

# SEO For Law Firms

## The Ultimate Guide

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# SEO for Law Firms - The Ultimate Guide

Looking for the best way to grow your practice? You can maximize your firm's online visibility with SEO for law firms. While SEO isn't easy or a quick fix, it's an essential part of a long-term digital marketing strategy that will boost your competitiveness in the legal space.

How consumers find legal services has changed drastically over the past decade. It's no longer as effective to pour your ad dollars into things like billboards, commercials, and print ads.

The new reality is that a majority of legal consumers are turning to search engines first to get legal questions answered and then find an attorney to help them solve their legal issues. Even referrals, which have always been a reliable source of leads for lawyers, have moved to online channels like Google and Facebook.

The legal industry has always been competitive, and your firm can't afford to fall behind when it comes to its online presence. This guide will show you how you can implement the most effective legal marketing strategy available - search engine optimization (SEO).

## Why SEO is a Top Digital Marketing Strategy for Law Firms

If you're a law firm that wants to grow its practice, organic traffic is one of the best marketing channels to deliver results. According to a recent [Legal Trends Report](#), 17% of consumers looked for a lawyer via online search, which is much higher than other methods like review sites, directories, and social media.

Hubspot reports that [62% of consumers](#) turn to search engines when researching a new business or service, and 41% use them when they are ready to buy. That same survey reveals that consumers prefer to visit a business's official website to learn more about them, so having a strong online presence will boost your firm's credibility with potential clients.

Finally, legal services are competitive. When you focus on SEO, you have the opportunity to move your website's rankings above those of your competitors. Research shows that the top result on a search engine page gets [34.2% of the clicks](#). From there, the second and third results get 17.1% and 11.4%, respectively. It makes sense to keep aiming for the top.

## How SEO Works

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of driving more visitors to your law firm's website through better organic positioning in the search engines. When a potential client searches for something online, such as "estate lawyer in Memphis," the idea is for your law firm's result to appear as close to the top of the page as possible.

Organic search results don't include paid ads, but they might include local listings such as businesses in the Google Maps pack. You have the opportunity with SEO to earn several places on the first page of search results with a listing for your website, a local search result, and even things like "featured snippets."

The biggest challenge for law firms is beating their competition and even securing a number one spot. While there are no guarantees that you can rank number one and keep the spot, there are plenty of ways to improve your standings in the search engines.

How Effective is SEO for Law Firms?

Google commands about 95% of search engine traffic, so a majority of your efforts should be focused on dominating the organic results in this search engine. But, why should you care about this as opposed to paid ads or social media?

The reason is simple. Of all U.S. searches, only about [2.8% of people](#) still click on paid ads. People are simply more trusting of organic results. In short, your firm has a much bigger opportunity to reach potential clients through organic search.

Assuming you run a paid ad, you'd have to continue to pay for that ad if you want people to keep seeing it. But, if you post an engaging piece of content on your website that ranks well in Google, you can get free traffic for years to come.

The good news is that the market for your legal services is there. It just needs to find you. SEO can help you accomplish this by boosting your visibility in the search engines and then converting those visitors to clients.

Law Firm SEO: 7 Elements to Generating More Clients Through SEO

Search engines are incredibly sophisticated, but that doesn't mean you can't help them do their job. By optimizing your website, you can deliver better information to the search engines that give your law firm more opportunities to show up in organic search results.

This is a somewhat detailed guide, but it can never cover all you need to know about SEO. It's important to point out that a few wrong moves could have a negative impact on your rankings. If you're not comfortable with these action steps or just don't have time to put in the effort required, we strongly recommend that you reach out to a law firm SEO expert (like Sundown Legal Marketing).

That said, here are the seven elements you need to address to generate more clients through SEO:

#### 1. Your Website's Structure

There are four structural requirements that you must address to ensure your website ranks well in the search engines and provides the best user experience possible. This is something you'll want to take a look at before you change anything else.

##### Mobile-friendly

Consumers now spend an average of 5 hours a day on their smartphones. And more than half of smartphone users have discovered a new company while searching on a mobile device.

If your law firm's website doesn't look right on a mobile device, it's not going to perform well in organic search results.

A responsive website is one that automatically adjusts to different screen sizes and devices. It's now the standard and something you should have for a variety of reasons. First, it provides a better user experience. Just as important, Google wants you to do this, and your rankings will suffer if you don't.

As far back as 2015, Google [released](#) its "Mobile-friendliness" statement. Specifically, the search engine indicated that a website's ability to cater to mobile visitors would be used as a ranking factor.

