

The Anti-SEO Report

Why Search Engines Are Overrated, and What to Do Instead

What if I told you that you didn't need to spend money on Search Engine Optimization (SEO) in order to grow your law firm?

What if I told you that search engines like Google aren't the best source of new clients for your law firm?

What if I told you that I personally know dozens of lawyers who have taken their solo/small firms past the million-dollar mark - without spending a penny on SEO?

It's true.

SEO isn't a necessary part of your law firm marketing strategy. You can win clients without even worrying about your ranking on Google.

In fact, focusing too much of your marketing strategy on SEO can actually hurt your firm and slow your growth.

This is probably surprising to you. And I don't blame you - the fact is, most of the legal marketing world is completely focused on SEO.

If you attend the average legal marketing conference, it seems like 80% of the content is focused on search engines. Not to mention, if you're like most lawyers you probably get dozens of spam-emails every week promoting "guaranteed" SEO services.

SEO is all that anyone wants to talk about in the legal-marketing world!

There's a better way to grow your law firm. And in this report, I'll show you what it is - and how to begin.

Part One of this report breaks down the myths, misconceptions, and problems that arise when you focus your marketing too heavily on SEO. And in Part Two, we'll talk about what to do instead.



Part One: What the SEO Company Won't Tell You

— 1 —

No, You Don't "Have to" Care About Search Engines

There's a narrative, which is unfortunately widely accepted, that you have no choice but to spend money on SEO if you want to grow your law firm. That it's automatic, that it's required, that you'd be crazy not to spend money on search engine marketing.

Have you ever noticed that it's the SEO providers themselves who are pushing this message? That the very people who profit from selling SEO are the ones telling you that it's non-negotiable?



SEO companies would have you believe that SEO is a necessity for success, and must be a top priority.

SEO is a marketing option.

That's it. An option. It's one way, among many, many ways, for you to get new clients and grow your law firm.

It's not the only way.

It's not required.

It's not the best way!

Consider this scenario. Let's say you've created a physical flyer promoting your law firm. It's a very nice flyer and you want a lot of people to see it. (A flyer may or may not be an effective marketing strategy, but this example serves as an analogy.)

So, how are you going to make sure that people see it? You have a lot of options!

You could send someone down onto a street-corner to pass out the flyers. Or you could mail them out. Or you could put them on windshields. Or you could put stacks of them in local coffee shops.

What's the best approach? That depends on a whole bunch of factors - like your marketing budget, the type of client you want to attract, what your competitors are doing, and more.

The point is, you have options, and you get to make the decision.

In this analogy, the flyer represents your website. You've got a website, and it looks nice, and you want people to visit your website.

You could choose the SEO route - just like you could choose to send someone walking through the street handing out flyers. And that might work for you. But it's not the only option, and you shouldn't listen to anyone who presents it to you as the only option.

You have options, and you need to make the best strategic decision for your law firm. And you should be very skeptical of people who are directly profiting from selling the myth that you "have to" invest in SEO.

— 2 —

Competing for Search Engine Placement is an Uphill Battle

Let's continue with our analogy. Imagine if, when you sent someone out on the street to pass out your flyers, you found out that the street was packed with a hundred other people passing out flyers too.

Pretty quickly, you'd look for another strategy - right?

That's what's happening on Google.

If you do a search for "Family Lawyers in Charlotte NC," you'll get 3,550,000 results. Now obviously there aren't 3.5 million lawyers in Charlotte, but there are 3.5 million web pages competing for that search phrase. Here's a few more examples:

Search	Results
Criminal Lawyers Minneapolis	7,820,000
Bankruptcy Lawyer Los Angeles	15,500,000
Business Lawyer Miami	59,300,000

Even a smaller town like Topeka, Kansas, returns 268,000 results when you search for "Immigration Lawyer." And there are only 126,000 people in Topeka!

Here's the problem: SEO is a zero-sum game. There is only one position at the top of Google for any one search term.

That means, if you want to take over that top spot, the only way you can do so is by taking it away from someone else.

Just think about how many lawyers do what you do, in your city. There may be hundreds - but even if it's only a few dozen, you're all competing for the same space on Google, and only one person can win the race.

