right lawyer. Rather than learning about you and your competitors through a third party, prospective clients can be directed to your website instead.

This method gives you the opportunity to speak with your prospects directly, persuading them to consider you regardless of price or proximity. Unlike other local businesses, individuals seeking legal counsel are willing to travel and/or pay a premium if they believe they have found a trusted partner. The advertisement you place in search engines helps start your conversation with them – allowing your confidence and expertise to convince them to pay you a visit.

## #1 – NOT TURNING CALLS INTO SALES EFFECTIVELY

Generating qualified inquiries to your practice will get you close to success, but you or your staff will need to take it the last mile and close the sale. Managing dozens of inquiries, following up and scheduling can be a challenge. However, when it comes to getting a return on investment for your marketing activities, sales effectiveness is critical.

### **Please pick up.**

You've done it. You managed to turn your carefully spent marketing dollars into a phone call from a qualified prospect ready to learn more about your services. What's more, you are so excited that you are only 36% likely to answer the phone! That's right – as reported by FastCall411 with a test of 5,000 local businesses – two-thirds didn't answer their phone.

Missed calls are going to happen at every business and can never be completely avoided. However, missing a call is a sure-fire way to drive your potential clients to keep researching and find your competitors instead. If you can't answer, you have to think about a system to help you manage all your incoming inquiries to ensure you are making the most out of your marketing efforts.

Another big reason local law firms don't answer the phone is that your prospects are calling the wrong number. How is this possible? Did you change your phone number or move locations? Your prospects may be searching in an online or offline directory that is not updated regularly, or referring to a brochure with your old phone number. Either way, if they can't reach you, you are missing out on a potential client. As the owner of a practice where every appointment counts, you have to control what prospects see and have the ability to make changes to your contact information, quickly and easily.

## **Don't let your clients manage you.**

It's a great problem to have until you have it. The problem is having to juggle and respond to so many inquiries that it becomes difficult to track and ensure follow-through with all of them. There are several reasons this could happen:

- Instead of pacing your marketing efforts, you launch one large campaign, causing a rush of activity.
- No systems or tools are in place to help manage your inquiries and ensure timely follow-up.
- A system is not in place to aggregate inquiries from multiple sources such as web forms and phone calls.

## ***What can you do to avoid the #1 law firm marketing mistake?***

Now is the time for you to upgrade your systems and control how your potential clients are contacting you. Competition with larger practices is difficult enough without having the advantage of a contact management system. You have the opportunity to level the playing field by investing in a system that can be your single source for superior appointment-booking effectiveness.

Also, working with [experts in local law firm marketing](#) to build or enhance your website can empower you to update your information in real-time and ensure that you are not missing out on potential clients.

Finally, a benefit often overlooked is the value of having an experienced marketing partner whose insights help you become more authoritative, savvy and technology-forward. These subtle qualities may not reflect directly on your legal acumen, but they doubtless help you convert more inquiries into clients.

## CONCLUSION

You've made it through all five law firm marketing mistakes... hopefully you've thought about how to apply them to your practice and your various marketing activities. We've discussed strategies for building and driving traffic to your website, and how to measure campaign performance to drive future marketing decisions. And we've explored some of the down-sides to working with a pay-per-referral directory and the importance of sales effectiveness and profitability.

If we tried to get one point across, it's that you don't have to go it alone. Companies like [Yodle](#) have helped countless local businesses and specifically law practices like yours to generate calls and clients with a single system, dedicated account manager, and industry expertise.

## ABOUT YODLE

Yodle provides law firms a simple way to [get more clients and phone calls using online marketing](#). Yodle has created an effective platform and offers services that ensure you will avoid all of the law firm marketing mistakes you've just learned:

**#5 – Trying to Build a Website on Your Own:** Yodle's websites are built with a single goal in mind – to send phone calls and clients to your practice. Your website will be built by experts in local online marketing and can be up and ready to start receiving traffic in days instead of weeks. And if you already have a website, we'll give you a free Website Assessment so you can make the most of the assets you already have.

**#4 – Creating a Site No One Visits:** Using the major search engines, such as Yahoo!, Google, MSN/Bing and many others, Yodle places your office in front of prospective clients in your area. We make sure that your advertising

shows up in the right place, at the right time across over 75 high-profile local search engines and business directories.

**#3 – Not Knowing if Your Marketing is Really Working:** Yodle provides your business with state-of-the-art measurement tools to track results and review your return on investment.

**#2 – Using Directory Services:** Unlike referral services that use your hard earned dollars to market their own comparison services and simply list your practice in a directory, Yodle only promotes *your* practice.

**#1 – Not Turning Calls into Sales Effectively:** With Yodle’s advanced contact management system, you can actually listen to all your incoming phone calls, even those that come in after hours – all while complying with established Attorney-Client Privilege principles. You can use the recordings to review how professionally your staff answer calls, make improvements to your sales process and finally determine who is turning calls into new clients.

Yodle will work directly with you on an ongoing basis to enhance your campaign by a variety of factors, according to the performance of every keyword, every geographic region targeted, the profitability of your services, and the quality of the inquiries you receive. Simply put, Yodle will be an invaluable marketing partner, constantly focused on the success of your practice!

To find out more about Yodle, contact us at:

[www.yodle.com](http://www.yodle.com)

(877) 77-YODLE

[info@yodle.com](mailto:info@yodle.com)

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