A CASE FOR INBOUND

DIGITAL MARKETING

for the Legal Industry



A Case for Inbound: Digital Marketing for the Legal Industry

INTRODUCTION

Marketing for the Modern Firm

here were roughly 728,200 practicing U.S. attorneys in 2010. That number is expected to surpass 800,000 by the year 2020, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, as the number of students graduating law school each year now exceeds the number of jobs available in the sector.

Although the need for legal services is expected to increase parallel to industry growth, demand will likely become constrained as businesses continue to consolidate by turning to larger firms offering similar services at lower prices.

As a result, recent law school graduates will turn to temporary staffing agencies to provide work on an "as-needed" basis. And then – with the tenacity unique only to a displaced youth – these bright minds will do the only thing left to do: found their own law firms.

At Murvine Marketing Group, we're already witnessing a shift beneath the unstable tectonics of the legal profession. Our attorney client base gets younger with every new dealclosing handshake.

Today's young lawyers are leveraging their undeniable advantage: they're considerably more tech-savvy than their senior executive peers, having grown up in the Golden Age of the Internet, smartphones, social media, and self-published content. They instinctually recognize the value of building online communities and understand that advertising, by its traditional definition, is dead.



Where the legacy firms have seen a sudden reduction in the effectiveness of traditional marketing efforts, the Legal Profession's freshmen class has made a hard turn toward digital, establishing integrated marketing campaigns in their native online ecosystem.

At MMG, we're committed to being a part of this movement of tech-savvy legal professionals. This eBook – part how-to manual, part manifesto – is a guide for boosting your firm's marketing and lead generation strategies with "inbound" methodologies. The material within comes direct from our experience working alongside law clients – experience we've chosen to package for anyone who's willing to learn.

We hope you find the content that follows as rewarding as we've found working with attorneys like yourself.

The MMG Team



Part I — Foundation Phase: Building a Powerful Platform

In order to implement a successful inbound marketing strategy, your firm will need to take part in specific foundational activities before efforts to engage prospects and generate leads become sustainable. You'll be new to some of these activities; others you'll have completed long before you first broke ground.

This section outlines the foundation blocks your firm needs to create, implement, and execute a successful digital marketing campaign.

7 FOUNDATION BLOCKS OF INBOUND MARKETING

To ensure that you're building your campaign the right way, we've outlined seven Foundation Blocks that must be in place to achieve measurable, sustainable growth online:

- Target Market You must have a comprehensive understanding of your target audience, including relevant buyer segments.
- Key Performance Indicators (KPI) You must have a clear understanding of what success looks like to your firm.
- Keyword Bank You must know which search terms prospects are using to find the services your firm offers.
- **Content Depot** You must have digital content collateral to attract traffic, generate leads, and nurture sales.
- Marketing-Ready Website You must have a website that can support regular content publishing and lead generation efforts.
- Social Media You must engage your firm's target market on relevant social networks and configure brand consistency across channels.

 Intelligence Tools – You must implement analytics tools to monitor your firm's Key Performance Indicators and scale your marketing efforts parallel to your firm's growth.

Collectively, these seven Foundation Blocks make up the basis of every strong digital marketing campaign and, when implemented outright, save time, money, and other valuable resources spent on backtracking to correct errors down the road.

Consistent Effort Yields Sustainable Growth

Doing things the right way takes time. As such, the Foundation Phase will not be completed overnight—a website design and development project alone can require a six to twelve week turnaround period. However, most of the Foundation Blocks can be put in place concurrently, and in the case of a Block like Target Market, your firm should already have a deep understanding of your primary clientele.

> "The vast majority of *lawyers understand* that they must have a

robust online and mobile presence

to be found by clients and recognized by their peers, but are challenged by the time and expertise required to manage their online presence effectively."

(Mark Britton, Avvo Founder & CEO)

Target Market

In order to develop an efficient inbound marketing campaign, your firm must first identify its specific Target Market and define all relevant buyer personas. Knowing your Target Market will help you develop your law firm's unique voice and brand messaging, determine which social media platforms to target, and make proper aesthetic choices when it comes to the design of your website.