Not sure if your website is responsive or mobile friendly? Google wants to help with that as well. You can quickly check with the [Google Mobile-Friendly Test Tool](#).

## Secure

Every [39 seconds](#), there's a new cyber-attack, and nearly half of these (43%) target small businesses. Your website's security should be a priority for this reason alone, but there's more.

Your potential clients want to see that you have a secure website. If you don't, they may not click on your link. In fact, 82% of consumers now won't browse a site that isn't secure.

Finally, Google has prioritized security as well. The search engine has been warning for years that websites might be penalized if they fail to secure their sites. That is now happening. Google confirmed in 2020 that if you don't have an SSL certificate installed, you may not rank as high as websites that do.

In most cases, this is simple enough to resolve. You can get your website's developer or designer to install the certificate for you. You may also be able to get some assistance from your web host.

## Fast-loading

Page speed, which is the amount of time it takes a website to load, has been a Google ranking factor for [over a decade](#). The search engine had a "speed update" in 2018 and recently announced "[core web vitals](#)" as a ranking factor, with speed at the heart of this initiative.

Bottom line - if your page loads slow, your search engine rankings are going to suffer.

There's a good reason for this. Consumers have little tolerance for slow-loading websites. In fact, more than half (57%) will abandon a website if it takes more than three seconds to load.

Google now recommends that websites aim for a three-second target.

There are a variety of tools you can use to evaluate your page speed. But, we recommend you start with [Google PageSpeed Insights](#). It's a comprehensive, free tool that gives you insights into how you can improve your results. Some of the ways you can improve your page speed include:

Optimizing images

Using website caching

Cleaning and compressing code

Implementing a CDN

Choosing a better host

## 2. Your Website's Content

One of the single biggest drivers of your firm's search engine rankings is its content. Google's main goal is to connect searchers with the most useful content and brands that can help resolve their issues.

Google relies on a variety of factors to predict whether one website over another is going to provide the best answer to a search query. If Google has more confidence in your content, it's going to rank higher than its competitors.

If you want to rank well in Google, here some SEO tips to focus on when it comes to your law firm website's content:

### Use the Right Keywords

SEO can't exist without keywords. But choosing the right ones for your law firm website can be challenging. The most lead-enhancing keywords are also the most competitive. In general, your keywords should be based on several factors:

Your target audience - What is your target audience generally looking for? This varies among firms and practice areas.

Keyword search volume - What is the monthly search volume of the keywords? [Google's Keyword Planner](#) can help give you a ballpark figure.

Keyword competition - The more people trying to rank for a keyword, like "personal injury lawyer," the harder it will be to get a spot on page one of Google. Google's Keyword Planner can also help you gauge competitiveness.

The keywords' search intent - It's generally better to target keywords with commercial intent, meaning a consumer is ready to "buy" or hire someone. So, a keyword like "DUI lawyer near me" has more commercial intent than "DIY divorce."

If that's not overwhelming enough, we find that it's a good practice to use a strategy that combines targeting some general, high-volume keywords with local search and long-tail keywords.

Some examples of general legal keywords that are also highly-competitive are:

DUI attorney  
Car accident lawyer  
Estate attorney  
Work injury lawyer

Some examples of lower-competition keywords that can also pull in powerful leads include:

Medical malpractice attorneys near University hospital  
How to deal with wage discrimination  
What to do just after a DUI in Alabama

## Post Engaging Content

Just about every page on your law firm's website is designed to fulfill a particular purpose. Legal content marketing is about more than describing your services and qualifications. It should also drive people to take specific actions, like calling you to schedule a free consultation.

The two basic content archetypes you'll find on a law firm's website are area of practice pages and blogs. Practice area pages are essentially sales landing pages, and blogs are used to build awareness and drive traffic to those practice area pages.

### Practice Area Pages

Practice area pages should be as specific as possible. If you are a personal injury attorney, you can have a "Personal Injury" practice area page. But there should also be separate pages for "Car Accidents," "Truck Accidents," "Medical Malpractice," "Slip and Fall Injuries," etc.

Include lengthy, useful, in-depth content that addresses the reader's main concerns. In personal injury cases, this is generally how they can receive compensation from a responsible party after an accident. If applicable, be geographically relevant with your content so that readers know you are available to serve them locally.

Finally, include multiple calls to action so that the visitor understands where they can turn to for help and what they should do as their next move. These can be within the content, in a sidebar, or in the form of a chat window.

### Blogs

Blog content is another ingredient that is vital to your SEO success. At the top of the sales funnel is the "awareness" stage, and this is where blogs can be the most valuable. Through long-tail and question-type searches, many prospects will discover your law firm for the first time, and you can begin to "sell" them on your experience and knowledge.

