

Legal Web Design and SEO: *Questions to Ask*

By Jim Christy

“I need a new website. What do you guys charge?” I field this question a couple times of week, but I still cringe every time I hear it. I understand that price is a major factor in a decision making process, but starting a conversation with price based questions is a lot like going to a restaurant and asking for the check before you order. You may feel good (temporarily) knowing your meal is \$2.99 but disappointed when the waiter brings out a glass of water and some toast. To avoid this situation and to make the most of your requests for information, consider these questions before picking up the phone:

1. What are you looking to get out of your site? This can be as basic as “I just want my site to look more modern,” to “I want my site to be a leading driver of new business,” and everything in between.

This keeps you from getting distracted by what “packages” the service provider may have to offer. I’m not saying that bundled services are inherently bad, but they generally do not offer a lot of customization based on practice area and geographic market. What I really mean by this is to avoid simply buying a product or service and start thinking about the end results that you are really purchasing. For example, a new template-based website design, 10 pages of content and very basic SEO services may actually drive some business to your firm if you practice in a small town, but that package probably isn’t going to work if you have even a modest amount of competition. In most cases, the package described above is essentially an online brochure that people will find if they search for your exact name. There isn’t anything wrong with this option – just make sure you understand what you’re getting.

If your answer to this question is that you want to drive more business, then good follow up questions may be “How many more cases per month do I want?” or “How much growth do I want for my firm?” These questions will begin to shape the overall value of the site to both you and the service provider.

2. Who are your ideal clients?

You don’t need to have this concept entirely fleshed out, but at least consider it in the early stages of planning a new website. Marketing companies build buyer personas for their products and brands as a starting point for discovering what type of information motivates those individuals to action. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that this type of exercise is only helpful for large, direct to consumer companies – it should apply to all businesses, regardless of size and scope.

3. Where do you want to be in three years?

A new website should not be considered a short term project that comes up, gets completed and then forgotten about until it needs a facelift in three years. Think of your website as something that is always being built and improved. What if

you had started a web project 10 years ago and developed 100 pages of content per year? Sure, you have the obvious answer of a site with 1000 pages, but the more meaningful answer is that you’d have built an online presence that is likely viewed as a trusted source for information for potential clients and industry professionals alike.

As a rule of thumb, just keep your questions focused around goals and measurable results and you’ll be much more likely to get what you’re looking for. Also, keep in mind that the burden of meaningful questions shouldn’t come exclusively from you. If the person on the other end of the phone isn’t trying to understand what you’re really trying to achieve, chances are that they don’t have your best interest in mind.



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