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LEGAL MARKETING

12 Steps to Make Your Law Firm Website Bio Work for You

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Special to the Legal

Did you know that the bio pages of a law firm website are usually the most heavily visited of any portion of a law firm's site? It's true and yet, after reading thousands of lawyer bios, I have concluded that most do very little to effectively promote their subjects. In fact, I would argue that most bios are boring, colorless and in-artfully written.

Sorry. I don't mean to hurt your feelings. But your bio could do so much more for you—not just in better explaining your expertise in a more appealing way—but in detailing the benefits of working with you vis-à-vis your competition. Isn't that what you want your bio to do?

Here is your roadmap to creating a great bio that actually does work for you.

- Make your narrative summary



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really interesting, very human and understandable. It should not sound drone-like. Lead with a sentence about what you do—not whether you are a partner or associate in “name of firm.” That is already evident. Let's grab the reader right away with what kind of stellar lawyer you are. Example: Instead of, “John is a partner in the firm's workout group,” lead with, “Cassandra has represented national financial institutions for over 20 years in workout matters.” An example of a bio that grabs you right from the first sentence is that of Patricia Hamill of Conrad O'Brien (confession—a friend of

mine). Check out just the first few sentences of her bio at <http://goo.gl/HE35LB> and you will say “wow.”

- Don't use unclear legalese terms. Many civil litigators I know say that they handle “complex commercial litigation matters.” What does that phrase mean? Avoid it and try saying something like you “have a history of successfully defending companies sued for millions of dollars over matters that could have significantly affected their ability to do business.” More understandable to the reader, right?

- Make sure every sentence in your bio shows, to the extent possible, the specific value you bring to your clients. To do this, at the end of every sentence, literally ask yourself, “Why should anyone care?” So if your bio says, “Sandy represents companies in mergers and acquisitions,” change that to, “Sandy represents companies in mergers and acquisitions in such a

way that she always seeks to successfully limit tax liabilities and to prevent successor liability.” Ah, now you have my interest as I do care about that for my deal.

- What “value-added” services do you offer every client? Amazing communication and responsiveness? Say it. For example: “Clients applaud Robin’s outstanding client service noting that their phone calls are always returned within two hours.” Or, “Steve’s years of serving as a prosecutor before joining the firm provide his clients with a window into the inner workings of the criminal justice system.” Or even, “James routinely visits his clients ‘off the clock’ to teach them about the impact of new regulations on their business.”

- Do not start every paragraph with your name. Try to make each sentence different. Harken back to your middle-school favorite English grammar class and mix up your sentence structure. (You would not believe how many bios violate this rule.)

- Include something about your life outside of the law in your bio. I want to get to know you and better understand and like, or even relate, to you—the person behind the lawyer. Check out the wonderful colorful bios of the lawyers at the Van Winkle firm in North Carolina at www.vwlawfirm.com. Lawyers

there have two bios—a serious and a lighter side one.

Make sure every sentence in your bio shows, to the extent possible, the specific value you bring to your clients.

- Please use the best color photo you can of yourself. Images are the first place the eye goes to, so lead with your best foot forward. Several law firms use two or three staged pictures of lawyers on the bios. I don’t care for these as I don’t want to see a lawyer on the bio page “act.” Instead, I want you to be looking into the camera, so viewers can literally see your warmth, determination or “eye of the tiger.” Also, choose a light and airy background for your headshot—the brighter the better. Sitting in front of a brown or muted backdrop—even light blue—can make you look tired, drab and dated.

- Talk about results in your bio. Visitors want to see that you have solved problems of the exact ilk that they have. Create that moment when the visitor says to himself or herself, “Great, he or she is the right one for my matter because

they have handled cases like this before and won.”

- Reference your industry or industry experience. Visitors want to know that you get their world.

- Try not to refer to yourself as Mr. or Ms. But instead use your first name. Clients don’t want to work with Mr. Tim Smith, they want to work with Tim.

- Finally, include all your speeches and articles with proper Bluebook citations in your bio. Most that I read do not. I also read too many bios that include something like this phrase: “Wyatt is a frequent speaker at Pennsylvania Bar Association meetings.” If you speak or write, I want to know specifically the topics for which you are on the lecture circuit. It means something. Also, always include all of your extracurricular activities and any accolades you have received somewhere in the bio text.

- This is your “aha” moment. If you have nothing to put on your bio for the above tip, get the heck out of your office and start doing something to credential yourself.

You can do this. Get up, get out and get going. •