

10½ ways to ensure your content delivers a return on your investment

Tenandahalf top tips: June 2015

The following tips are designed to help you make sure you use the content (articles, blogs, newsletters, newsfeeds etc.) open to you in a way that will deliver the highest return on your investment.

This guide's been specifically written for us by Joe Reevy.

Joe is the managing director of www.legalrss.co.uk and www.words4business.com, specialists that deliver a variety marketing content and a class-leading marketing automation system to law firms.

1. Know what your content is for

What is the purpose of the material? We think all content published by professional service firms has one or all of three purposes:

- to produce enquiries from potentially profitable clients
- to save time and costs in your firm
- or - admittedly more rarely - to reduce the poor quality enquiries that waste your fee earners' time

Content that doesn't do one of these is a cost.

2. Know who your content is for

The first 'must do' with content is to know the audience it is targeting.

This should be the target(s) you have identified ... potentially profitable clients and, in the large majority of cases, targets who are probably local to you. (Google have told us that 86% of searches for professional services in the UK carry the name of the place in the search).

3. Avoid complexity

If you can't explain what something is about in 20 words, forget it. Your readers won't understand it.

I hate to tell you but your firm doesn't have world-beating knowledge. Even if it did, you'll never get that across in print. A lot of law isn't actually complex and, what is, will not be very interesting to the layman.

Concentrate on what can be explained, understood and has a message for the reader. We call a lot of what we do 'modern morality tales': the mistakes people make and could have avoided if only they had taken the right advice...

4. Get the language right

Whatever market you are targeting, show you understand their language by writing in it.

Every industry has its own language (and issues). Read the trade press and familiarise yourself before you start punching the keyboard. If you want to attract hauliers for example, read Roadway, it'll help you understand their issues and argot.

5. Keep the production cost down

Content isn't very valuable on an item-by-item basis so incurring large costs on content is unlikely ever to pay off.

I see firms paying £3,000 plus a month for material. I think they are crazy. Great content costs a bundle to produce, but shouldn't cost a bundle to buy and tweak if necessary.

6. Always write for the medium

Writing an article for the web? Stick to 200-400 words.

Writing a blog? 500-800.

Writing an 'on the page'? 300-500 words

Writing a feature? Up to 2,000 words.

And always, always tailor your length and style to the medium.

7. Be timely

There is no point at all in being the fifth firm to supply someone with your views on a 'big story' case. Similarly there's no point at all in having out of date copy.

The morning I wrote this I see a firm's news page dealing with legal aspects of some of the Labour manifesto proposals... the election was almost a month ago!

8. Editors

Never ever publish content that hasn't been edited by someone else ... and the problem is that good editors are as rare as hen's teeth.

Our minimum standard for an editor is:

- 3 good language 'A' levels
- a good degree in English from a Russell Group university
- appropriate professional experience
- a 'plus'

What is a 'plus'? One of editors does the Times crossword before starting work every day and has an MA in Classics.

Another is a Scrabble fanatic and member of Mensa. I mention this because a good editor has a real passion for language plus a very high level of technical expertise: it is a rare combination.

Stylistic consistency is also important. It doesn't seem much of an issue until you see adjacent content with clashing styles or grammatical conventions.

9. Keep content management and distribution costs down

Managing content can take a huge amount of time if you aren't careful. It needn't.

Using social networking automation tools like Buffer or Hootsuite, marketing automation tools like Autopilot (a great LinkedIn marketing tool) and email packages like ConstantContact or FusionExpress mean that a process that might take hours can take minutes.

I can't resist mentioning here that we have integrated some of these in the LegalRSS.co.uk offering, making e-newsletter production, in particular astonishingly fast (quicker than writing this paragraph!).

If you manage web content, newsletters, e-newsletters, mobiles, and social networking as separate processes, or pay others to do this for you, there are very substantial time savings to be made. I find it hard to believe that I still meet firms who don't post their own web content in-house or do, and then have to cut and past it into some freebie mail engine to send e-newsletters. The tech is there. The tech is cheap!

Don't overanalyse your data. Easy to do and costs a bundle. Content marketing is a longer term strategy: obsession with metrics forces a short-termist approach.

Far better to make sure the costs are really low, so that you don't feel compelled to spend another big wedge looking at data collected over too short a period to be of real use.

10. Repetition and sharing

Good content can often be used several times. Most firms don't.

Systems like Buffer will show you which items have proved most popular; they're the ones to recycle. This is important because there's so much content out there now, that (especially with Twitter), it will be within the recipient's attention span for a very short period.

A more effective way is the sharing of content with other valued brands who have access to your targets. This is too long an issue to take up here, but it really works.

10½ Don't Make a Promise You Don't Keep

If you promise 'legal news' etc on your website and the latest bit of material is from 3 months ago you are making a promise in public that you aren't keeping.

Is that really the impression you want to give?

How likely do you think it is that someone will call you if that's what they see? No one forces you to promise legal news: it is much better to not make the promise in the first place than to make it and not deliver.

Joe Reevy is the managing director of www.legalrss.co.uk & www.words4business.com. If you have any questions regarding content marketing please contact Joe on 01392 423607 or joe@words4business.com.



www.tenandahalf.co.uk
info@tenandahalf.co.uk