For example, a law firm that focuses on corporate law will craft its message to reflect the desired outcomes of executive decision makers on LinkedIn, while a criminal defense attorney who focuses in OWI cases might target college-aged drivers on Facebook. Knowing every conceivable segment of your Target Market will reduce the need for numerous campaign adjustments down the road.

"Potential clients no longer rely on word of mouth.

They do *their own research* when looking to hire an attorney, most often online, and come to appointments

better educated and prepared

with questions and requirements for establishing a client relationship."

(2012 Legal Market Survey Report, Avvo & LexBlog)

PRO TIP

Brainstorm Persona Profiles

Creating simple persona profiles is a proven exercise among marketing professionals: they refine Target Markets and segment audiences in order to specify messaging and focus overall strategy.

Create Persona Profiles for 3 Segments within your Target Market by defining the follow qualities of each segment:

- Age Group
- Professional Background
- Desired Legal Service
- Desired Outcome

For example, a general practice attorney may create profiles based on three very different prospective clients:

- College students in need of
 immediate help with OWI charges
- Middle class fathers seeking child custody during a divorce
- New business owners researching attorneys for long-term professional relationships

Based on three brief descriptions you can anticipate relevant practice area, sales cycle length, and initial touch points. These insights will be used to form critical campaign elements later on.

Key Performance Indicators

What does your law firm wish to achieve with an inbound marketing campaign? Knowing what success looks for your firm like will help eliminate the feeling of trying to hit a moving target. Early determination of KPI's will help your firm make data-driven decisions that move you closer to your growth goals.

KPI's To Consider

In general, Key Performance Indicators can be categorized based on three outcomes:

- Branding
- Acquisition
- Retention

Branding includes any activities that help increase brand awareness, including growth of a social network, an increased number of blog subscribers, or building thought leadership among a firm's principles.

Acquisition includes any action directly attributable to building a client list, such as growing a leads database or engaging in business development activities.

Retention includes all post-sale marketing activities aimed at keeping the clients you already have.

Make a list of your firm's specific KPI's for your inbound marketing campaign. Which indicators are the most important for your firm? Keep your list of KPI's accessible to refer back to throughout your campaign.

FOUNDATION BLOCK 3

Keyword Bank

Approximately 100 billion searches are performed on Google each month. Roughly one-third of those are considered "transactional" searches, meaning that users are searching for information to help them purchase products and services.

In order to correctly categorize their index of websites, Google relies heavily on the "keyword phrases" that appear within website copy as clues about what each site has to offer. In order to gain visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs), your law firm must optimize your site for keywords relevant to your practice.

For example, if your firm's area of practice is Criminal Defense, you'd craft your website copy with a strategic emphasis on the keyword phrase "criminal defense," perhaps adding geographic modifiers as a way to target prospects in your city or region. Examples of geotargeted keyword phrases are "criminal defense Madison," "criminal defense attorney Dane County," etc.

PRO TIP

Brainstorm Persona Profiles

Brainstorm potential terms users might enter into Google's search bar to find the types of services your firm provides. Start by segmenting these terms based on practice area and geographic location – "bankruptcy attorney Janesville," "family law practice Chicago," etc. Separate terms by column, gradually adding items based on specific services your firm provides. For example, if there's a particular area of divorce law in which you focus, include it. This keyword bank will be used to develop campaign strategy. optimize website metadata, and craft compelling pieces of premium content.

Content Depot

"Content" denotes all media, text or otherwise, that your firm promotes in order to establish thought leadership, build lead databases, and acquire and retain clients. Content type and format used will vary by stage of the inbound sales cycle: blog posts are top-of-funnel awareness builders, while case studies are specifically designed to acquire qualified leads.

Ideally, your Content Depot contains one piece of digital collateral per market segment.

PRO TIF

Brainstorm Potential Case Studies

What do people look for when hiring an attorney? **Proven success**. Legal professionals stand to benefit from offering case studies that illustrate real-world examples of how your firm has overcome challenges to achieve success for a client.

