

Legal Marketing Survey: 82 Percent of Business and Transactional Firms get Cases from the Web

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Law firm Web sites are the single most effective marketing tool employed by corporate, transactional and defense firms, according to our latest national survey, and a growing number of firms also are employing formalized search engine marketing to obtain case inquiries from the Internet.

For the past 20 years, our bi-annual national survey of business and defense firms, along with every other survey we have ever reviewed, has ranked seminars and presentations/speeches as the most effective business development tactic a law firm could employ.

However, the results of our recently-compiled 2006 survey reveal that 82 percent of the 119 responding firms had "received work directly or by referral during the past 24 months" from their Web site. That's up from 51 percent of firms in 2004 -- a huge leap reflecting the power and pervasiveness of the Internet on traditional legal services purchase patterns. No firm reported using search engine marketing techniques in our 2004 survey, but 20 percent said they did in 2006.

Follow-up calls to firms about the change confirmed that most all of the 20 percent of responding firms who had employed formal search engine marketing techniques -- key phrase optimization, geotargeting and click-through campaigns -- had received a steady flow of case inquiries. Search engine marketing raises a firm's ranking on Google, Yahoo and MSN, which dominate the online research world. These techniques are well-known and widely-accepted in the contingent fee world, but are used much less commonly by hourly fee-based practices. All participating firms filled out detailed questionnaires concerning their marketing efforts and expenses. The questionnaires were developed with input from a panel of law firm marketing directors and legal administrators. Returns were received from December to January. The survey is conducted every other year by our firm. In off years, we survey the marketing done by contingent fee practices.

Seminars and presentations slipped to second on the list of most effective marketing tactics. Fifty-five percent of firms reported receiving work directly or by referral from those efforts, which is down from 77 percent in 2004.

Trade and community group participation came in third with 47 percent of firms, the same as in 2004, reporting they obtained work that way.