Write blog posts that strategically answer the questions people are typing in Google. Some examples include:

- When to get an attorney for a car accident
- How can I get my DUI charges dropped?
- How to choose a divorce lawyer
- How to sue an insurance company

When you post content on a particular topic, such as car accidents, it should always link back to the corresponding area of practice page. This sets up a pillar/cluster model that is beneficial for SEO.

### Share Various Types of Content

Text-based content remains the most popular type of content consumed online, but what you post for your target audience should vary. Not everyone loves to read words on a screen, and some people relate

to other types of content more deeply.

According to recent HubSpot research, [50% of consumers](#) say they want to see videos from brands they interact with. And video marketing is known to build connections with viewers and increase conversions.

In addition to video, you can also post infographics, ebooks, white papers, and even webinars or podcasts to give your firm more credibility and establish it as an authority in the eyes of the public and the search engines.

### Address User Questions

Your content might be engaging enough and in a compelling format, but does it address the user's question? Consider the two possible outcomes when a person searches for "how to deal with wage discrimination:"

Outcome 1: The visitor gets to your page and stays there. They learn about their options for dealing with wage discrimination, including hiring an attorney. Google sees that the visitor is engaged and assumed that your page answers their question. This helps your rankings.

Outcome 2: The visitor gets to your page and goes right back to Google to look for something better. Maybe your page only defines wage discrimination but doesn't give any options for addressing it. This tells Google that you didn't address the question, and it is likely to harm your rankings.

Google now employs a machine-learning algorithm called [RankBrain](#) that continually analyzes search results. The goal of RankBrain is to deliver the most relevant results to searchers by predicting and satisfying searcher intent.

Basically, RankBrain will interpret the searcher's intent based on past experience and deliver a list of results. If the searcher is "happy" with their pick, that result could rank higher next time. If not, the result could rank lower.

In short, the content on your website is vital to your SEO success. But you must have a plan. The right content marketing strategy can impress both your visitors and the search engines, helping you achieve the results you want in even the most competitive markets.

### 3. Technical SEO Elements

Pleasing the search engines with your website's structure and content are only the first steps in achieving favorable rankings. You also need to make sure your site speaks a language that the search engines can understand.

You might have a fantastic-looking legal website on the surface that you believe communicates your services in a powerful way. But what's happening behind the scenes matters just as much as what the visitors see with the naked eye.

Here are some of the technical SEO elements that you must address to get the attention you want from Google, and ultimately, your target audience:

## Schema

Schema markup is the way that your law firm's website communicates with the search engines. It is a form of HTML that needs to be placed on your page to tell Google what it's about and help it stand apart from its competitors.

Schema markup is a form of microdata that can be found on [Schema.org](https://schema.org). It creates a "rich snippet," or an enhanced description of your page that can appear in search engine results.

Why is this important? Specifically, schema can give searchers the clearest picture of what is on your page because you are controlling the message. This improves click-through rates, which, in turn, can improve your rankings.

According to one [study](#), only about one-third of Google's results contain a rich snippet, meaning there is plenty of opportunities for your firm to outperform the competition.

## Title and Meta Descriptions

When a visitor enters a search in Google, three pieces of information show up in the organic search results to help them decide where to click: your site URL, the page name, and a description of the content. You can control all three, and your effectiveness with this can impact your search engine rankings.

You communicate the page name and description by specifying the "Title Tag" and "Meta Description" for the page.

Your Title Tag should be less than 60 characters and contain your target keyword phrase. A good example of a title tag is "Biloxi Car Accident Lawyer."

Your Meta Description is generally what shows up in the Google search results, although the search engine can pick something else from your page if it wishes. You have up to 160 characters for your meta description. Make it an accurate yet compelling description of what the visitor will find on your page. Be sure to include your keyword phrase early, and give the reader a reason to click through. An example of a good Meta Description is: *"If you've been injured in an accident, find out how our Georgia personal injury lawyers can help you collect the maximum compensation you deserve."*

## Heading Tags

When you post any content, whether it be area of practice pages or blogs, make sure you are using proper heading tags. This not only keeps your content organized for the reader but also communicates that flow of information to the search engines.

Your page's title should be under an H1 tag. This should be followed by multiple H2 tags to show the reader when you are moving from one topic to another. You can also use H3 tags and so forth to continue your organization.