Select a recently won case and draft a one-page narrative that outlines the client's problem, your firm's solution, and the resulting outcomes. Executed properly, case studies convince prospective clients of the benefits of hiring your firm instead of a competitor.

FOUNDATION BLOCK 5

Marketing-Ready Website

We see it all the time with legal firms: static, uninviting websites inaccessible by the firms that purchased them. To implement a successful inbound campaign, you must have personal access to your website in order to leverage its power as a marketing tool.

Having access to your website requires that it be built on a user-friendly content management system (CMS), such as WordPress or Joomla. Unfortunately, a hiccup often occurs when a law firm begins its transition toward an inbound marketing strategy. Because there is no industry standard for building websites, firms are vulnerable to problems with their website, including:

- Debate over who owns the site and its content
- Having to petition a third-party in order to make changes
- Retaining content from an old site while transitioning to a new one

If you're struggling with any of these issues, your firm may require a website re-design before implementing an inbound campaign. Check with your firm's web master, and if necessary, hire a reliable, transparent web development firm to get this essential Foundation Block in place.

Is Your Website Inbound-Ready?

- Site and Content Owned Outright
- Accessible without 3rd Party Help
- Built on User-Friendly CMS
- Simple Navigation Structure
- Logical Flow Between Pages
- Each Page Accessible in Two Clicks
- Speedy Load Times
- Clear Content Formatting
- Blog Functionality
- Integrates with Social Media Channels

Social Media

With unprecedented two-way access from professional service providers to consumers via social media, building an audience has never been easier. But online communities are fragile: they must be tended to and supplied with valuable content on a regular basis.

Because social media is often mistakenly dismissed as an ineffective lead generation tactic, you may be wondering how social media marketing helps law firms get ahead. By being present on channels that are most relevant to your Target Market, and by consistently and creatively demonstrating your experience in your areas of practice, social media marketing offers the following opportunities:

- **Build Loyalty** by interacting with followers in real time
- Enhance Your Brand by regularly posting helpful content
- Foster Connections by showing followers that their opinions matter
- Grow Your Audience by turning your best clients into brand advocates
- Monitor Your Reputation by responding in real time to client questions, complaints and praise

To get started on social, first select the channels that your Target Market is using. When creating your profiles, work with a great writer and an experienced graphic designer to ensure brand consistency across networks. Don't worry—we'll show you how to kick off this part of your campaign in Part II.

FOUNDATION BLOCK 7

Intelligence Tools

Implementing the correct intelligence tools allows a firm to measure and adjust its campaign based on predefined performance goals and unanticipated changes in the marketplace. Google Analytics is the current industry standard intelligence tool as it allows users to analyze everything from visitor demographics to specific traffic patterns and more.

However, additional analytics tools should be considered prior to launching an inbound marketing campaign, especially for mid-sized firms and larger. Expert software platforms – like HubSpot or Eloqua – provide marketers with advanced analytics, such as:

- Email Open, Click, Conversion and Subscription Rates
- Landing Page Click and Conversion Rates
- Lead Activity by Pageview, Duration, Downloads and More
- Performance of Individual Blog Posts
- Performance of On-Page SEO
- Traffic Sources and Search Terms

Advanced platforms aren't necessary for every campaign, but are key in helping larger firms automate their marketing processes. If you're considering adding an advanced intelligence tool to the mix, get in touch with an expert who can help you weigh your options.



(2012 Legal Market Survey Report, Avvo & LexBlog)

Part I Takeaways

As the Foundation Phase comes to a close, let's summarize what we've learned so far:

- Building a solid foundation is a necessary precursor to implementing an inbound marketing strategy
- Your Target Market determines your brand messaging
- Key Performance Indicators help guide and measure the success of your campaign
- Your unique Keyword Bank is essential for creating content that converts
- Content type will vary during each stage of the sales cycle
- A Marketing-Ready Website is accessible, engaging, and structurally sound
- Social Media Marketing builds loyalty, widens reach, and spurs campaign growth
- Intelligence Tools measure individual campaign deliverables
- Advanced marketing platforms are ideal for marketing automation

Although these elements may initially appear disparate, each Foundation Block is crucial to building an integrated campaign. For example, proper use of a niche-focused Keyword Bank will lead to increased website traffic, your Target Market will dictate the tone of your Content Collateral, etc.

