

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 | Full Report

 LexisNexis®

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MARKET RESEARCH

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Their input has enabled us to form an initial view of the approaches and extent to which corporate law firms in different regions of the world are using their website to market their expertise online. Whilst offline marketing tactics still represent the lion's share of current marketing budgets, this balance is beginning to shift as marketers begin to increasingly deploy more sophisticated technologies and statistical data to not only improve levels of engagement and win business more effectively online, but also prove return on investment to Finance Directors and members of the firm's Board.

We would also like to extend our thanks to Stephen Bairfelt, Managing Director at Purple Market Research and his team, who was our partner for this project. Purple Market Research is a leading research and insight consultancy, which specialises in customer understanding and market structure studies in professional services and the legal sector.

I hope that you'll find this report useful in helping to benchmark approaches presently taken by law firms investing in their online presence and the implications for strategic planning and allocation of tactical marketing budgets.



Derek Benton
Director of International Operations
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Introduction

The legal profession has traditionally been a people business. Lawyers typically established their reputations over many years, they developed specialist skills and endeavoured to build solid long term business relationships. This was the way to grow a legal practice in the good old days.

However times have changed. The advancement of technology, increased competition and new legislation in many parts of the world have meant that private practice legal establishments of all sizes have had to consider alternative ways to develop their businesses over time.

Generally, the legal profession has been rather slower than other industries to adopt professional marketing practices. However, marketing functions are now commonplace across the profession, with firms of all sizes either employing marketing specialists or encouraging partners to become more marketing oriented. In some larger practices, it is not unusual to come across firms employing in excess of 40 marketing professionals, many with highly specialised skills gained in parallel professional services sectors, such as financial services, as well as consumer sectors, including fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) or technology/media.

The adoption of more advanced marketing skills has inevitably led to a growth in interest in the benefits of online marketing techniques. But to what extent is online replacing or complementing more traditional approaches? How much emphasis are firms placing on their website and other online content to help drive new business? How are they measuring effectiveness and success? What are their future plans? What is the present balance currently between online and offline marketing activities and expenditure? These are some of the questions to which we wanted to find some answers.

This study was commissioned to better understand perceptions of online marketing amongst corporate (business-to-business) law firms. Specifically, it examines the following issues:

- Approach to website development and maintenance.
- Establish how firms are using websites, including tracking engagement and return.
- Understand priorities for future development and investment.

Executive summary

This study examines how corporate (business-to-business) law firms use their websites as part of their online tactical activities to develop new business and retain existing clients.

Issues covered by this study include: 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 and website effectiveness and future plans with regard to online marketing activity.

This section summarises some of the key findings of a two stage programme of research – an initial exploratory stage involving interviews with 25 firms of varying size, followed by a second stage; online quantitative survey of 184 private practice law firms from across the globe. The initial phase of research was conducted in April 2012 and the follow-on quantitative stage in July 2012.

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

Budget expenditure (U.S.\$)	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.

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 in the future. 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 certainly 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.

Methodology

The research programme was conducted in two phases. The first phase, carried out in April 2012, involved 25 exploratory interviews with international law firms of varying size, based in a wide range of geographical locations. The research involved a combination of face-to-face, telephone and online bulletin board interviews.

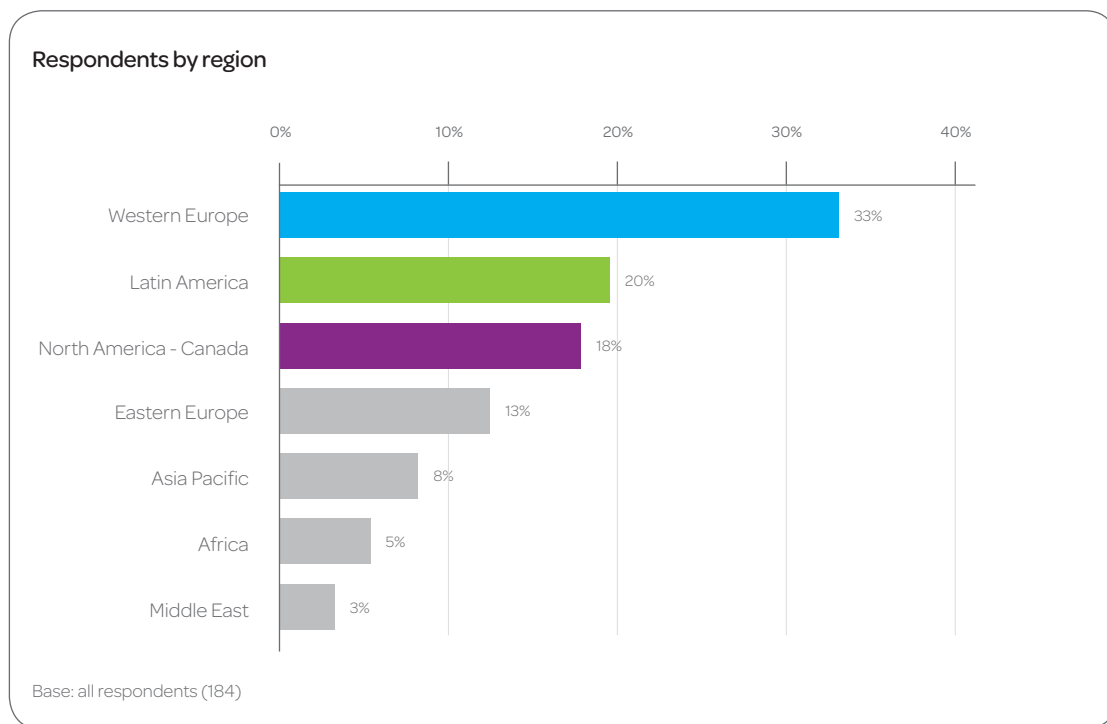
The results from the initial qualitative phase were then fed into the second phase, a confidential online quantitative survey, conducted in July 2012. This two stage process ensured that the questions asked in phase two and the issues addressed were up-to-date and relevant to international law firms. In total, 184 responses were received from the most senior person responsible for marketing in corporate (business-to-business) law firms based across the globe.

The results outlined in this report are based on the information provided in both phases of the research programme. Where given, financial figures are in U.S. Dollars (\$), unless otherwise stated.