## 4. The User Experience

Google now places a strong emphasis on the user experience (UX), and for good reason. Every



interaction you have with a customer is part of the UX. According to [Google](#), "*the goal of a good UX is to help users do what they want when interacting with your business, not necessarily what you want.*"

If your website is making people feel confused, rushed, or irritated, this a poor UX, and it won't reflect well in your search engine rankings. If you want to focus on SEO, you can address the UX in the following ways:

### Site Architecture

How your site is organized is important for the user experience first and the search engines second. You want and need your visitors to be able to find their way around your website easily. If they can't, they're going to get frustrated and leave. And Google should be able to figure out what is on your page with a clearly-worded URL.

You can organize your site using a few directories (think of them like electronic folders), but don't go overboard. Having too many folders gets confusing for everyone. Further, you have limited space for characters in a URL, so use them wisely.

Next, make sure you are optimizing your URLs for SEO. For example, an area of practice page for a personal injury attorney in Memphis might have the following URL:

<https://lawfirm.com/personal-injury-lawyer-memphis/> OR

<https://lawfirm.com/practice-areas/memphis/personal-injury-lawyer/>

As you can see, the keywords are clear in the URL. A visitor looking at the URL in the search engine results will have confidence that the page they are about to click on will have the information they want.

### Readability

Another part of addressing the user experience is making sure your content is easy to read. Those Heading (H2 and H3) tags will help, but there are few other things you can do:

Have plenty of white space on your page. You can avoid subjecting your visitor to a "wall of words" by keeping your paragraphs short (2-3 sentences max).

Use an appropriate size font and contrast to minimize eye strain.

Avoid moving backgrounds and strange colors on your page that will be a turnoff for visitors.

Use bullet points and numbered lists to convey a message when appropriate.

Inject plenty of photos and/or videos to break up your content.

### Conversion paths

Your visitors should have a seamless experience on your website, meaning they don't have to work to find the content they need or figure out what to do next. There should be multiple conversion paths designed to educate, convince, qualify, and convert them.

If they want more information, they can click on a FAQ blog or chat window. Or, if they are ready to

schedule an appointment, they can click through to the contact page.

## 5. Your Website's Authority

Part of your website's ranking has to do with authority. This has several elements. We've already addressed providing a positive user experience. But Google also wants to see that you are doing something better than your competitors and have some kind of confirmation of your legitimacy through inbound links.

### Compare to Your Competition

There are only so many spots on the first page of Google. You have the three map pack spots and then ten organic results. And the top few of each are going to get the most clicks.

When you have a list of keywords that you want to rank for, compare yourself to the competition based on a variety of factors. Some things to look at include:

- Page load speed
- Presence of schema markup
- Quality and length of the page's content
- Presence of backlinks that point to the website
- Whether or not there are optimized images on the page
- Presence of social signals pointing to the page

Where are you performing better or worse than your competitors with respect to each keyword on your list? This can give you a starting point for your SEO strategy.

### Inbound Links

You need other websites linking to yours for several reasons. First, it provides corroborating evidence that you are who you say you are and even that your firm does fantastic work. Second, links from other websites can help you latch onto their authority or popularity to promote your brand.

Backlinks have long been one of the most powerful ways to boost website rankings. But, things have changed over the past decade. Unfortunately, some abused the backlink strategy, and it's not as easy as it once was to increase rankings with backlinks.

It can be done, and it's a powerful strategy, but it takes time, experience, and care to get it right. Some of the ways you can build links to your website include:

- Social profiles, like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn
- Local directories like Google My Business
- Legal directories like Avvo
- Business directories like Yelp
- Organizations like your local BAR association
- Links from websites that share your blog posts
- Links from sites that host your podcasts or videos

Links from sites from which you offer to write guest content

A few strategies you should probably avoid, because they're "spammy" and could harm your rankings, include submitting your website to link directories, paying for links, and putting out press releases only for SEO purposes.

If you aren't sure how many places are linking to your website currently, you can get a basic link profile of your site at [Moz.com](https://moz.com), which includes your Domain Authority (DA). This is also an excellent way to benchmark your DA and link profile against your top competitors to see what you need to target for better rankings.

## 6. Your Local SEO Properties

Most law firms focus on serving a local market. In other words, they offer criminal defense in South Georgia or are a personal injury attorney for clients in the Birmingham area. Optimizing your website and other web properties for local SEO is vital for your overall digital marketing strategy.