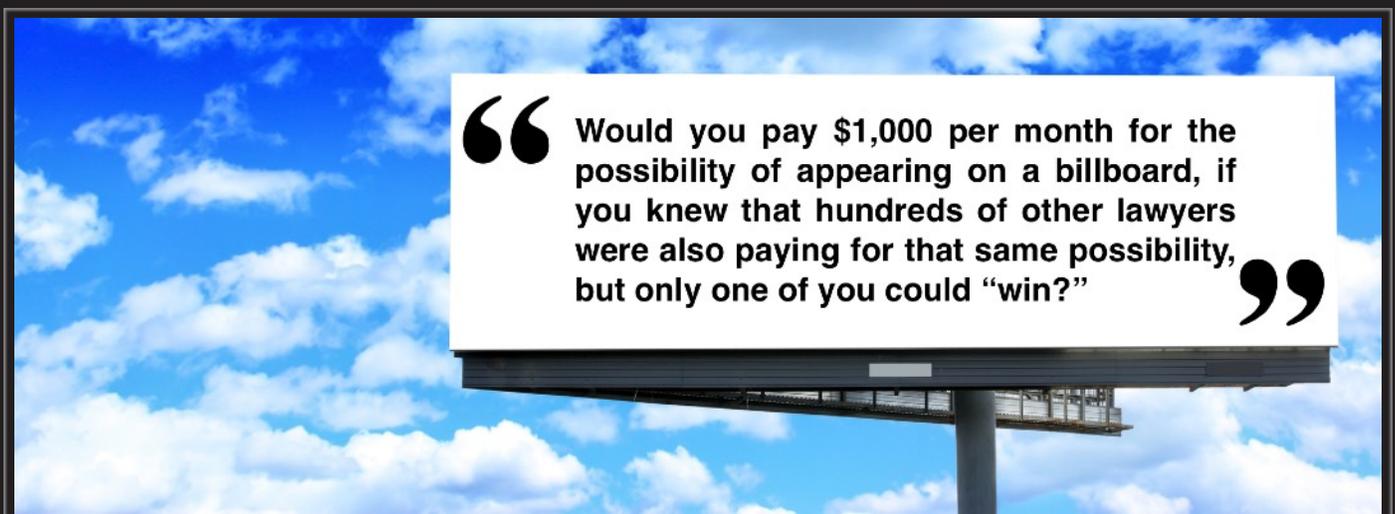
It just doesn't make sense.

Why would you spend thousands of dollars on something that most-likely won't even work out for you? Would you pay \$1,000 per month for the possibility of appearing on a billboard, if you knew that hundreds of other lawyers were also paying for that same possibility, but only one of you could "win?"

Of course not!

But that's exactly what happens when you join the rat-race for Google rankings.

The only people that are really winning in this scenario... are the SEO companies that are cashing your checks each month.



The Best Clients Don't Come From Google

Let's imagine for a moment that you get lucky and you do win the SEO lottery.

Congratulations, your law firm is now on the first page of Google!

You know what you're going to discover?

You're going to find that people who find you on Google aren't generally great clients. They're price-shopping and they're looking for transactional work, not meaningful relationships that last.

Typically, if someone calls you because they found you on Google, they're also calling at least 3-4 other law firms. And do you know how they're going to decide who to hire?

They're going to hire the cheapest lawyer they can find.

A recent survey found that 76% of those searching online for a lawyer listed price as one-of the most important factors in their decision, if not the most important factor.

The 2018 Clio Legal Trends Report found that the top-three client concerns when selecting a lawyer were all cost related.

When you make it easy for potential clients to price-shop... that's what they're going to do!

And it's very, very easy to price-shop when an internet user can call 3-4 different firms in less than 5 minutes!

Here's another analogy. Imagine setting up a lemonade stand. You want to charge \$1 per glass, and if you're the only lemonade stand on the block, you can do this easily.

But if there are 4 other lemonade stands, all within walking distance, all offering the



Leads from search engines are often price shopping, creating pressure to lower your price in order to compete.