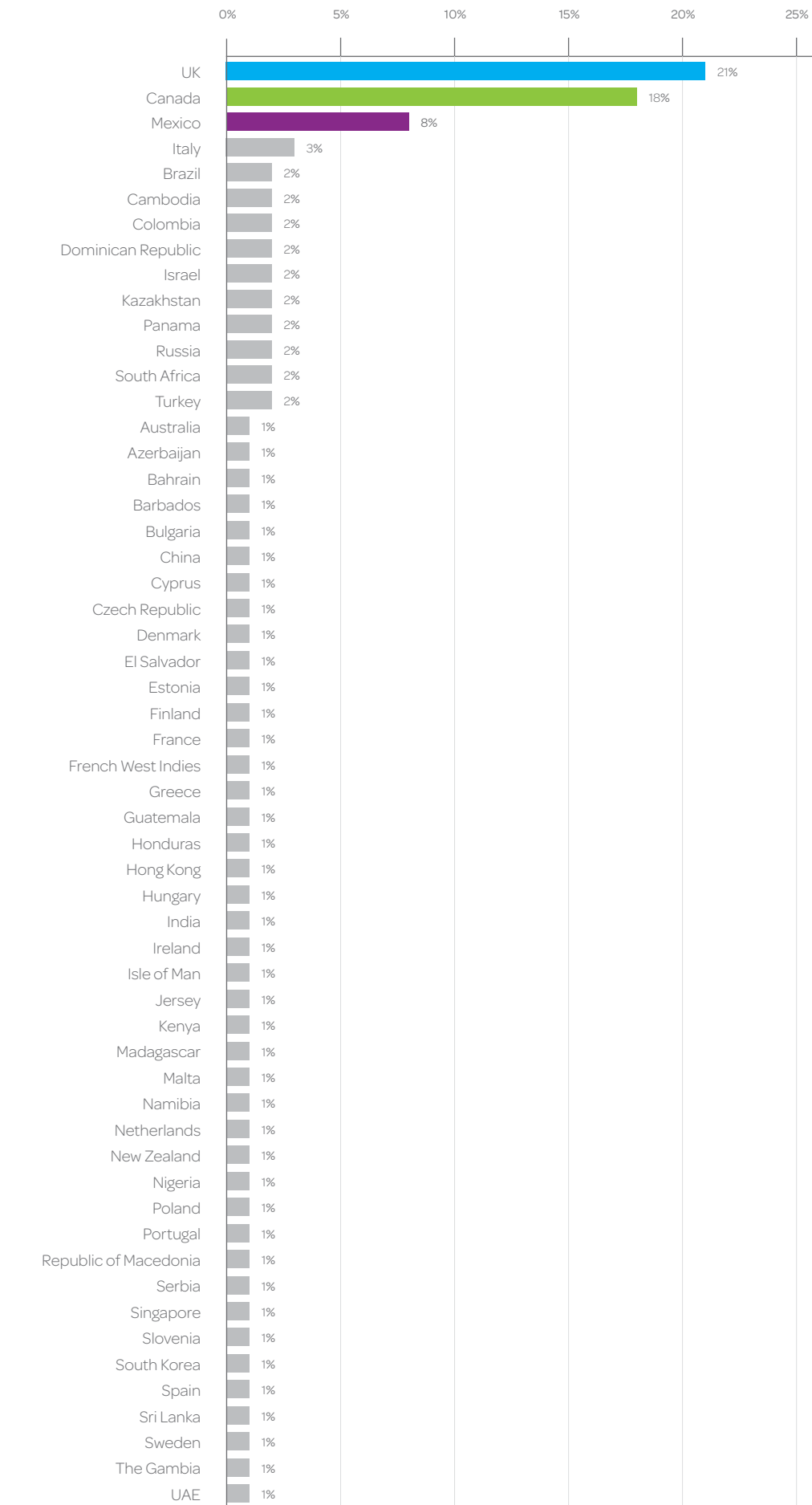
Demographics

Location of respondents

Survey participants were widely spread geographically. Nearly half (46%) were from Europe (Western Europe – 33%, Eastern Europe – 13%), a fifth (20%) from Latin America, just under a fifth from Canada (18%) and the remainder from Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East.



Countries represented by respondents, by region

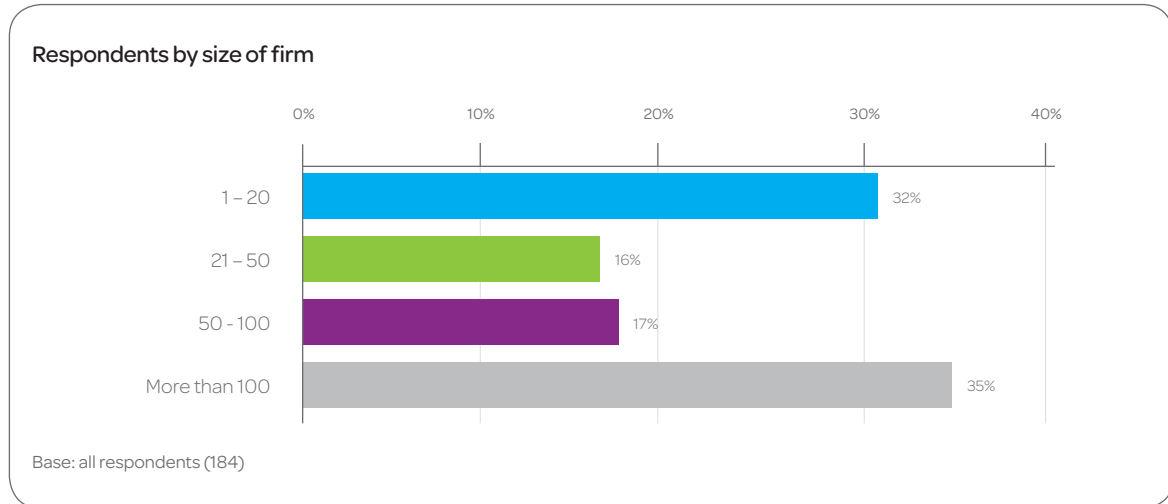


Base: all respondents (184)

Size of practice by number of lawyers (including Partners)

Table 1 shows that respondents were equally split between larger and smaller practices. Nearly half of participants worked at firms employing less than 50 lawyers, while almost an equal number (around 52%) came from practices with more than 50 lawyers. Those at firms with more than 100 lawyers represented 35% of the base.

Geographically, the larger firms in this sample mainly come from Western Europe, Canada and Asia Pacific, while responses from Eastern Europe and Latin America tend to be skewed towards smaller practices.



Respondent job titles

The initial qualitative phase indicated that smaller practices with less than 20 lawyers were unlikely to have a dedicated marketing function, those with 21 – 50 lawyers are more likely to employ one or two marketing professionals, while the larger practices are likely to have well established, sophisticated marketing operations.

The responses to the question about job title in the quantitative survey support this finding. In smaller practices, without professional marketing support, marketing activity is more likely to be handled by one of the Partners on a part time basis. Consequently the most frequently mentioned job title of participants from smaller practices was ‘Managing Partner’ or ‘Partner’.

On the other hand, in the larger practices, participant job titles such as ‘Marketing Director’ or ‘Business Development Director’ were much more common. Generally with large marketing functions, participants in the survey also more frequently had the title of ‘Marketing Manager’.

Table 1 - Respondents by role type and size of firm

Job title	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 - 20	21 - 50	51 - 100	100+	
Director of Marketing/Business Development	16%	21%	39%	46%	31%
Marketing Manager	7%	24%	19%	26%	19%
Marketing Executive/Coordinator	0%	10%	23%	11%	9%
IT Manager	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Marketing Partner	0%	7%	0%	0%	1%
Managing Partner	33%	14%	3%	0%	13%
Partner	28%	14%	13%	2%	14%
Associate/Lawyer	10%	3%	0%	0%	4%
Other (please specify)	6%	7%	3%	13%	9%

Base: all respondents (183)

Proportion of international business

While many of the participants in the survey conduct both international and domestic work, it's worth noting that just 16% stated that the majority (ie more than 70%) of their work was international in nature. In contrast, some 38% of firms confirmed that the majority of their work was domestic.

Overall, across all firms responding, the proportion of domestic work to international work was 57% compared to 43%.

Size of marketing function

Further evidence about the nature of professional marketing expertise in firms of different size is provided in response to the question about the number of full time marketing professionals employed at their firm.

As table two below shows, some 60% of firms with less than 20 lawyers, claim to have no marketing professionals employed at all. At the other end of the spectrum, those firms with more than 100 lawyers, tend to employ in excess of 20 marketing professionals (39%). As indicated in the initial exploratory phase, those in mid-sized firms tend to employ between one and five marketing professionals (firms with 21-50 lawyers: 59% have 1-2 marketing professionals, 50-100 lawyers: 49% have three to five marketing professionals).

These findings were found to be consistent across geographic regions.

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 marketing activities

In the initial exploratory phase of the research, marketing professionals interviewed explained that while the use of online marketing activities were certainly growing, a significant amount of attention (and budget) in legal firms was still placed on offline activities such as workshops, seminars, brochures, training sessions, networking events, printed advertising etc.

This finding is borne out in the wider quantitative survey, with offline marketing activities currently accounting for approximately 62% of overall marketing budgets, compared to 38% for online.

“We are aware of the importance of both online and offline marketing. Offline allows for one-to-one activities helping with loyalty, while online marketing allows us to reach a wider segment and generate visibility.”

Small law firm, Bulgaria

“Online marketing is more affordable for smaller firms like ours, has instantaneous global reach and the value is more easily identified.”

Small law firm, India

“The traditional legacy of law is offline hard copy, but competition is forcing a significant switch online.”

Mid-size law firm, UK

When asked about dedicated resource for website development, about half of those responding claimed they employed an individual to exclusively and specifically focus on this activity. This demonstrates the perceived importance of a website to legal practices with an international aspect. As table three demonstrates, this response comes from both smaller and larger practices, but this is likely to be for different reasons.

Smaller practices may focus efforts on developing/maintaining their website, because with limited resources they perceive and prioritise this as the most important marketing activity. Larger practices maintain the same focus but tend to employ website specialists within their larger marketing team. Indeed, some larger practices indicate they employ more than one individual with exclusive responsibility for website development.

Table 3 - Number of marketing professionals dedicated to website development

Number of marketing professionals dedicated to website development	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
None – we do not have a specific web development role	48%	57%	66%	31%	45%
1 professional	48%	29%	24%	38%	36%
2 professionals	4%	14%	7%	12%	10%
3 or more professionals	0%	0%	3%	19%	9%

Base: all respondents (183)

Marketing budget allocation

It was determined in the exploratory research that budgets tended to be set and approved at a Senior Partner/ Management Board level.

When asked about overall marketing budgets (covering both online and offline activities), 106 participants provided an answer to this question. Table four shows that for smaller practices (1-20 lawyers), an overall marketing budget of less than \$155,000 was most prevalent. For medium sized practices (20-50 lawyers), the size of the marketing budget crept up more towards the \$775,000 mark, while for practices of 50-100 lawyers, marketing expenditure levels up to \$1.5 million were commonplace.