If what we've covered so far seems confusing, don't worry: we'll show you how the moving parts fit together in Part II.

Part II — Campaign Phase: Adapt Your Message. Grow Your Firm.

With the Foundation Phase complete, your firm has put into place the necessary Foundation Blocks to support a successful inbound marketing campaign. However, if you're new to marketing, keep in mind that it helps to approach strategic planning as if you're playing a game of chess: backwards.

Beginning at the End

Sometimes, it's easier to craft a marketing strategy by conceptualizing it in reverse. In other words, start by picturing your "end goal" – an inbound phone call, a landing page form submission, etc. – and think backwards through each touch a prospect will make over the course of your unique sales cycle.

For example, let's say you operate a small firm comprised of three attorneys, two paralegals, and one full-time receptionist, and your end goal is to receive an inbound call from a prospect. Your receptionist will field the call, complete a pre-consultation interview, and schedule a first meeting.

But what steps occur prior to the phone call? Let's think through the possible scenarios as granularly as possible: every step counts.

80% of attorneys

believe **content marketing** is either important, or **among the most important**

marketing strategy

they can employ at their firm.

(2014 State of Digital Content Marketing Strategy)

An Inbound Scenario

Before picking up the phone to call your office (End Goal), your prospect must first find your office telephone number **(Step 5)**. This number likely appears in multiple places online, but for the sake of this exercise, let's assume your prospect first encountered your office phone number on the "Contact Us" page of your firm's website.

Before clicking on the "Contact Us" page, your prospect – in need of bankruptcy representation – read the information on the "Bankruptcy Law" page of your website (Step 4).

Your prospect arrived on your "Bankruptcy Law" page by clicking on a body text hyperlink in a recent blog post your firm wrote about Homestead Exemption in Wisconsin **(Step 3)**.

To read the relevant post, your prospect clicked through its accompanying image on their LinkedIn newsfeed and arrived on your blog **(Step 2)**.

One of your prospect's Connections, who follows your firm on LinkedIn and found the post valuable, shared it to his or her online community - thereby beginning the inbound thread **(Step 1)**. Makes sense, right? However, the above example is what's called a "perfect thread," meaning the prospect traveled uninterrupted through the sales cycle, from start to finish, without ever dropping off. This is a rare scenario: prospects often abandon the thread mid-search, pause to research other service providers, etc. So how do you keep them in the funnel?

Inbound Contingencies

Let's revisit the previous example, but let's assume that your prospect pauses their research to assess one of your competitors.

After arriving on the "Bankruptcy Law" page, your prospect opens a new browser tab after realizing he has options for bankruptcy attorneys in the region. He launches Google and searches for "Rockford bankruptcy law attorney."

Instantly, Google returns a dozen first-page results. But having already transitioned to an inbound marketing strategy, your firm appears in the second organic result position - a blog post you wrote about Homestead Exemption that performed especially well when shared on the firm's social networks.



Your prospect nods in recognition – they know their stuff. This second lateral touch point piques your prospect's interest, and he clicks the link to your firm's Google+ page. Your Google+ page is active and fully optimized with correct office locations, service descriptions, and contact information. After reading a few stellar reviews left by satisfied clients, your prospect decides to call the number on the top of the Google+ page.

We've laid out two inbound scenarios that led to one common end goal.

Ideally, during the Foundation Phase, your firm created and routed call-tracking phone numbers from these different online locales – your website, your Google+ page – to your office receptionist, allowing you to calculate return on investment of both the blog post and the Google+ profile and to adjust the campaign as needed.

