

The Use of Websites in Law Firm Marketing

Examining how corporate law firms use their websites
in marketing and business development



Martindale-Hubbell®

2012 Research Study | Summary Report



In association with:



Summary Report

LexisNexis® Martindale-Hubbell® commissioned Purple Market Research to examine how international B2B (corporate) law firms are using their websites as part of their marketing programs. Based on initial qualitative interviews conducted in April 2012 and an online, quantitative survey in July, the study reflects the views of 209 law firms across six world regions (excluding the U.S.) and covers:

- The size of marketing budgets and the extent to which marketing professionals are employed
- The balance between online and offline marketing activity
- General website development and associated expenditure levels
- Content management
- Tools used to measure online activity
- Website effectiveness and future plans with regard to online marketing activity

This summary report summarises some of the key findings of the two stage programme of research.

The full report: The Use of Websites in Law Firm Marketing: Examining how corporate law firms use their websites in marketing and business development

To obtain a full copy of the report, please visit www.martindale-hubbell.co.uk/law-firm-websites

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The size of marketing budgets

From the 184 firms that participated in the research, the table below shows approximate expenditure based on the size of their firm, overall marketing budget and two distinct lines for website investment: one-off website revamp fees and the cost of ongoing external support.

Marketing budget expenditure - overall and website related

Size of legal practice	Size of law firm		
	Small firms (1 - 20 lawyers)	Medium-sized firms (21 - 50 lawyers)	Larger firms (51+ lawyers)
Overall marketing budget (per annum)	Up to \$155,000	Up to \$775,000	Up to \$1.5 million (lower end) Up to \$7.5 million (higher end)
Website development budget (involving a major revamp)	Up to \$15,500	Up to \$31,000	In excess of \$46,500
Ongoing external website support budget (per annum)	Up to \$1,550	Up to \$7,750	Up to \$15,500

The size of marketing departments

Some 60% of smaller legal firms (1-20 lawyers), do not employ marketing professionals and their marketing activity is typically handled by a Senior/Managing Partner. Only when a firm reaches around 20 lawyers, is the presence of at least one full time marketing professional more common place.

Firms employing up to 50 lawyers, tend to have on their books around 3-5 marketing professionals. Once the 100 lawyer threshold is crossed, the number jumps to around 20 marketers. Some of the very largest firms can often be seen to employ more than 40 marketing specialists, headed by a Marketing Director who usually sits on the firm’s management board.

Table 2 - Number of marketing professionals, by size of firm

Number of marketing professionals employed	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
None	60%	28%	7%	0%	25%
1 – 2 professionals	24%	59%	38%	6%	26%
3 – 5 professionals	5%	10%	48%	19%	18%
6 – 10 professionals	5%	0%	0%	20%	9%
11 – 19 professionals	6%	3%	7%	17%	9%
20 or more professionals	0%	0%	0%	38%	14%

Base: all respondents (183)

Online vs. offline marketing activities

Firms are increasingly engaged in a combination of online and more traditional offline marketing activities. Overall across all participants in the survey, offline marketing currently accounts for about 62% of marketing spend, compared to approximately 38% of budget being used for online activities.

However the situation is changing and many participants in the research said that they expected to be increasing online expenditure in the future. This was for a number of reasons, the main ones being lower cost, better reach and more flexibility.