For larger firms, marketing budgets were more varied, with just over a third spending up to \$1.5 million, while half of all larger firms claimed to be spending between \$1.5 million and \$7.5 million. A few larger firms said they had a marketing budget in excess of \$7.5 million.

Table 4 - Size of marketing budget, by size of firm

Size of annual marketing budget (US\$)	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
Up to \$155,000	50%	25%	10%	0%	22%
\$155,001 - \$310,000	7%	18%	10%	7%	9%
\$310,001 - \$775,000	0%	7%	24%	17%	11%
\$775,001 - \$1,549,999	2%	3%	14%	13%	8%
\$1,550,000 - \$2,945,000	4%	0%	3%	14%	7%
\$2,945,001 - \$7,595,000	2%	0%	0%	3%	2%
More than \$7,595,000	0%	4%	4%	7%	4%
Not sure	11%	11%	7%	3%	8%
Do not wish to disclose this information	24%	32%	28%	36%	30%

Base: all respondents specifying a budget (106)

For those planning to launch a new website, respondents were asked how much they are likely to be spending on this. A total of 42 responses were collected for this question.

Not surprisingly, larger firms were planning to spend considerably more than smaller firms on their websites. Table five shows that the majority of smaller practices, when considering upgrading their website were planning to spend up to \$15,500, while larger practices were budgeting for expenditure in excess of \$46,500. Many firms with between 21 and 100 lawyers were not likely to spend much more than their smaller counterparts on a website re-launch, though some seem to be prepared to budget a little higher - up to \$31,000.

Investment levels were higher in Canada and Western Europe (partly driven by the fact that respondents are skewed towards larger firms in these two regions). In contrast, investment levels appeared to be lowest amongst Eastern European firms, but this region contained a significant proportion of smaller firms amongst the respondents.

Table 5 - Investment in website re-launch, by size of firm

Approximate cost of website re-launch (US\$)	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
Up to \$15,500	53%	23%	25%	8%	24%
\$15,501 - \$31,000	7%	23%	25%	8%	13%
\$31,001 - \$46,500	0%	0%	0%	23%	10%
More than \$46,501	0%	8%	13%	42%	21%
Not sure	20%	15%	25%	8%	15%
Do not wish to disclose this information	20%	31%	12%	11%	18%

Base: all respondents considering a site re-launch and specifying a budget (42)

External support

Finally, respondents were asked whether their firm pays an external agency for ongoing website development and to indicate the cost of this support service. A total of 93 responses were collected for this question.

As expected, there was again a close correlation between size of practice and expenditure levels. Most smaller practices made use of external support and were spending up to \$1,550 per annum, with some spending a little more - up to \$7,750. Practices with between 21 and 50 lawyers were generally spending up to \$7,750 per annum. For firms employing 51-100 lawyers, the figure rose to \$15,500 per annum.

Interestingly, for larger practices while a number were spending in excess of \$15,500 per annum on external support, others were spending less. This is probably explained by the fact that with larger more sophisticated marketing support functions, some were choosing to employ website specialists and therefore felt they had less need to draw in outside expertise.

Table 6 - Cost of external website support, by size of firm

Approximate cost of external support per year (US\$)	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 - 20	21 - 50	51 - 100	100+	
Up to \$1,550	42%	14%	16%	9%	19%
\$1,551 - \$7,750	25%	36%	16%	22%	24%
\$7,751 - \$15,500	8%	7%	31%	11%	14%
More than \$15,500	4%	0%	16%	39%	19%
Not sure	4%	21%	16%	8%	11%
Do not wish to disclose this information	17%	22%	5%	11%	13%

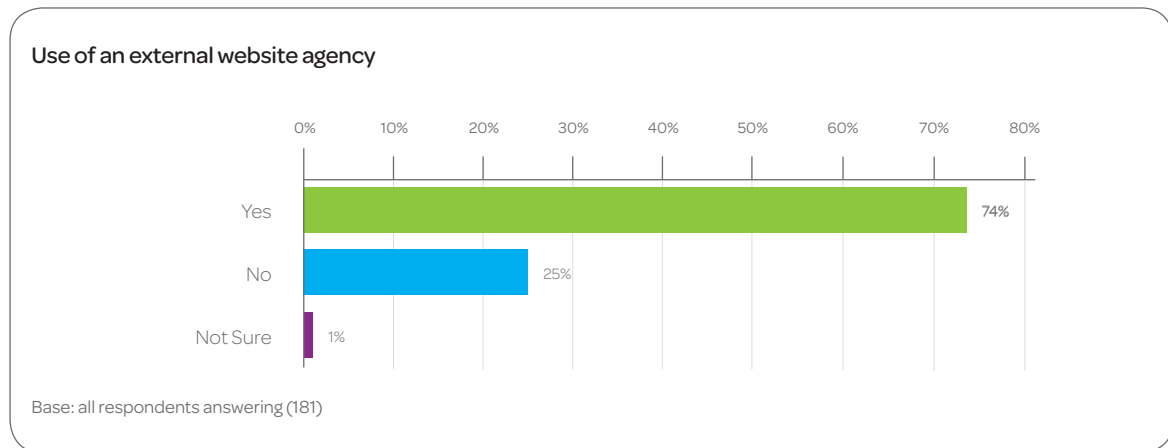
Base: all respondents using external support and specifying a budget (93)

General website development

The exploratory research demonstrated that for the majority of law firms, website development was seen as the core component of their online marketing activities and fulfilled a wide range of objectives. These include increasing awareness, building reputation/credibility, demonstrating professionalism, generating new business, sharing knowledge/legal updates, displaying case studies, etc.

Use of external website agencies

Nearly three quarters (74%) of those responding to the survey, stated that they worked with an external agency to help them develop their website. Larger firms (more than 100 lawyers) were more likely to make use of the services of an external agency for this (89%), compared to only 57% of smaller firms (less than 20 lawyers).



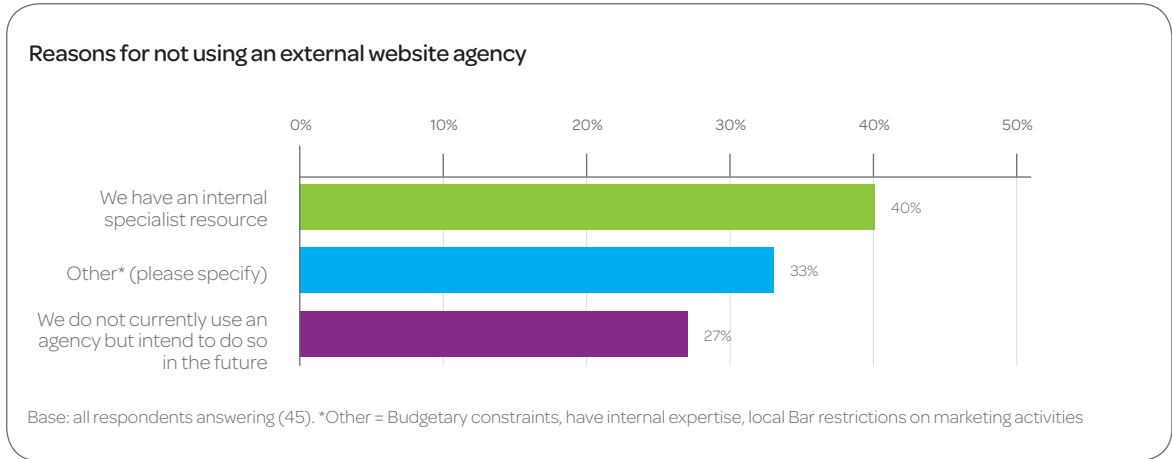
The exploratory research phase demonstrated that the role of an external agency can differ quite considerably depending on size of firm. For instance, larger practices with greater levels of internal expertise tended to use agencies in a more functional manner (i.e. to help complete specific tasks or projects). Smaller and medium-sized firms, have less available marketing resource, and tended to rely on external agencies to provide a more strategic role (i.e. advice on overall web strategy alongside developing and maintaining the website).

Table 7 - Use of an external website agency, by size of firm

Use of an external website agency	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 – 100	100+	
Yes	57%	69%	77%	89%	74%
No	43%	31%	23%	8%	25%
Not Sure	0%	0%	0%	3%	1%

Base: all respondents answering (181)

Interestingly, for those not currently using an external agency, when asked why, just over a quarter (27%) claimed they are looking to do so in the future. 40% said that they felt they already had this expertise available internally.



