

Branding and social media

How they work together to build your firm's business



Let's say your practice is family law. It's a highly competitive specialty in your community. You know that if you want to attract new clients, you need to distinguish yourself from the rest of the pack. So, how?

You start by considering what makes your firm different from the others. Then, you think about how you can communicate those distinctive qualities. You want to ensure that people remember your firm's name when they need legal representation.

Whether you know it or not, what you're doing is developing and using your firm's **brand**.

You and your firm may be comfortable using the term "brand" when marketing your services. You may be unclear how it relates to a legal practice. You might associate it with advertising a consumer product, not the high-level service a legal practice provides.

The fact is, "brand" is often misunderstood. It's more than a logo or an advertising slogan. Instead, think of your brand more broadly, as the distinctive way you present yourself, your firm, and your expertise. It's the face of your firm to your clients and potential clients. It's also the way you connect with them. It can provide the fastest route for potential clients to reach you. Outside of your legal expertise, your brand is your firm's most valuable asset for building your business.

One of the most profitable ways to use that brand to attract business in the legal marketplace is through social media. Your firm may already be active on LinkedIn or Twitter. Or perhaps you're simply considering using social media and wondering how to begin. In either case, to maximize your investment of time (and, in some cases, money), it pays to develop a strategy.

And it's your brand that guides your social media strategy. The first question to address, then, is: What *is* your brand? Who are you, and why should people needing legal representation choose *your* firm? What do you want them to think of you? And how readily can they find you online?

In this guide, we'll discuss how to develop your brand, how it impacts social media strategy, the strengths of the various social platforms, and how to prevent your messages from getting lost in the crowd. Your brand connects and weaves throughout all of these issues. You have a brand, and through social media, you build and express it.



What *is* my firm's brand?

Understanding and expressing your brand is where all your marketing efforts begin, and not just your social media strategy.

You probably have at least a good sense of what is distinctive about you and your firm. A branding strategy formalizes that distinctiveness and presents it to the legal marketplace. It puts your brand to work attracting new clients and keeping your name in front of existing ones.



You may find these questions helpful as you and your colleagues seek to clarify and solidify your brand:

- + How do you stand out from competitors that provide services in the same specialty?
- + How do you and your colleagues work together?
- + What are your values? What do you stand for? What is most important to you?
- + Why is your practice important to you, and why do you want to help people in need of legal counsel?
- + What ways are you and your firm active in the community?
- + What kind of emotions do you want to evoke in clients?

It's not only your expertise that attracts potential clients. Again, it's likely that there are other firms in your market with the same specialty. What can set you apart in the minds of people in need of legal help and also the way you provide that help. In other words, it's your firm's approach to *service*.

All these attributes interconnect. Your "offline" presence — your specialty, your approach to service — also interconnect with your online presence, and also with elements you might be more likely to consider your brand, such as your logo and the website's design. Your brand should be consistent across all the places where you might have a presence, not only your website but also your online advertising and your blog (if you have either of these). These marketing arenas should have not only the same logo and same font as your offline materials — they should also have a consistent tone of voice. They're all part of your brand identity.

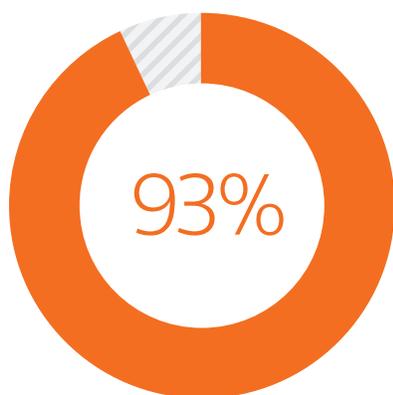


Why should I use social media?

Social media can make it easier for these clients to find you. Building your brand also involves building name recognition for your firm, an attribute professional marketers call brand awareness.

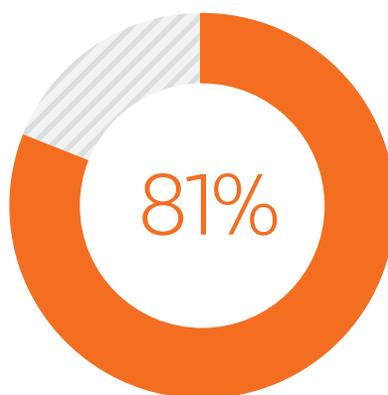
Make no mistake: Marketing your firm and its capabilities via social media requires time and careful thought. (That's one reason why it's best to be on only one platform, at least at first.) As we'll discuss, it can also require money (though not a great deal). But it can be an excellent way for potential clients to get to know you in a more personal, no-pressure way, and it's a useful tool for staying in touch with existing ones. True, a well-designed website is essential when people are seeking skilled legal representation in your specialty. But to paraphrase the famous line from the movie *Field of Dreams*, if you build it, clients won't necessarily come to it. Social media can point them in your direction.