When a person searches for a "criminal lawyer near me," local law firms now have multiple opportunities to show up in organic search results. There are the standard search results, the business three-pack with map listing, and possibly your social media profiles. Optimizing for these helps your target audience find you by improving your visibility online. Here are a few things you need to do:

### Google My Business

Every law firm should have a fully-optimized [Google My Business](https://www.google.com/business/) (GMB) profile, even if you have a great website. According to [Google](https://www.google.com/business/), "*Google My Business complements your existing website by giving your business a public identity and presence with a listing on Google. The information that you provide about your business appears on Google Search and Maps.*"

You can start with the basics, which are your name, address, and phone (NAP). This is the information found on your website, and it should match that exactly. If there are any discrepancies, it could impact your rankings.

Beyond the NAP and some other basic information (your practice areas, hours, etc.), you need to focus on getting some client reviews. Having Google reviews, and good ones, are a major factor in local SEO rankings. The number of reviews you need to show in the local three-pack varies based on your market's competitiveness.

When you believe you have a happy client, simply ask them to leave you feedback on Google. Let them know it will help your business. But, never write a fake review or have someone else do this.

Your responsiveness to reviews is also notable. When someone leaves a review, good or bad, make sure you respond quickly and appropriately to demonstrate your firm's commitment to client service. Prospects will notice this, as will the search engines.

### Social Media

There's a common misconception that social media doesn't impact SEO. This isn't the case. The truth is

that social signals, like Twitter followers and Facebook likes, can be viewed as credible backlinks and influence a page's rank.

Beyond this, social media gives your business another way to rank in organic search results because social media profiles can show up on the first page of Google. So, if someone searches for a "DUI lawyer in Tuscaloosa," your firm's website, Facebook page, Instagram account, and Twitter profile can all claim spots on page one of Google, in addition to that Google Maps results.

This means that you should expand your concept of SEO include your social media pages and profiles. Make sure they are optimized for local search, meaning you include relevant keyword phrases in your profile's description and some of your posts.

## 7. Your SEO Performance

It's tough to succeed in any business without some measurable goals, benchmarks, and a few adjustments along the way. It would be ideal if your SEO efforts worked flawlessly from the start, but Google rankings can be a moving target.

Google doesn't advertise it's ranking factors and updates its algorithm frequently. The search engine giant might rollout 2-3 major updates in a year, but it had over 3,200 "improvements" to its algorithm in 2018 compared to just 890 five years earlier. A single change can move a website's ranking from a number one spot to somewhere on page 10.

Law firm SEO isn't a "one and done" project. It's important to continue working on improving your performance, and this starts with tracking your results.

### Track, Measure, and Analyze

When you track your results, you can quickly see which of your SEO strategies are getting results and which are missing the mark. Some of the metrics you can track and analyze include:

- Rankings
- Impressions
- Website traffic
- Bounce rate
- Page load speed
- Brand mentions
- Social shares
- Leads
- Conversion rate

### Make Adjustments

The final step is to evaluate your results and make any necessary adjustments to your strategy. You can look at year over year improvements in your KPIs as well as benchmark your results against competitors and your industry.

For example, if your website rankings fell, see if you can optimize those pages to improve your results.

If your traffic is down, did you make any changes to the pages? Make sure you check the page load speed and see if you have any alerts from Google about problems on your page. If your leads are falling off, are your CTAs functioning properly, or have you changed your message in a way that isn't resonating with visitors?

Gathering data and making improvements is a continuous process that will bring your law firm closer to achieving its SEO goals.

## Questions About Law Firm SEO

### Do I Need a Website Analysis?

Absolutely. It's tough to create a plan for your digital marketing success without first analyzing your starting point. A free website analysis gives us a picture of your current rankings, link profile, local citations, and much more.

### Do I Have to Change My Website to Rank Higher in Search Engines?

That depends. In some cases, you can make on-site improvements that will boost your SEO efforts. In others, it just makes sense to create a new website that is SEO-optimized and that provides a better user experience.

### How Long Does SEO Take?

That also depends. There are a variety of factors that impact how long it takes for a website to rank in Google for a given term. These factors include how well the site was already optimized, the competitiveness of the keyword, and the efforts devoted to the campaign.

### How Often Should I Post a New Blog?

Between two and four times per month is an optimal schedule. Quality is the most important factor with your legal blog. Our agency can help with idea generation and the production of quality content for your blog to boost your SEO efforts.

### Can I Do SEO and PPC? Do I Need Both?

You can do both, and each has its benefits. But Google ads aren't going to have any impact on your organic rankings.

## Get a Free SEO and Website Analysis

The success of your law firm's digital marketing strategy begins with knowledge. Sundown Legal Marketing offers a free analysis of your firm's website so that you can see where it stands. We'll provide you with suggestions and insights about improving your law firm's marketing strategy and performance. Contact us today to get started.