As table eight shows, smaller firms were more likely to require and pay for ongoing support (beyond the initial website development work), than larger practices. Some three quarters (74%) of smaller firms say they paid for ongoing support, compared to 64% of larger practices.

Table 8 - Payment to an external website agency for ongoing support, by size of firm

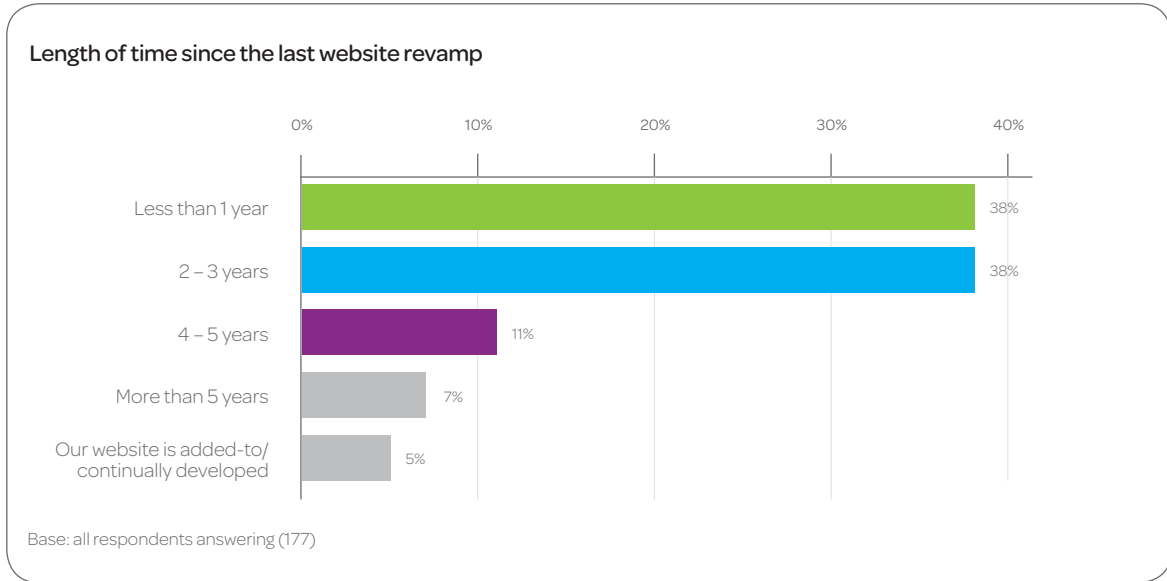
Payment to an external website agency	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 – 100	100+	
Yes	74%	70%	79%	64%	70%
No	23%	30%	21%	30%	27%
Not sure	3%	0%	0%	6%	3%

Base: all respondents using external support (134)

Frequency of website revamps

The majority of law firms surveyed appear to be conducting a significant revamp of their website on a two or three year cycle. Nearly a fifth however, admit that it takes four or more years for this to happen.

This can have significant implications with the rapid progress of technology, when firms are faced with increasing competition both domestically and internationally.



Firms based in Western Europe and Latin America appear to be better at revamping their websites more frequently, while those from Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe and Canada seem to retain sites for longer periods before undergoing full site re-designs/re-launches.

The impact of social media

Overall, just under 46% of all respondents claim that their firm has integrated social media channels into its website. Given the availability of more resource, 59% of larger firms claimed to have integrated social media channels, compared to 30% of smaller firms.

Table 9 - Integration of social media into the firm’s website

Integration of social media into website	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
Yes	30%	35%	57%	59%	46%
No	68%	62%	43%	38%	52%
Not sure	2%	3%	0%	3%	2%

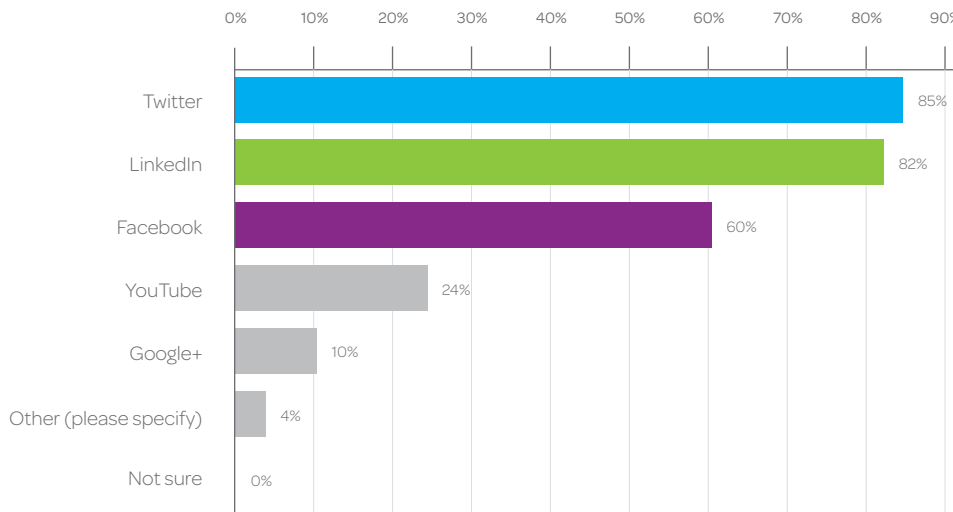
Base: all respondents answering (173)

Not surprisingly, and consistent with the previous social media research study by Martindale-Hubbell¹, Twitter (85%) and LinkedIn (82%) were quoted as the most popular social media channels to adopt by those respondents claiming to have integrated social media into their websites, with larger firms in particular seeing Twitter as having the most potential business benefits.

Facebook (60%) falls into third place for popularity and was adopted more by smaller firms. YouTube (24%) came next, but was mainly being used by larger practices that participated in this survey. Google+ (10%) was generally perceived as being a relatively new and untested tool; only a handful of law firms felt ready to integrate this network into their website.

¹“Global Social Media Check Up – A global audit of law firm engagement in social media methods”, in association with Burson-Marsteller, October 2011.

Social media networks integrated into the firm’s website



Base: all respondents integrating social media channels (78). Total exceeds 100% as more than one response could be chosen

Secure client areas

Less than a quarter (23%) of respondents currently offer secure client areas on their websites, though this facility is currently much more popular with larger practices and in response to client demand, is likely to grow in future.

In terms of the precise online services offered, a wide range of services were mentioned, that can be broadly divided into four clusters:

Table 10 - Use of secure client areas

Cluster	Types of Activities / Services Offered
Information Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client extranets • Password protected premium content • Register for free/paid-for subscription services • Discussion forums • Information portals • Micro sites • Podcasts • International guides to areas of law
Legal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online document production and purchase of legal documents/services • Facility for directing questions directly to lawyers • Facilitating 'continued legal education' • Litigation support services
Billing and Contract Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online visibility of billing • Deal rooms
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event or seminar bookings

Content Management

Keeping content up-to-date

The exploratory research phase seemed to suggest that smaller and medium-sized law firms were less structured in their approach to content management, with content updates generally being less frequent and more ad hoc.

Larger firms on the other hand, appeared to take a more structured approach, making more use of content calendars with department heads required to provide updated content and commentary on a regular basis.

However, as table 11 shows, while only a quarter of respondents currently make use of structured content calendars, the use of them appears a little more widespread across both larger and smaller firms, than the qualitative interviews in the initial phase suggested.

Further analysis reveals that those firms with at least one marketing professional employed are more likely to use content calendars.

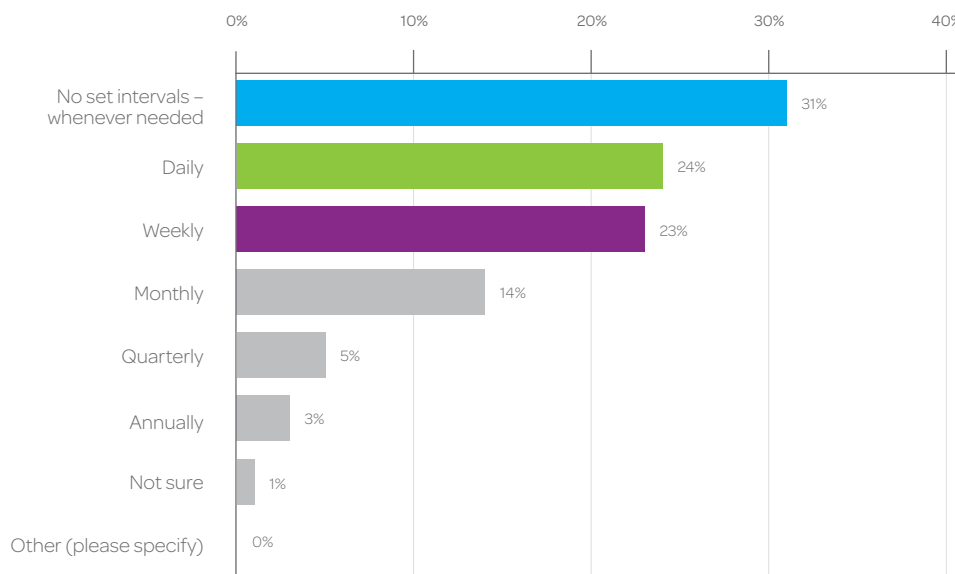
Table 11 - Use of a formal content calendar, by size of firm

Use of a formal content calendar	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 – 100	100+	
Yes	20%	34%	26%	24%	25%
No	68%	52%	68%	71%	66%
Not Sure	12%	14%	6%	5%	9%

Base: all respondents answering (178)

When questioned about how frequently their website was updated, just over a third (31%) stated that this was not conducted at set intervals, but instead on an ad hoc basis and whenever needed. For nearly half of respondents, website updating occurred at least on a weekly basis and for 24%, on a daily basis.