The Content Fulcrum

We touched upon the role of content as a key part of an inbound marketing campaign in Part I (Foundation Block 4: Content Depot). However, it can be difficult for newcomers to envision just how essential this Block is to the overall inbound process. A piece of content collateral – a blog post in the previous example – was the driving force behind each touch point

- The blog post was shared on LinkedIn, leading the prospect to your website
- The social success of the blog post, along with proper keyword optimization,

caused the page to rank for a specific keyword thread ("Rockford bankruptcy law attorney")

 The blog post's helpful, relevant advice established trust between the prospect and your firm – after learning others had positive experiences working with your firm, the prospect promptly called your office to schedule a consultation

Admittedly, this is an accelerated example: not every sale closes after three touch points. But using the inbound marketing method, the acquisition process unfolds in essentially the same manner, oftentimes requiring additional touch points and premium content offers to nurture the lead to close.

Because the Internet is an entirely consumercentric, demand-oriented medium, entertaining or informative content is the only viable tool for engaging, re-engaging, and nurturing leads. An online audience won't tolerate a sales pitch – it's too easy to silence.

Quality content is the fulcrum upon which the entire process hinges.

Leveraging Quality Content

Let's continue with the small-sized law firm from the previous example. The End Goal – the point at which the prospect transitions from the "marketing stage" to the "sales stage" – occurs precisely when the prospect picks up the phone to schedule a consultation.

Find us online!

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What does it take for the prospect to perform this desired Action? Why should the prospect call you instead of the law firm down the road?

Let's say that during the Foundation Phase, you identified young, business-minded professionals as one segment of your Target Market. Your previous interactions with this segment demonstrated that these young professionals value "organization" and "efficiency" above all other qualities, and you've branded your firm in a way that evokes these shared values.

Leaning on these values, you create a piece of content collateral specifically designed to move prospects past the final touch point to the handoff from marketing to sales (the call). Your 30-page eBook is a step-by-step guide to winning a court case in as little time as possible, complete with an interactive calendar for tracking milestones and document checklists to help defendants and their attorneys stay on-track and organized. You promote this collateral piece on your website, where interested prospects provide their name and email address to "unlock" the download.

Although this collateral may seem consumercentric, if properly executed, the eBook also functions as a powerful pre-consultation document. If the eBook resonates well, your prospect will feel as though he or she has already hired you for counsel and will begin collecting documents they'll need to provide to you – and may even bring them to the initial consultation.

Segmented Conversion Content

The eBook from the previous example is considered a "bottom-of-funnel" collateral piece, meaning it's intended to move prospects to the final stage before commitment (the consultation). However, in order to achieve full results from the inbound sales process, there must also be a "middleof-funnel" collateral piece as well as a "topof-funnel" collateral piece, each designed to shepherd prospects to the next stage in the sequence.

For the market segment from the previous example, your firm must develop two additional collateral pieces based on a segment that values "organization" and "efficiency":

- Middle-of-Funnel: A case study that demonstrates how your firm achieved success for a young professional client for less money and in less time than industry average.
- Top-of-Funnel: A white paper outlining alternative solutions to traditional legal matters (separation agreement as opposed to divorce, etc.)

As before, prospects must "unlock" each piece by entering their name and email address before downloading. This information can then be added to a customer relationship management tool (CRM) or targeted email list used to promote and deliver the next piece of collateral in the sequence.

These three segment-specific collateral pieces form the basis of the inbound sales cycle.

However, up until this point, the sales cycle has been localized to your website only. In order to increase search engine rankings and engage your social network – essentially, to make your content visible to early-stage prospects – you must add a recurring, "nongated" form of content.

This content will make up your firm's blog.

Strategic Blogging

If you're nominally familiar with inbound marketing theory, you're probably aware of the benefits of regular blogging – and in fact there are many:

- Increased Number of Indexed Pages
- Increased Search-Originated Traffic
- Higher Search Rankings
- Established Thought Leadership
- Industry Recognition
- A Foundation for Social Sharing

Keeping in mind that blogging is effective only if executed in a strategic way, it's crucial that every blog post your firm publishes funnels prospects toward a sale.

In order to coax prospects to the next stage of the cycle – to downloading an eBook, case study, or white paper – your blog posts must act as "teasers" to the premium content available for download on your website.