If you put your “lemonade stand” right next to other lemonade stands, competing on price is inevitable.

same lemonade, but for only twenty-five cents... what’s going to happen?

You’re not going to sell much lemonade at \$1 per glass! Your choices are simple: either lower your price-point, or move to a different location!

Why would you base your entire marketing strategy on an environment that requires you to sit right next to all of your competition?

Unless your plan is to be the cheapest lawyer in your market... your best clients aren’t going to come from Google!

— 4 —

Search Engine Marketing is Focused on Robots, Not People

Do you know how search engine rankings are determined? Google, and all search engines, deploy what they call “spiders” to evaluate websites and determine which pages are most relevant.

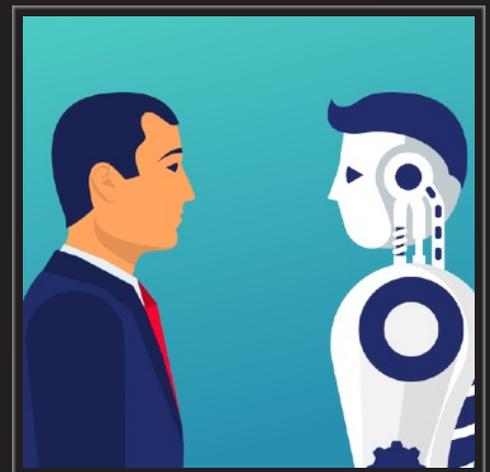
Then, they plug that data into an algorithm, which generates page rankings.

You know what’s not involved in that process?

Actual people!

So unless you’re hoping to build a law firm representing search engine spiders... don’t you think you should focus your marketing on attracting human beings?

Here’s the problem: creating website pages that are attractive to search engines often results in website pages that are unattractive to humans.



SEO focused content results in creating content for Google robots, not people!

A simple example is the focus on “keyword density” - if you’ve ever hired an SEO

firm, you've probably heard this. They typically want your chosen keyword to appear a certain number of times on each page. And if you follow this guidance, you end up with website content that appears robotic and doesn't appeal to most people!



Google's algorithm changes 500-600 times per year

Another example is the length of content. People aren't looking to read long blocks of text. As a matter of fact, the shorter your content is - the more likely your audience is to read and understand it. SEO strategists would have you create longer content - but this is making your content less attractive to real people.

Making matters even worse, Moz.com reports that Google's algorithm can change upwards of 600 times every single year. So you could create a website based on their algorithm, only to have the algorithm change next month and wipe away all your hard work.

It's much smarter to focus your marketing on people, not search engine robots. It's people that are going to hire you, and it's people that are going to refer you to family and friends.

In fact, even in today's digital world, Clio reports that over 60% of law firm clients still come from referrals - from friends, family, or other attorneys.

Focus your marketing on people, not search engines.

— 5 —

What's the Opportunity Cost of Your SEO Focus?

Many law firms are spending upwards of \$1,000 (or more) per month on SEO.

The desire for search rankings is impacting their website content, blogs, video, social media postings, and more. Trying to squeeze SEO benefits out of these things isn't worth the effort, and often causes the focus to be in the wrong place.

As discussed above, these efforts should be focused on people, not SEO. And

focusing them on search engines provides no guarantee of results.

In other words, the SEO focus is harming their marketing. There is so much more that you could be doing to grow your law firm, beyond SEO!

For example, did you know that, according to a Texas Tech Study, 83% of satisfied clients are willing to make a referral, but only 29% actually do? In other words, only 1/3 of the people who are willing to refer clients to you... actually do it!

Statistically speaking, you're missing out on 2/3 of the referrals you could be getting, which is a possible 100%-200% increase!

What if, instead of spending thousands on SEO which may or may not work, you instead focused on building a more memorable brand and creating top-of-mind awareness so that you could get more referrals?

Or, what if instead of spending thousands on SEO, you hired a writer and a publishing company to help you write and publish a book? Imagine how much more credible you would be, and imagine how much more sought-after you would become, if you wrote a book focused on your area of practice?

There are so many other ways to market your law firm than Google - and most of them are going to be more effective.

What opportunities are you missing out on because you're focused on SEO?