Frequency of updating content on the website



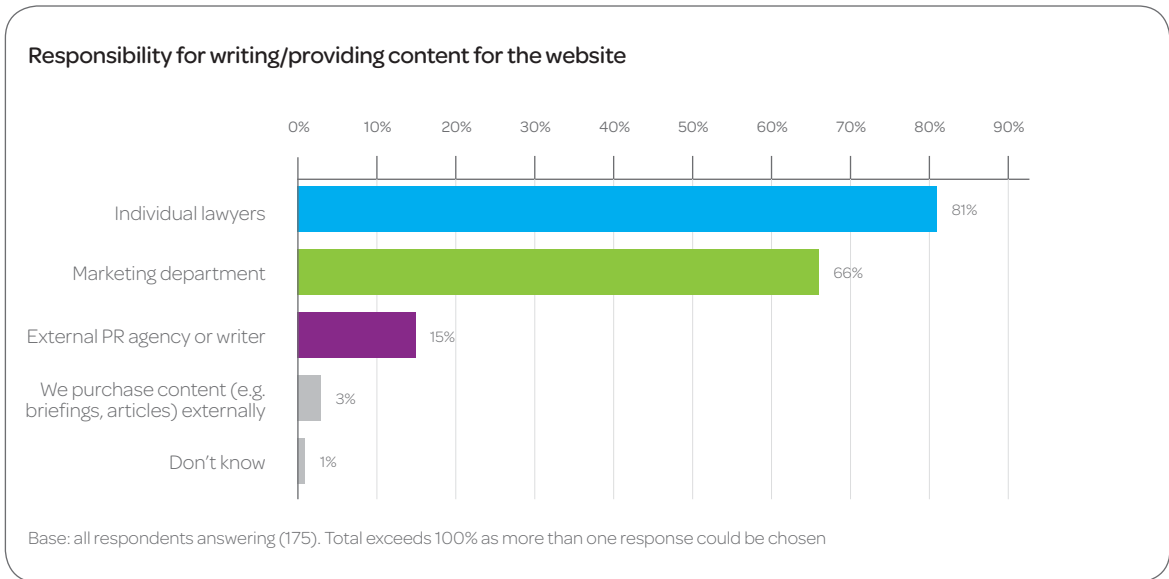
Base: all respondents answering (178)

While marketing plays a significant role in many firms in providing content for the website, it is individual lawyers who play the most prominent role here. In more than four fifths (81%) of all respondent firms, individual lawyers are charged with providing content.

In fact, when looking at this by size of firm, the marketing department seem to take more of the lead in larger firms, both to co-ordinate efforts and provide content, while in smaller firms, individual lawyers carry most responsibility for this activity.

For a small number of (generally larger) firms, an external PR agency or professional writer is used to manage content production.

Geographically, firms based in Canada and Western Europe appear to be updating content far more frequently (either daily or weekly), than firms based in Asia Pacific, Eastern Europe and Latin America, where updates are conducted more on an ad hoc basis. However, this pattern should be interpreted with caution, as respondents are skewed towards larger firms in Western Europe and Canada, which generally take a more structured approach to managing content on their website, than smaller firms in Eastern Europe and Latin America.



While it is generally the responsibility of individual lawyers and marketing to provide content for the website, it is very much the responsibility of marketing to add content to the website. This is particularly the case for larger practices. As table 12 shows, for three quarters of those included in the sample, the marketing department or website manager has responsibility for this activity.

Individual lawyers tend to get more involved in this activity in smaller firms, which either perhaps do not have a formal marketing resource and/or have access to content management software to enable them to add/edit content on their site in-house.

Table 12 - Responsibility for adding/editing content on the website

Responsibility for adding/editing website content	No. lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) across all locations				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
Marketing department or website manager	37%	79%	93%	97%	75%
Marketing Partner	17%	18%	0%	8%	11%
Individual lawyers	52%	18%	17%	15%	27%
External agency	8%	7%	3%	5%	6%
Don't know	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%

Base: all respondents answering (170). Total exceeds 100% as more than one response could be chosen.

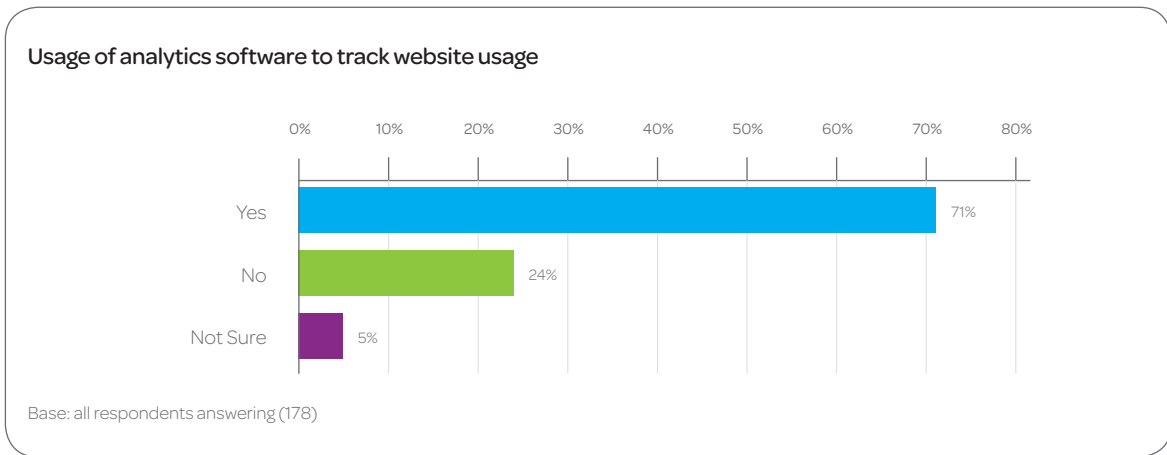
Measuring Website/Online Marketing Effectiveness

Usage of web analytics software

Findings from the exploratory research indicated that while measuring the effectiveness of online activities was generally considered important by most, in reality far more attention is currently paid to generating content.

Most had access to either paid-for or free website analytics, however few said they made full use of the information available or viewed the statistics frequently enough. Many agreed that they planned to make more use of the available data in the future.

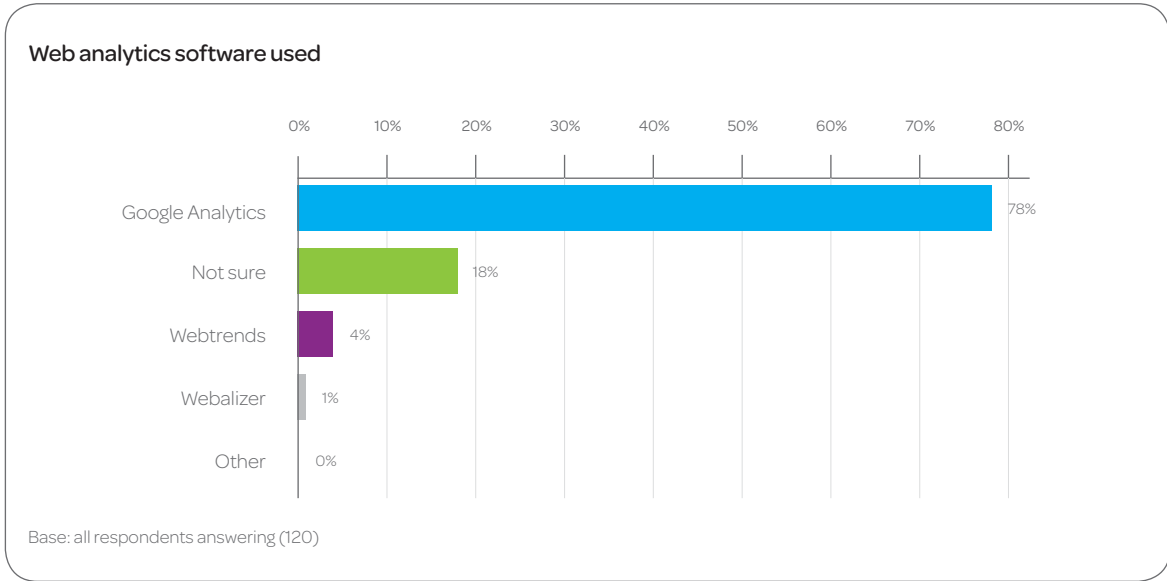
Nearly three quarters (71%) of all respondents used web analytics software to track usage of their website. Notably, respondents based in Latin American law firms were the least likely to make use of web analytics software.