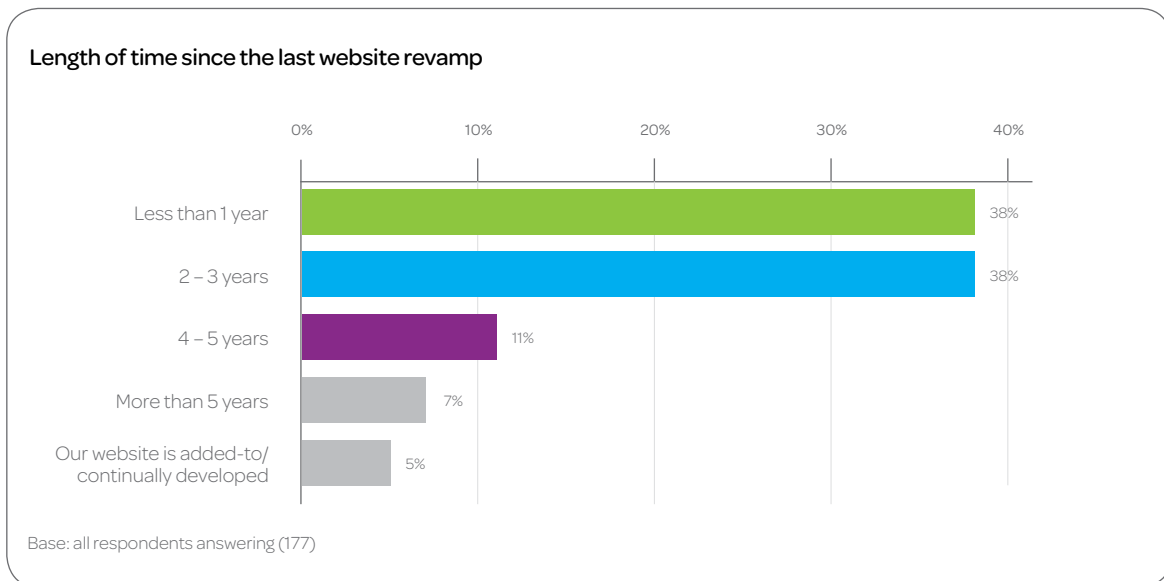
That said, the legal profession is largely a people business and face-to-face marketing activity will remain a key feature of the overall marketing mix.

Website development

The research indicated that the majority of firms considered their website the central component of their online marketing strategy.

The website was also expected to perform a number of roles including providing a window to the firm’s positioning and capabilities, outlining specialist skills of individual lawyers, providing clients with secure areas, sharing information, generating new business and so on. Some claimed better success than others on the effectiveness of achieving multiple objectives, with most saying it was effective in building brand awareness.

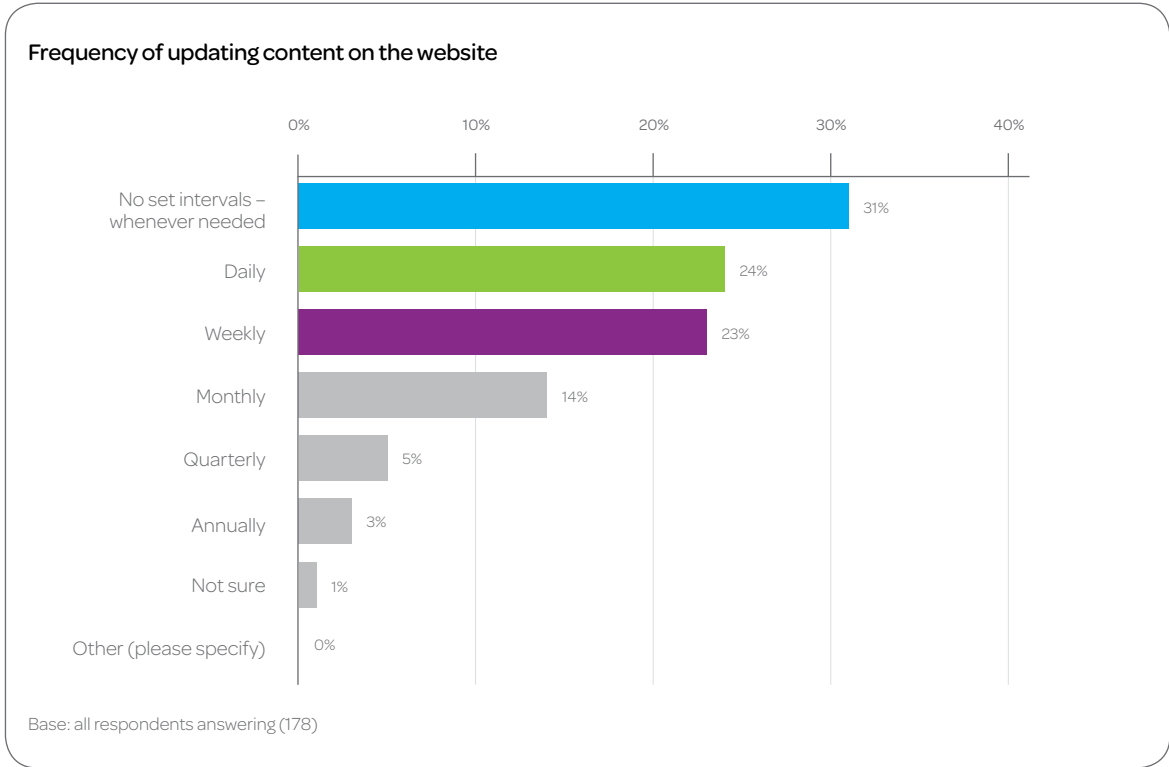
In order to keep their website relevant and up-to-date, the majority of respondent firms appear to be conducting a significant revamp of their website on a two or three year cycle. However, nearly a fifth of participants admitted that they hadn’t conducted a website revamp for at least four years.



