

How to Create a Successful Email Marketing Strategy at Your Law Firm

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Email marketing should be a core part of every law firm's marketing strategy regardless of the size of your firm.

Email marketing is still the most effective marketing channel simply because people use email several times each day.

So many law firms don't send regular email newsletters or email alerts with blog posts, client alerts and webinar invites and instead rely on social media to distribute their content. This is a big mistake.

There is no better and direct way to reach clients and prospects (if your contact lists are updated and segmented) than email. Emarketing enables you to stay top of mind with clients, prospects, referrals, recruits, the media and alumni.

It also puts the content directly into their inboxes, your firm name appears front and center in their inbox – whereas on LinkedIn or any other social platform, they may or may not see your post due to whether they are on that social platform at that moment, whether that piece of content gets buried in their news feed due to their settings and the complicated algorithms.

As I mentioned above, you simply don't know if or when someone is on social media at any given moment on any given day. And that means they may or may not see your content. But we know business professionals are on their email all day long. That's why sometimes email is the most effective and direct way to reach your target audience.

So, if you write a substantive blog post or article or host a virtual event and want to make sure your clients and prospects know about it, make sure to send it directly to your mailing list so you increase the likelihood that they will see it.

Emarketing can help you build upon existing relationships with your clients and prospects by providing relevant, valuable information.

Remember, your clients, prospects, referrals, alumni, media and others who are on your lists have already given you permission to email them by signing up for your mailing list. They want to get

updates from you. If they receive content from your competitors instead, you're missing a huge opportunity for visibility and engagement.

A great benefit of email marketing is that it's incredibly easy to track your ROI. Everything is measured with the use of emarketing software so you can determine who is opening your emails and when, who is clicking onto your site through your emails and more. Here's how to create an emarketing strategy for your law firm.

Why should you use email marketing?

- It helps to build relationships with your prospects, referrals, recruits and clients.
- It helps to boost brand awareness. By sending periodic emails to a targeted audience, your firm and its services remain top-of-mind for when they need someone with your expertise.
- It enables you to promote your content.
- It facilitates lead generation. You can encourage individuals to provide their personal information in exchange for signing up for your content.
- It enables you to promote your products and services (just always remember to provide value through thought leadership and use case studies to promote your brand and your capabilities).
- It helps you build your brand. By providing others with content that can help them succeed in their goals, you become a trusted resource and expert, which can lead to more than new business. It can open doors to speaking engagements, article writing opportunities, press coverage and invites to serve on industry committees and boards.

How do you create an email marketing strategy?

Here are some steps to take when planning out your emarketing strategy. Note that some of these may be done simultaneously.

- **Set your goals.** Do you want to build your visibility? Increase leads? Launch a women's initiative? Launch a new practice area? Build your brand in a specific new market? Improve recruiting efforts? Get certain lawyers more press? A combination of all of these? Outline what you want emarketing to do and then develop your strategies based on that.
- **Start building targeted, segmented email lists.** I recommend creating one general firm announcement list for lateral hires, major firm news and your holiday card – 'tis the season!, as well as practice-specific and industry lists prioritized by your most important revenue generating areas as a start. You can then build more lists based on the goals set above such as
- **Research and choose the right email marketing platform based on your needs.** Your needs may include the frequency of emails you plan to send per month, who will be managing your emarketing efforts and their graphic design and CRM capabilities, the size of your contact database

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- **Craft compelling email content and templates.** Create several templates for the emails you expect to send consistently so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel each time such as:
 - E-announcements (laterals, lawyer promotions, new associate class arrivals)
 - Matter successes
 - Practice area launch
 - Office opening
 - Press release
 - Newsletters
 - Client alerts
 - **Create an email marketing content calendar.** Plan out what you want to say and when you will distribute the content in advance to the best of your ability (although we all know timely client alerts pop up each week).

To whom should you send emails?

- Clients
- Former clients
- VIP contacts
- Alumni
- Law student recruits
- Laterals in the pipeline
- Referral sources
- Prospects
- Reporters with whom you have relationships

What types of emails should you send?

- Value-added content, including blog posts, client alerts, podcasts, videos, published articles and other thought leadership pieces such as a practice or industry newsletter
- Announcements about events, webinars and CLE programs

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- Firm announcements, including lateral arrivals, lawyer promotions, the launch of a new practice/service area, an office opening, new practice head, etc.
 - Holiday greetings
 - Highlights of the firm's pro bono, community service, CSR and diversity initiatives
 - Periodic firm news (but write these in a client-centric tone such as a case study or client victory)
 - A roundup of your top-performing blog posts or client alerts over the past six months or a year

When it comes to content for a firm e-newsletter, here are some ideas on what to include:

- Article snippets with links to your latest blog posts or client alerts
- Links to past webinars (provide a synopsis too)
- Links to recent podcasts and videos (with shownotes)
- Recent case studies
- Q&As highlighting new laterals, alumni and lawyers
- Practice spotlights
- Highlights of your community service/pro bono work
- Announcements of your recent hires
- Recent press coverage (this would be the only place where I would recommend including self-promotional items in the newsletter – the rest of it should be client-focused)
- Upcoming events/webinars – this is a great way to promote them
- Open jobs – why not promote them through this newsletter? It's a competitive job market
- News about your diversity and women's initiatives programs

What types of emails should you avoid sending?