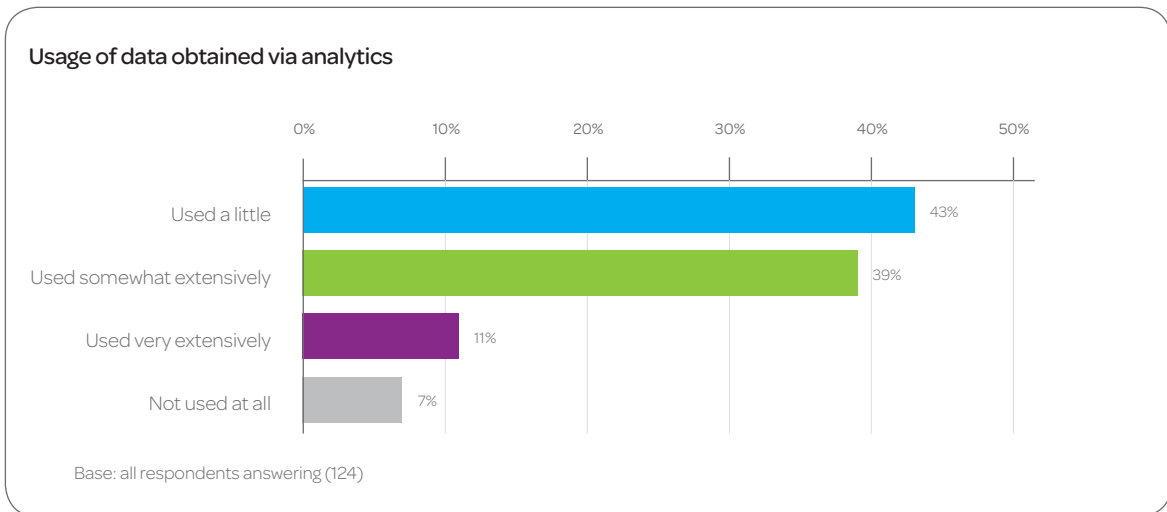
The majority (73%) made use of free website analytics facilities, with the most popular software being Google Analytics. In contrast, some 20% used paid for packages with Webtrends being the most frequently mentioned alternative. It should also be noted that some 12% said they paid for Google Analytics, despite this being a free software tool. The only circumstance where firms would be charged is when an external agency is retained to manage Google Analytics data. However, a definite conclusion cannot be drawn on this point, as it was not the focus of the question.

“It’s one thing getting the statistics and reports, but another thing acting on it. For us it’s very much a reactive process at the moment, but I believe we’ll get better at reviewing the data in the future.”

Marketing Director, large law firm, London



That said only 11% of respondents using analytics software admitted making very extensive use of the data generated. Indeed, a full 50% of respondents said they made little or no use of the data available to them, which confirms the findings from the initial exploratory phase of research. Interestingly, further analysis shows little difference in the extent of usage of web analytics data between those who had a free service and those who paid for it.



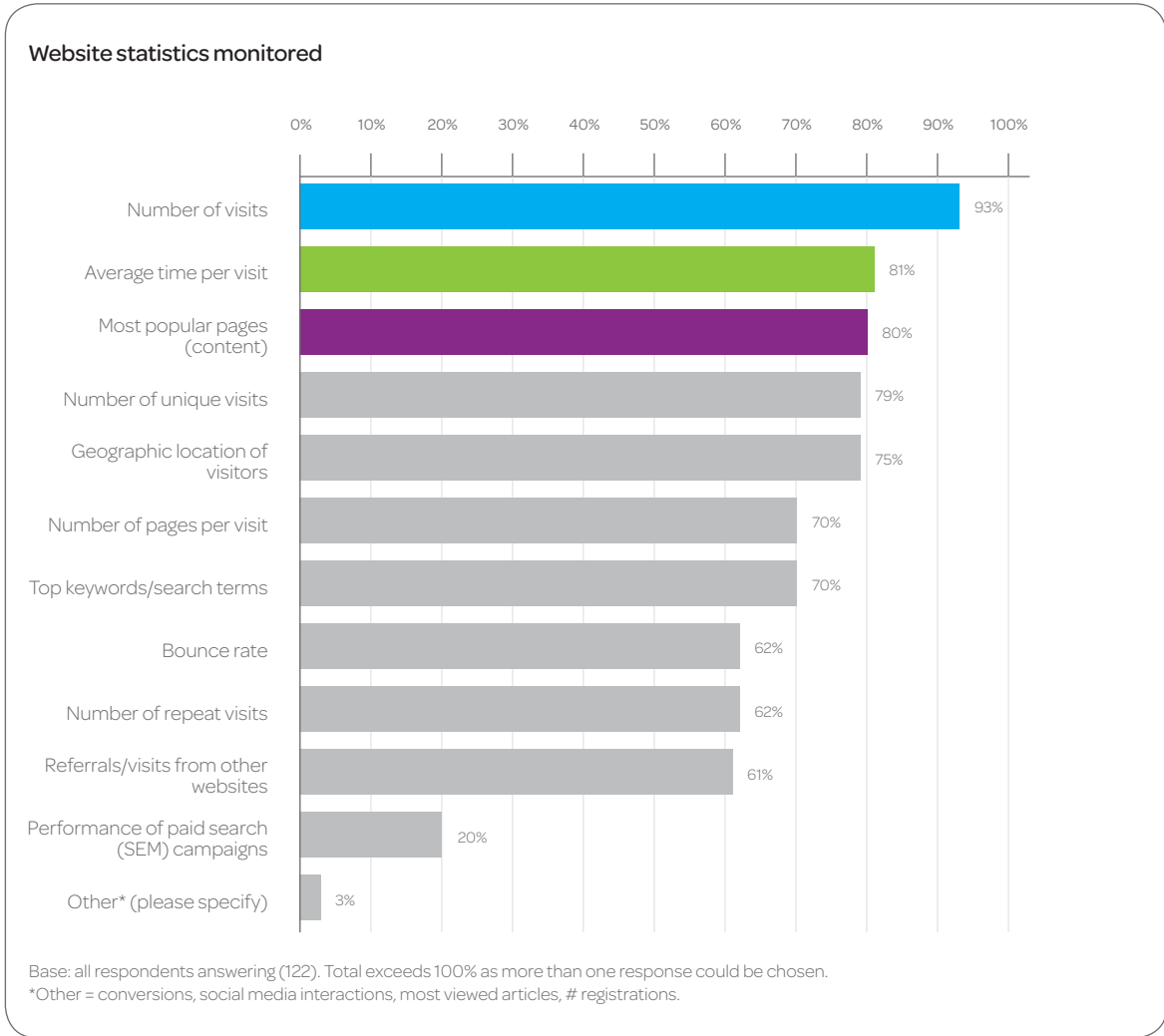
Specific web statistics monitored

The most popular statistic monitored is, 'number of visits' (monitored by 93% of respondents), followed by, 'average time per visit' (81%), 'most popular pages' (80%) and 'number of unique visits' (79%). 'Geographic location of visitors' falls into fifth place.

Interestingly, monitoring the number of visits was very popular among smaller firms (1-20 lawyers), while average time per visit was currently monitored much more frequently by larger practices (100+ lawyers).

All respondent firms in Eastern Europe and Latin America tracked, 'number of visits'. In Asia, monitoring 'number of unique visits' was very popular and in Western Europe a large number of firms closely analysed the 'most popular pages'.

Tracking performance of paid search (SEM) campaigns was very low, with just 20% conducting and monitoring this activity.



