9 Skills Your Legal SEO Writer Should Have

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SEO (search engine optimization) is not a one-and-done task. It's an ongoing effort, which is why many attorneys and law firms invest in hiring a legal SEO writer.

When law firms work with a legal SEO specialist, they don't always get full visibility into the SEO work that's getting done. This lack of transparency between the client and consultant can often result in confusion and an assumption that the work is successful.

You may already know that regularly publishing quality content on your law firm website signals to search engines that you're keeping an updated, high-quality, and relevant website. These signals will help you rank higher when prospective clients are trying to find you.

Why is SEO important for lawyers?

SEO is critical for lawyers looking to generate leads, attract new clients, and ultimately, stay competitive. While referrals are always important, many people looking for legal services search on their own and are looking online.

If you have an in-house SEO manager at your law firm, they should have no trouble identifying new opportunities for refreshing your professional biography, education history, and blog posts. Of course, these activities will all support driving prospective customers to your website. Hopefully, this sounds like your legal SEO writer.

Below are nine skills your legal SEO writer should possess.

1. They prioritize creating new content

Your law firm website as a whole is your professional foundation on the web. In other words, your website is your law firm's online real estate. If you haven't updated your content in months, consider your foundation to be at risk. Despite what some contractors may tell you, link building and optimizing old posts are not a replacement for new content. Potential clients may take weeks (or months) to decide if you're the lawyer for them. If they see a stagnant blog, they may abandon your practice for a competitor.

Ask your legal SEO writer to provide you with a monthly checklist. Make sure your site's content is being updated. Also, ask questions about how or why certain things are done, and clear the air for open discussions when you check in with them in the future. This clear communication helps you and your contractor manage expectations. For example, is your legal SEO writer responsible for updating pages as well as your blog? Or did you solely hire them to write new blog content? Ensure neither party is making assumptions about their scope of work.

2. They have a link building strategy for blogs and resources

When it comes to link building, it's about quality versus quantity.

What is link building? Securing a link on a website that links to your website is known as a backlink. This is what link building is all about. Google is more likely to view your website as trustworthy if you have numerous backlinks from authoritative websites. One way a website's authority is measured is via its domain score, also called domain authority.

Essentially a search engine ranking score, domain authorities predict how likely a website is to rank in search engine result pages (SERPs). This is especially true when the backlinks come from an authoritative website with a higher domain score than yours. In general, backlinks are one of the essential ranking factors for Google, but not the only one.

Your legal SEO writer should be able to get links to your posts or pages from authoritative websites instead of links from various low-quality pages. It's not easy to get links from authoritative sites. The best way to earn these links is to create high-quality, original content regularly. Another way is to build relationships with these sites and their webmasters through social media.

Feel confident about your Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter efforts by watching our on-demand webinar Innovate Legal Online: Level Up Your Firm's Marketing and Social Media.

3. Your legal SEO writer should use long-tail keywords

In SEO, there are many types of keywords to consider. In a well-rounded strategy, both short and long-tail keywords are important in site content. This gives search engines a variety of options to pull results from, giving you a better chance of appearing in search results.

If your legal SEO writer only focuses on one type of keyword, you will not attain all of your potential web traffic and leads. Since long-tail searches make up a significant amount of search traffic, optimizing your website content to gain as much organic website traffic and leads as possible is crucial. To clarify, organic website traffic refers to the number of visits your website gets based on search engine queries, instead of paid search ads. Think of it this way: Searchers generally know what they're looking for, and where they want to find it.

That means your legal specialty, location, and possibly other case details could be included in their search terms. You should be preparing for visitors looking for "divorce lawyer" as much as " Los Angeles divorce lawyer."

4. They can explain their process

If your legal SEO writer has trouble explaining their process to you, that's not a good sign. There may be some jargon to explain, but this shouldn't stop your legal SEO writer from being transparent with you.

To avoid hiring an inexperienced or low quality SEO writer, ask a lot of questions during your initial meeting. If you get a vague response, probe more. At the end of the meeting, if you don't feel strongly that your legal SEO writer has a clear idea of how to proceed with your website and content needs, continue your search.

5. Their efforts focus on building organic traffic

Pay per click (PPC) traffic can be a powerful site referral tool. But paid content is entirely different from SEO. Your legal SEO writer should be performing updates aimed at attaining organic referrals to your firm's website.

It's possible that completely new websites can benefit from some PPC support to get your site some initial traffic. But that should be just one part of a greater overall content strategy.

6. They never use duplicate content

Your legal SEO writer may sometimes be tempted to use content from other legal sites and blogs, with attribution. Never copy content from another site and publish the same content on your law firm's website. If Google has already indexed the original content, it won't index it again. In essence, you're wasting your efforts and sending Google a negative signal that your website does not produce high quality, original content for your audience.

Indexing is not the only negative result of using duplicate content. As soon as your visitor sees you posting content from another site, they may see you as less professional and trustworthy.

7. They leverage local listings

Local search engine listings are a key aspect of a fully rounded SEO strategy. Whether your practice is central to a single location or multiple cities, local listings offer highlighted results and a better user experience.

Why are local listings important? For starters, they offer various core business details that typical SEO links don't provide without multiple searches. Since most users make a decision on your practice after the first query, this is very valuable. You may also verify your business through snail mail, which entails entering a code sent on a postcard to your address, to solidify your location.

Lastly, you can get citations, which builds trust in your business. There are a handful of ways to acquire citations, and they're worth the time since authoritative citations are the #1 ranking factor in a very competitive search market.

8. They have proven ability to create quality content

Content can make or break your site. In order for your site to come out of this process on top, your legal SEO writer should have a strong content strategy.

Keep your audience in mind—your potential clients are human beings. Google's algorithm has become very complex and has been created to reward content that people enjoy. Therefore, they will penalize methods that cut corners, such as keyword stuffing.

It's crucial that your topics and writing attract people while providing them with the valuable information they're looking for. All of these aspects combined take you one step closer to acquiring a new lead.

9. They show results

At the end of the day, you're paying your legal SEO writer to increase traffic to your website. If you don't see a traffic increase, something's not working. You hired a legal SEO writer to increase traffic, and by proxy, client leads. If you find your traffic numbers aren't increasing, or your conversion numbers aren't going up, it's time to reassess.

There may be a few reasons why your traffic isn't increasing. Your site could have any of the previously mentioned optimization issues, especially concerning content. Or your legal SEO writer may be relying on branded keywords to attract users. Branded keywords are any search queries that include the name of your law firm. The trouble with that is if a client already knows your name (or your firm's name), chances are they're not the leads you need to attract with SEO.

You should work on SEO with the goal of attracting potential clients that have no idea that you or your practice exists. Or you should target potential law firm clients who know little enough about you that they don't use terms that identify you in a Google query.

Even if your traffic has gone up, you still may notice a lack of calls or emails to your practice. This sign usually means that your legal SEO writer has been using keywords that attract the wrong type of client. That is why it's crucial to have a well thought-out content strategy, especially if your contractor doesn't have a lot of familiarity with the practice of law.

SEO does take a few months and even years to start to show an uptick in traffic. So, give your legal SEO writer some time to show results. If you've waited a long time for results that haven't appeared, chances are your strategy, and possibly your legal SEO writer, aren't working out.

About Clio

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