Keeping content relevant and up-to-date is a major challenge for the majority of legal practices and most cite this as one of their most important priorities. Smaller and medium-sized firms were generally (but not always) less structured in their approach to content management, with content updates typically being less frequent and more ad hoc in nature. Larger firms appeared to take a more structured approach to content management, making more use of content calendars, with department heads required to provide updated content and commentary on a regular basis.

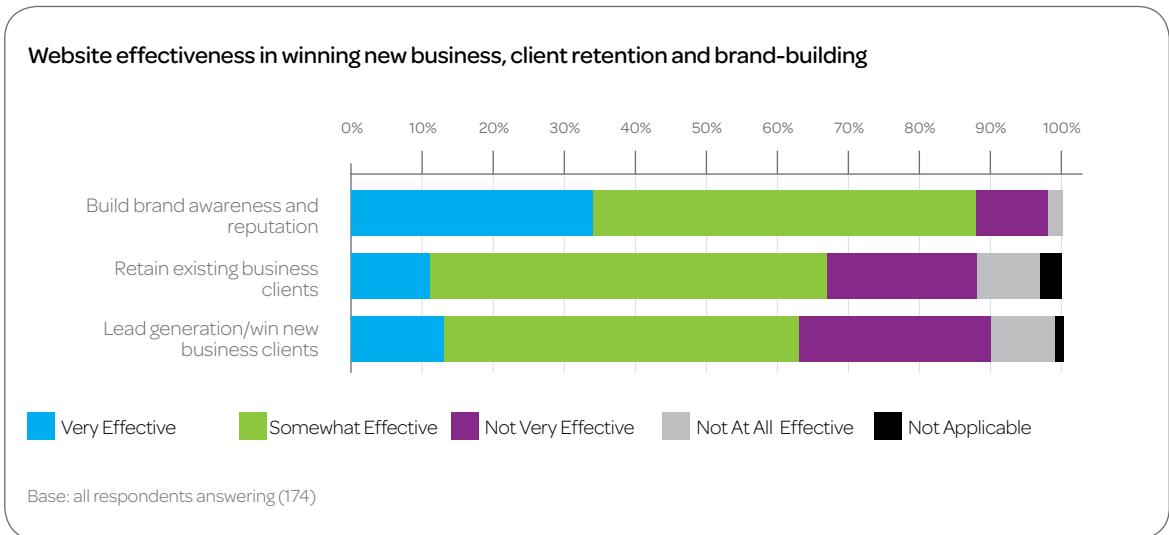
Nearly half of those participating in the survey conducted some sort of update to their website on a weekly basis, however nearly a third stated that updates did not occur at set intervals.

While most had access to free or paid-for website analytics software, few said they fully utilised this information. Most said they planned to do much more with the data in future.



Online directories/third party content providers

After website development, the next most effective method of generating leads together with Search Engine Optimization (SEO) was considered to be online directories/third party content providers, which helped to syndicate content about law firms to different audiences as well as providing those invaluable independent assessments through rankings and ratings. Many said that when it came to considering budgets that it was rarely a consideration as to whether to spend on the website or on legal directories, as they were considered equally important and very much complementary activities.



The future

Generally speaking the larger the firm, the more ambitions they had for their website. Whilst smaller firms appeared content to focus on keeping their websites up-to-date and easy to navigate, larger firms, often with considerable in-house expertise and with more funds available, frequently had ambitions to establish a more interactive experience for their clients.

This involved creating links to social media sites, electronic information sharing, setting up secure client log-in areas, being able to book seminars and register for subscriptions online, creating more video material and having sites that are more mobile friendly.

The parties

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About Purple Market Research

Purple Market Research is a strategic research and insight consultancy which helps professional services organisations better understand its customers, markets and competitors. Now in its tenth year of operation, Purple works with companies of all sizes across the world, employing the latest techniques to help support marketing, brand development and business strategy.



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