Most popular content

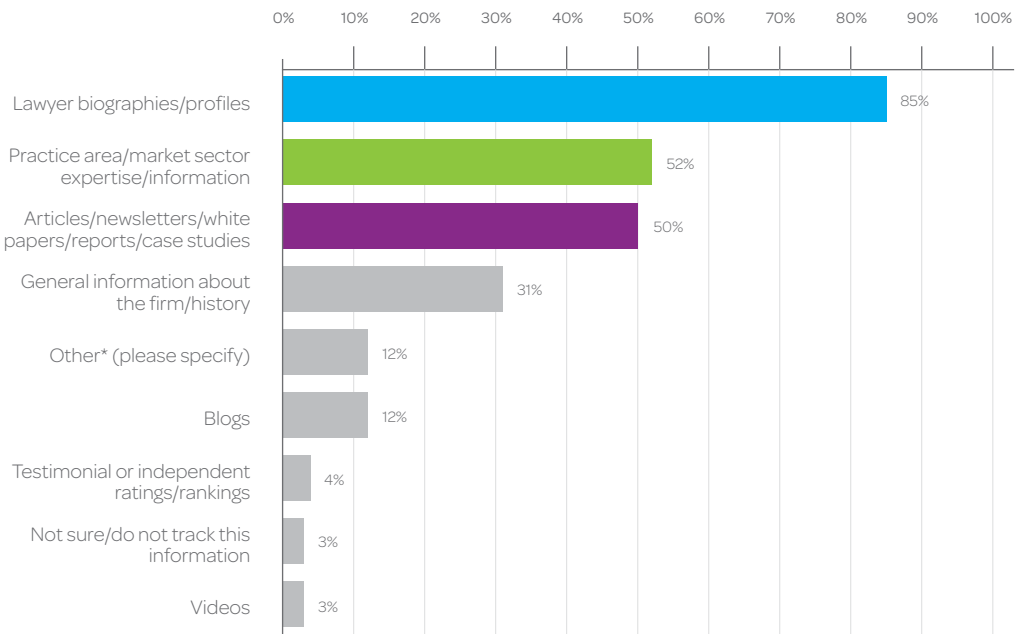
Most firms seemed to have a good idea as to the most popular content on their website, whether or not they were formally monitoring this.

By far the most popular content on firm websites is lawyer biographies/profiles, given by 85% of all respondents. This was particularly the case amongst respondent firms in Asia Pacific, Canada and Western Europe.

Some way behind was practice area/market sector expertise/information (52%) and articles/newsletters/white papers/reports and case studies (50%). Interestingly, general information about the firm (31%) was felt to be relatively less popular overall.

Blogs and video content are less commonly used by law firms, so it's not altogether surprising they fall further down the popularity list, though blogs (12%) seem to be increasing in importance, particularly for larger firms.

Most popular website content



Base: all respondents answering (174). Total exceeds 100% as more than one response could be chosen.
 *Other = Careers/graduate recruitment, contact us/office locations, microsites.

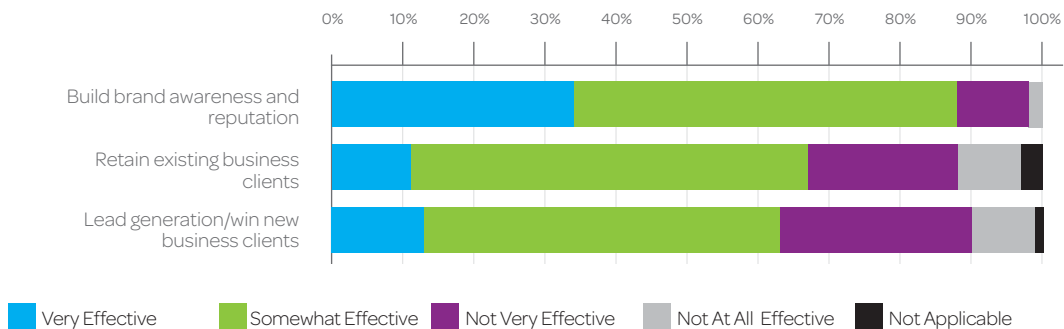
Effectiveness of website in lead generation, client retention and brand building

Respondents were asked overall how effective they felt their firm’s website was in generating leads, retaining existing business and building brand awareness.

First and foremost, respondents had most confidence that their website worked most effectively in building brand awareness (87%), with 34% believing that their website was ‘very effective’ in this regard. A significant proportion of firms in Eastern Europe felt this was the case.

More than a third (36%) felt that their website failed to support them in winning of new business, though it is interesting to note that this view was more prevalent amongst smaller practices and those respondent firms that had not revamped their website for more than three years. Despite this, some 63% felt that their website did have success in generating inbound marketing leads. 66% considered their site played an effective role in helping to retain business from existing clients.

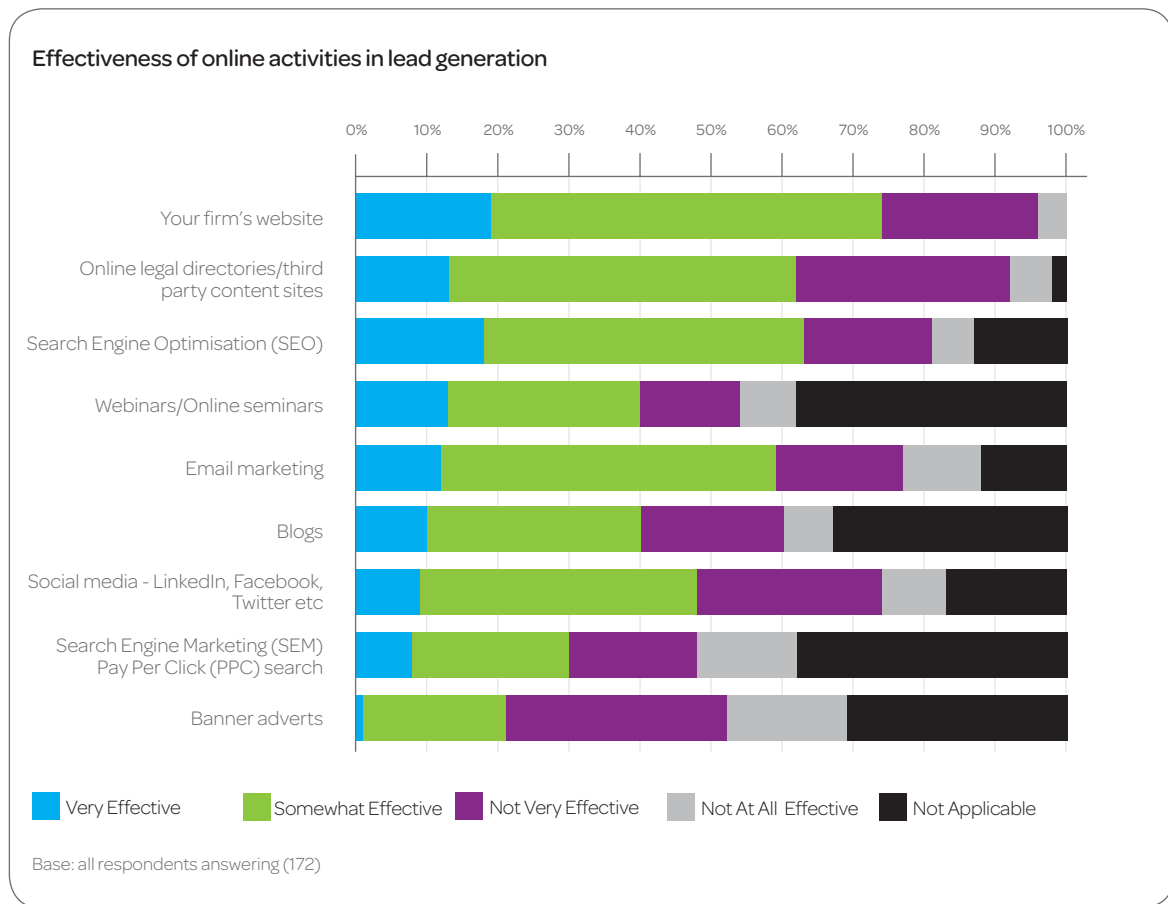
Website effectiveness in winning new business, client retention and brand-building



Base: all respondents answering (174)

Overall effectiveness of online tactics in generating leads

Reflecting on the past year, three quarters of all respondents (74%) felt an online presence, through the firm’s website was the most effective tactic to generate new leads. Some 19% felt the website was ‘very’ effective in this role.



In the initial phase of the research, when asked about the role of online legal directories/third party content sites in support of lead generation and brand building efforts, participants considered adding content on such sites played a highly valuable, complementary role to their own website. The quantitative survey generally supports this finding. Amongst all respondents, the use of legal directories/third party content sites were considered, after the firm’s website, to be the next most effective online tactic for lead generation and brand building alongside search engine optimization (SEO) efforts - 61% and 62% respectively.