Repurpose Your Premium Content Into Teaser Blog Posts

Make a list of a dozen or so subjects covered in your eBook or white paper. Using your preferred calendar application, schedule one blog post a subject from the eBook – to be published every Thursday morning at 8 am. In a separate Excel document, designate columns for each article's Subject, Target Keyword, Relevant Premium Content, Title, Meta Description, and a brief two-sentence Description. This worksheet will function as your blog abstract. By extracting twelve blog posts from a single eBook, you now have a strategic content editorial calendar for Q1.

Targeted Lead Nurturing

In order to convince visitors of the value of your premium content offers, your blog posts and their respective pages on your site must include call-to-action (CTA) buttons that link to landing pages. CTA buttons should be placed strategically on each blog post page as a "next step" readers can take to learn more about the subject matter discussed in the post.

By clicking the CTA, interested prospects "land" on a targeted landing page where an exchange takes place – the prospect's name and email address for the piece of premium content. At this point, the prospect has a choice to make: Is this information worth it?

This is the real payoff of inbound marketing. If the prospect decides not to give up their contact information, you know immediately that their intent to buy is low.

But, if the prospect does provide you with their contact details, that means they've weighed the information found in the premium content piece against the chance you might email them later for a follow-up – and they've decided the follow-up is worth it.

Having collected your prospect's basic information, you now have an opportunity to nurture your new lead using a predefined set of targeted follow up emails that continue to add value to the sales process. And you save time and resources by only reaching out to prequalified leads. It's a win-win.

Widening Your Reach with Social Media

In order to reach the widest audience possible online, share your blog posts and premium content offers to your firm's relevant social media channels.

For example, let's say your firm publishes new blog articles every Thursday morning. Share links to these posts to LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter (when relevant) at different times throughout the day, aiming to reach readers during peak traffic hours like early morning and mid-afternoon.

In addition to sharing blog posts, you can also post links to your premium content materials. But moderation is key – pushing premium content too often risks pestering your audiences with sales-heavy messaging. Avoid this effect by rounding out your social media strategy to include links to relevant industry news and events and engage regularly with your followers.



Campaign Optimization

Thus far, we've covered the two main essentials to running an inbound marketing campaign: building a solid foundation and implementing an integrated campaign structure. However, because change occurs in the high-tech marketing industry at such a high velocity, marketers must continually monitor and adjust their campaigns in an everevolving digital communications landscape.

To address campaign inefficiencies and to adapt to a changing marketplace, your firm must track progress down to the most remote detail. Use the intelligence tools you chose during the Foundation Phase to refine your campaign as needed. To make this step a bit easier, we put together a quick list of common campaign performance issues and how to address them:

- Low CTA Click-Through Rate Make your content offer more compelling; improve CTA copy
- Low Email Click-Through Rate Refine your Target Market and buyer segments; specify messaging and offers
- Low Landing Page Views Increase promotion of offer; improve CTA text
- Low Landing Page Conversion Rate Tweak and test Landing Page copy, design, and layout
- Low Lead Volume Find additional venues for promotion

Keep in mind that tiny changes in text – like adding the word "Free" in a CTA – can make click and conversion rates skyrocket. Don't be afraid to tinker with your tactics.



Part II Takeaways

At the end of the Campaign Phase, let's summarize what we've learned in Part II:

- To build a great strategy, visualize your end goals and lay out the steps a prospect must take to achieve them
- Content is key to building a successful inbound marketing campaign
- Leverage the value of premium content to generate prequalified leads

- Create one piece of content per sales
 stage, per market segment
- Blog consistently to make offers visible to early-stage prospects
- Tie offers to compelling CTA graphics and landing pages to secure lead information
- Widen your reach by sharing posts and content to social channels
- Continuously optimize your campaign according to successes, failures, and industry innovations



We're Murvine Marketing Group, an inbound marketing agency and HubSpot Certified Partner based in Madison, WI. Digital marketing experts with over fifteen years of experience, we specialize in connecting businesses with modern consumers in an increasingly digital world.

At MMG, we focus on two things: **engagement over interruption and people over profits**. To amplify your brand online, we offer inbound marketing strategies that foster **actionable**, **purposeful approaches** to driving targeted traffic and converting leads to loyal customers. Our professionals will take care of your marketing needs so you can spend time where it matters most—running your business.

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