- Self-congratulatory posts – anything that touts the successes of your lawyers such as your latest Chambers or Super Lawyers rankings. That's not client-centric and a waste of a marketing touchpoint. Ask yourself what is the benefit of this email to the recipient and if you can't come up with a good answer, either rework it, or abort mission.
- Emails that ask your audience to do something like vote for you. Again, that's not a client-focused email – that's one that's all about you and a waste of a touchpoint.

What is email marketing software?

Many companies and individuals send unformatted mass emails by bcc and use attachments. This is a huge mistake as these emails likely won't reach your target audience and if they do, they will go unnoticed or place you right in the spam folder of your intended recipient.

Email marketing software makes sending and monitoring email campaigns easier. Your email marketing software will help you create templates so your emails are aesthetically pleasing, send out emails on your behalf and monitor how your subscribers engage with your emails.

You can also use email marketing software to track analytics like clickthrough rates, open rates, bouncebacks and conversions.

What should your email say/include?

- Include a high-resolution image, a succinct headline and body copy in short paragraphs to make it easy for the reader to skim the email.
- Get to the point quickly – within the first paragraph of the text – or the reader can lose interest and move on.
- Always include links to the bios of any professionals mentioned in the email as well as the practices/industries noted in the email.
- Provide the contact information of the professionals mentioned in the email so someone who is interested in learning more can easily contact them.

Here are some email marketing best practices:

- Email marketing is all about expectations, and it's up to you to set them. Always write great content that educates, informs and helps others.
- Ensure you use a strong headline so that readers want to open your emails.
- Within the email itself, use short paragraphs and subheaders to break up block text as most readers skim articles.
- Personalized emails have 26% higher open rates, and an improved click-through rate of 14% when compared to others according to Hubspot. Many email marketing platforms enable you to set up personalized emails.
- Consider sending a personalized note to VIP contacts along with the content letting the recipient know you were thinking of them and why they might find the article of interest.
- Be sure to comply with advertising, GDPR, CAN-SPAM and professional ethics rules when you email content (so people can easily unsubscribe and you have your address, social media information, disclaimer and copyright information). If you use an email marketing platform – you will cover your bases on most of these.

Here's how to ensure that your emails are CAN-SPAM compliant:

- Include your company name and address in every email.
- Place visible unsubscribe links within your emails.
- Use real email addresses in the "From" and "Reply to" fields.
- Write subject lines that indicate the content of the email.

How do you build your email list?

- Ask your employees to contribute contacts to your master firm list. Hopefully you have a CRM system to house this information so that the information is automatically fed from their Outlook address books into the contact management system, but if not, you can work around it with some manual upkeep. Designate someone in charge of maintaining the list and working with employees to update contacts.
- Develop a free ebook or whitepaper and host it on a landing page that asks visitors to provide their email address in order to download it. This is called a "gated offer."
- Create free online tools make your users' lives easier and to access them, they need to sign up with their email address.
- Create a blog to which readers can subscribe. Blog posts help you increase your ranking on search engines and enable you collect subscribers that you can then add to email campaigns.
- Webinars are a great way to collect email addresses. Advertise the webinar on social channels, including LinkedIn and ensure your employees promote it to their valuable networks.

Ideas to expand the reach of your email content

- Encourage subscribers to share and forward your emails. Include social sharing buttons and an "Email" button in your marketing emails. That way, you'll gain access to their friends, colleagues and networks and expand your contact list. At the bottom of your emails, include a "Subscribe" CTA as a simple text-based link so that those receiving the forwarded emails can easily opt-in too.
- If you have any underutilized employees right now (if you don't, you can also outsource it), task them with updating your email lists and reconciling bounceback emails. Take the time to update your email lists so that your next e-mailings will have even greater reach.
- Pull the statistics from each email campaign (give it one week after distribution for the most complete and accurate info). The four most important statistics are open rates, clickthrough rates, unsubscribes and bouncebacks.

- With most email marketing platforms, you can see exactly who opened the email and on which links they clicked. This is very useful intelligence. Use this information to your advantage to create more of what did well and less of what did not. Make sure to send these statistics to the authors as well to inform their future blog and thought leadership efforts.
- In addition, segment your lists so that you are not blanketing your entire contact/prospect list with content that is not tailored to their interests. Segmentation is breaking up your large email list into subcategories that pertain to your subscribers' unique characteristics, interests and preferences. Sending generic email blasts can send the wrong content to the wrong people and losing subscribers. So, for example, create mailing lists by industry and practice (intellectual property, litigation, M&A, China, COVID-19, C-suite, etc.).

Remember you're a guest who is invited into the inboxes of your subscribers. Your emails are always just one click away from losing their interest forever. Your job is to always deliver value and to create engaging email content that makes people want to stay subscribed and forward your emails to their network.

I hope these tips are helpful – I am of course a huge proponent of the power of social media, but don't underestimate the effectiveness of email marketing to directly reach your prospects, referrals, important contacts, alumni, the media and of course, your clients.

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