“Our website is what we say about ourselves. However, legal directories provide those independent assessments which give potential clients confidence in you.”
 Marketing Manager, medium-sized law firm

In the last year, some also claimed a degree of success with email marketing to generate new business (59% considered this to be ‘very’ or ‘somewhat effective’), whilst around half (48%) highlighted the emerging value of social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook etc.).

Activities that are presently perceived to be less effective (i.e. ‘not very’ or ‘not at all effective’), or have yet to be used by respondent firms were banner advertising (49%), paid search; SEM (31%), blogs (27% - though they were more popular among firms in Western Europe and Canada) and webinars/online seminars (22%).

Future developments

Likely website enhancements

In the exploratory research when asked about future plans for their website, marketers from smaller and medium-sized practices mentioned keeping content up-to-date and relevant and ensuring that the site was relatively easy to navigate as their primary focus.

Larger practices tended to express somewhat more ambitious goals, stating they wanted to establish a more interactive experience for their current and potential clients through their website, create links to social media sites, set up secure client log-in areas, develop more video material and become more mobile friendly.

The quantitative survey supports the views from the initial findings. In response to the question asking for the most important development priorities for their website in the next 12-18 months, 89% of smaller firms said 'keeping content relevant and up-to-date' was a priority for them, compared to 77% of larger firms saying the same. In addition, some 69% of smaller firms said, 'having a well-designed and easy to navigate site' was important to them, with 55% of larger firms saying the same.

On the other hand, a significant 40% of larger firms claimed they would be optimising content via an SEO program with just 19% of smaller practices also saying this was a priority. Some 38% of larger firms stated they planned to develop a mobile friendly website, compared with 17% of smaller practices that had this in mind. Larger firms also seemed more determined to offer better integration between the website and email/CRM systems (35%), more video/webinar content on their website (23%), personalising content displayed to different visitors (via cookies – 17%) and secure client logins (15%).

Short-term priorities for website development (12 - 18 months)

Answer Options	How many lawyers/solicitors (including Partners) does your firm have across all locations?				Overall Response %
	1 – 20	21 – 50	51 - 100	100+	
Keeping content relevant and up-to-date	89%	96%	79%	77%	84%
Optimizing content via SEO program	19%	43%	38%	40%	34%
Having a well-designed and easy to navigate site	69%	61%	48%	55%	59%
Integrating social media channels	28%	29%	38%	35%	32%
Developing a mobile friendly website	17%	18%	17%	38%	25%
Adding secure client logins	6%	11%	14%	15%	11%
Adding more video/webinar content	11%	14%	31%	23%	19%
Achieving better integration between website and email, CRM/practice management system etc.	21%	18%	24%	35%	26%
Personalizing content displayed to different visitors (via cookies)	6%	0%	0%	17%	8%
Other (please specify)	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%

Base: all respondents answering (170)

Summary and conclusions

In commissioning this research the key objective was to better understand perceptions of online marketing amongst law firms targeting corporate clients (business-to-business) across the world, and specifically the role of the firm's website to support lead generation and brand building objectives.

Initial feedback from 25 marketing professionals working in different firms across the globe, followed by a further 184 marketers in the second stage of research, has helped to uncover more details on the current use and perceptions of a firm's website.

Online marketing activity is growing

Unsurprisingly, this research reveals that for some firms, offline marketing tactics still account for a higher proportion of the marketing budget compared to online activities. However, the balance is certainly changing as firms recognise that they can widen their reach with online and measure the effectiveness of specific activities more easily.

There will inevitably be a blend of both online and offline marketing activity within the marketing mix for law firms, as competition intensifies, budgets become tighter and the need to produce evidence of ROI more prevalent.

The website is seen as a key resource

Firms of all sizes emphasised the importance of investing in their website to support key strategic objectives to increase awareness of their brand, communicate the skills and capabilities of lawyers to help build credibility/reputation and generate new business.

Most firms currently focus on adding new content to their website, with secondary consideration being given to other tactics to help improve the visibility of their web pages, such as optimisation for specific keywords/phrases (SEO) or paid search (SEM). This is partly because lawyers usually write the content for their website and may be reluctant to adjust it to accommodate search effectiveness. It may also reflect a knowledge and skills gap amongst the surveyed firms about how optimisation works and the benefits it can bring.

Firms of all sizes seek external support

This research reveals that the majority of small and mid-sized firms seek some sort of external support for their online activities, while the position is more mixed for larger practices. For smaller firms, often with very limited marketing resource, external support is frequently needed to help develop, maintain and host the firm's website. Medium sized practices also generally need this support.

For larger practices however, some choose to allocate large sums of their discretionary marketing budget on external support for their website, while others prefer to invest in a full-time, salaried position and have specialist support available in-house. The latter may for instance employ a website expert, who is responsible for overall design and navigation, content editing and optimization, integrating content from social media channels, specifying and delivering specific development projects and tracking and reporting statistics etc.

Few currently monitor effectiveness, whilst accurate and up-to-date content is a priority

Very few firms, including larger practices with substantial internal resource, claim to make extensive use of website analytics. Most recognize that they should look at the data more and many state that they will do so in the future, but current efforts are more focussed on the overall design of their website and adding current content.

Many firms surveyed make website statistics available to senior management in the form of summary reports, but there is little evidence of the data and resulting insights being discussed extensively at management board level or used to inform decision making processes.

Keeping website content up-to-date and accurate is a key challenge for firms of all sizes, but especially smaller firms that generally have fewer resources available internally to generate content.

Whilst content updating is also important for larger firms, many have also implemented or plan significant enhancements to their websites, including more sophisticated use of online marketing techniques. These include improved information sharing through secure client areas or portals, video content and links to social media networks. Many also recognise the trend towards mobile communications and a number have or plan to launch mobile friendly versions of their websites.

Conclusions

The legal profession is undoubtedly a more competitive landscape, with new market entrants and technology already driving major changes in the acquisition of new business and approaches to client retention.

Face-to-face contact and traditional offline methods will always be part of the marketing mix for law firms, but most recognise the growing importance and benefits of using online marketing to help achieve new business goals.

Use of relevant content on law firm websites and other online destinations will not only help to produce leads more cost-effectively, insights gained from data will enable marketers to adapt specific campaigns and test new approaches more quickly to achieve the best possible return on investment and prove the overall value that marketing and business development programmes can deliver to achieve fee income targets.

Case study: Foga Daley, Jamaica



Nicole Foga, Managing Partner

Foga Daley is a small law practice based in Kingston, Jamaica specialising in Intellectual Property and Communications Law (including cyber law). It has 13 fee earners (two Partners, three Consultants, three Associates, three Paralegals and two legal assistants). Approximately three quarters of its business is international in nature.

Established in 2000, by founding Partners Nicole Foga and Dianne Daley the firm claims to be the first boutique Intellectual Property and Telecommunications law firm in Jamaica and the Caribbean. No marketing professionals are presently employed and Nicole handles most marketing activities the firm undertakes. The firm subscribes to *martindale.com*[®].

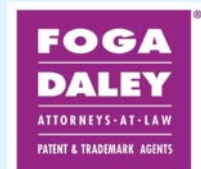
Having considerable knowledge of communications technology, Foga Daley makes extensive use of online marketing techniques, both to deliver services to its clients as well as market the firm. They expect this activity to increase in the future. Nicole commented: "Online marketing activity is more affordable for smaller practices like ours and it enables us to achieve a far greater global reach than would otherwise be possible".

The firm's website is of primary importance, predominantly serving as a new business generation and reputation management tool. It is used to provide an insight into the firm's culture and to communicate their professionalism and expertise in their specific areas of law.

They also appear far more active in measuring the effectiveness of their website and other online activities than other firms of a similar size. They presently use Webalizer (free software package) to frequently monitor and track the number of visitors, most popular content/pages, other websites that refer traffic, geographic location of visitors and search terms used.

They do not undertake paid search campaigns (SEM) to help drive traffic, but use data from Webalizer to help optimise content on their website. Pages containing biographies of Partners and the firm's specialist practice areas are presently the most frequently visited.

Adding information on selected online legal directories plays a very important role in Foga Daley's online strategy, which they consider an important activity alongside developing their own website. They report that content about Foga Daley, on third party online directories is often the first contact that new clients have with the firm. Furthermore, they receive feedback from clients that they value independent and credible information sources in relation to ratings, practice areas and quality of service.



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Lawyer to Lawyer Referrals a Canadian Perspective
2012 Research Study



The Selection and Retention of Law Firms in Western Europe
2012 Research Study



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