Keep reading for some ideas to get your wheels turning!



Most lawyers are only receiving 33% of available referrals. Why focus on search engines when there are many more referrals to be had?

Part Two: What to Do Instead of SEO

Now that we've agreed that SEO isn't mandatory, and that you have the opportunity to look for other ways to market your law firm, here are 10 ideas to get you going in the right direction!

1 - Launch a Monthly Email Newsletter



An email newsletter is the best way to stay in touch with your entire network - with just the click of a button! The key is to make sure that your newsletter provides practical value to your audience - tell them how to protect themselves, their family, or their business. Don't send them cookie recipes!

2 - Revise Your Website Content to Attract Real People!

You don't have to pack your content with search engine friendly phrases. And you don't need long pages with lots of content. In fact, most people are overwhelmed by lots of text. Keep it short, simple, and concise!



3 - Post Daily on Social Media



Social media isn't about lead generation - it's about creating and strengthening relationships with your existing network. It's important that you post consistently so that your audience remembers you when the opportunity for a referral arises.

4 - Focus Your Blogging on Quality, Not Quantity

SEO firms often want you to publish 4, 8, or even 10+ blog entries per month. But, because these blogs are written for search engine purposes, the quality isn't great - it's not content that a human would find value in reading. Instead of pumping out a high quantity of blog entries, focus on creating high-quality content that people will enjoy reading. One blog entry per month is plenty to keep your audience engaged!



5 - Launch a Podcast



Podcasting has exploded as a marketing channel, and it's not as hard to get started as you may think. With the money you're saving on SEO, you could hire a professional producer to make it really easy, and still have money left over to promote the podcast!

6 - Go on a Speaking Tour

Look for speaking opportunities across your town or around the country! Speaking is an incredible way to build credibility and build a premium brand. Speaking will attract new clients, and it will give you the ability to charge higher rates.



7 - Host Networking Events at Your Office



If you don't want to get on stage yourself, you can still create community and add value to your local network. Host a monthly event at your office and invite an outside speaker. Again, the money you save on SEO could likely be used to create a first-class event that people look forward to attending.

8 - Use Video to Connect Authentically with Your Audience

The best way to connect with someone is through a face-to-face conversation. But you can't spend all day talking to prospects. That's why video is so powerful - it takes the power of a face-to-face conversation and makes it scalable. You film your video once, and it will be viewed by thousands of people for years to come!



9 - If You're Determined to Get Clients From Search Engines, Try PPC



We believe that the best clients don't come from Google, as discussed above. But if you do want to get clients from search engines, consider pay-per-click ads like Google AdWords. Unlike SEO, PPC creates guaranteed visibility and traffic. You literally don't have to pay unless someone clicks on your ad and visits your website. There's a lot to consider when building out a PPC campaign, so make sure you work with an expert that you trust if you go this direction.

10 - Go Where the Competition Isn't

Remember the lemonade stand analogy. Your goal should be to find ways to market that aren't over-saturated by your competition. So get creative and look for opportunities that other lawyers in your market haven't found yet!



I hope you've found this report helpful.

Above all, I hope I've given you permission to expand your marketing mindset.

You don't have to make SEO the primary focus of your online marketing - in fact, you shouldn't. There's so much more out there, so many better ways to grow your law firm and attract clients who you enjoy working with.

Have fun exploring the possibilities!

- "Overnight Google could destroy your search ranking, but they can never destroy your brand"

About the Author



Marc Cerniglia
*President & Co-Founder
Spotlight Branding*

Marc Cerniglia is the President & Co-Founder of Spotlight Branding, a leading marketing agency dedicated to marketing for solo and small law firms.

Spotlight Branding provides internet marketing services such as website design, blogging, email newsletters, social media, video, and more! What makes Spotlight Branding unique is their focus on using the internet to build a brand and help law firms stay connected with their network, rather than focusing on SEO services.

In addition to operating Spotlight Branding, Marc is a writer, speaker, and podcaster. He is passionate about helping lawyers find the better ways to market their practice.

For Help with Your Firm's Marketing,
Contact Spotlight Branding Today!

(800) 406-7229

www.SpotlightBranding.com