2019 Attorney at Work survey



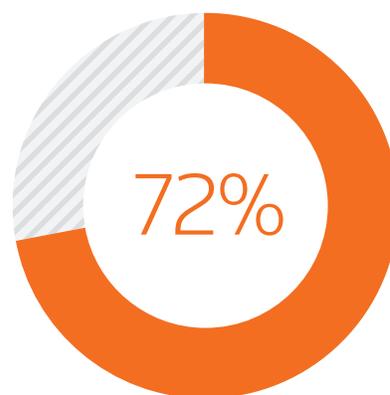
Lawyers said they have a presence on social media

ABA 2020 TechReport



Firms surveyed said they maintain a social presence

Pew Research in 2021



Americans who use some type of online social platform

And attracting business to your site — and more broadly, to your firm — is what a solid social media strategy can do. In a 2019 Attorney at Work survey, 93% of lawyers said they have a presence on social media, and 71% reported that it helped bring in new business. (The ABA's 2020 TechReport survey cited a somewhat smaller number: 81% of firms surveyed there said they maintain a social presence.) There's a good reason for that level of social presence: Clients and prospects are on social media. According to Pew Research in 2021, 72% of Americans use some type of online social platform, with 69% on Facebook (soon to be Meta) alone.

Legal consumers also demonstrate what might be called digital sensibility when it comes to seeking an attorney. They're approaching their search in a very similar manner to shopping online for a purchase of roughly equal monetary value. That noted, people looking for legal help are less concerned with money and more interested in who the attorney is, and how they can help.

Which platform should I choose?

In choosing which social media network to use, you will consider your brand and how you wish to project your firm to current and potential clients.



LinkedIn is, of course, the most professional of the social media platforms. Because LinkedIn provides access to a wide professional network, attorneys can gain a reputation for being a go-to source of expertise and information.



You might think of **Facebook** as a medium for sharing photographs of your firm and information about your staff's charity or volunteer activities. But it's also highly suited to sharing information relevant to your potential clients.



Twitter is the go-to platform for news, information, gossip, and controversy. As a brand builder and marketing tool, Twitter is effective only if you have the time to tweet regularly — and can say things that your target audience might find intriguing and usefully informative.



For most firms, the visually focused platform of **Instagram** won't be the first choice. But it can be a powerful tool for those whose practice tends to focus on a younger audience.

If your practice focuses on businesses, LinkedIn is probably the best choice. Facebook is more consumer-oriented, making it a strong option for reaching individuals and families facing issues such as divorce and estate planning. One other observation about platform choice: In the Attorney at Work survey cited earlier, 84% of attorneys who responded said they are on LinkedIn. But at the same time, 31% say Facebook is most effective at bringing in new business, compared to 27% who cited LinkedIn.



What should I say?

Once again, your brand is crucial to answering this question. How do you clearly communicate who you are and what you can do?

This requires you to understand what your target audience wants, and what it needs to hear from you. As you've been developing or maintaining your firm's marketing strategy, you've probably heard the term **content**. It means more than just the words and images you post on social media. It also includes the strategy behind what you say. The content you provide should reflect your brand, and it should thus seek to build a relationship between you and the people who see what you've posted.

In developing social media content, you might consider posting articles, videos, or blog posts you've seen or produced that provide information your target audience might find interesting or useful. Adding your professional take on relevant news stories is another potentially powerful approach. All this can demonstrate your understanding of what clients are facing. It also helps build your brand as a knowledgeable, easy-to-talk-to attorney who can provide trustworthy counsel.

Strong content is not just about **what** you say but also **how** you say it. For your messages and posts to be truly effective, it needs to have an authentic voice, one that conforms to the image you want to present. This doesn't mean, of course, that you simply post whatever comes to mind. Though it might sound contradictory, authenticity requires thoughtful planning.

One thing you'll certainly want to avoid is sounding self-promotional, which will likely turn away potential clients. They don't particularly want to hear how wonderful you are. This is **social** media, after all — it's a conversation, a tool for developing relationships.

What potential clients **do** want to hear from you is solid evidence that your firm has the legal expertise they need, and that you understand the challenges they're facing. They're seeking a sense of human connection with the firm they choose to provide legal representation. They want to feel as though they know you and can trust you. You want to engage them in your own voice, the voice of someone who truly cares, who knows how to listen, and has a way of providing help that is truly your own.

Another crucial point: While words are important, a crucial element of social content is visual. You will want to accompany your post with a photograph, video, or other image that illustrates what your post is about. Visual elements are table stakes on social media, and they too should reflect your brand.

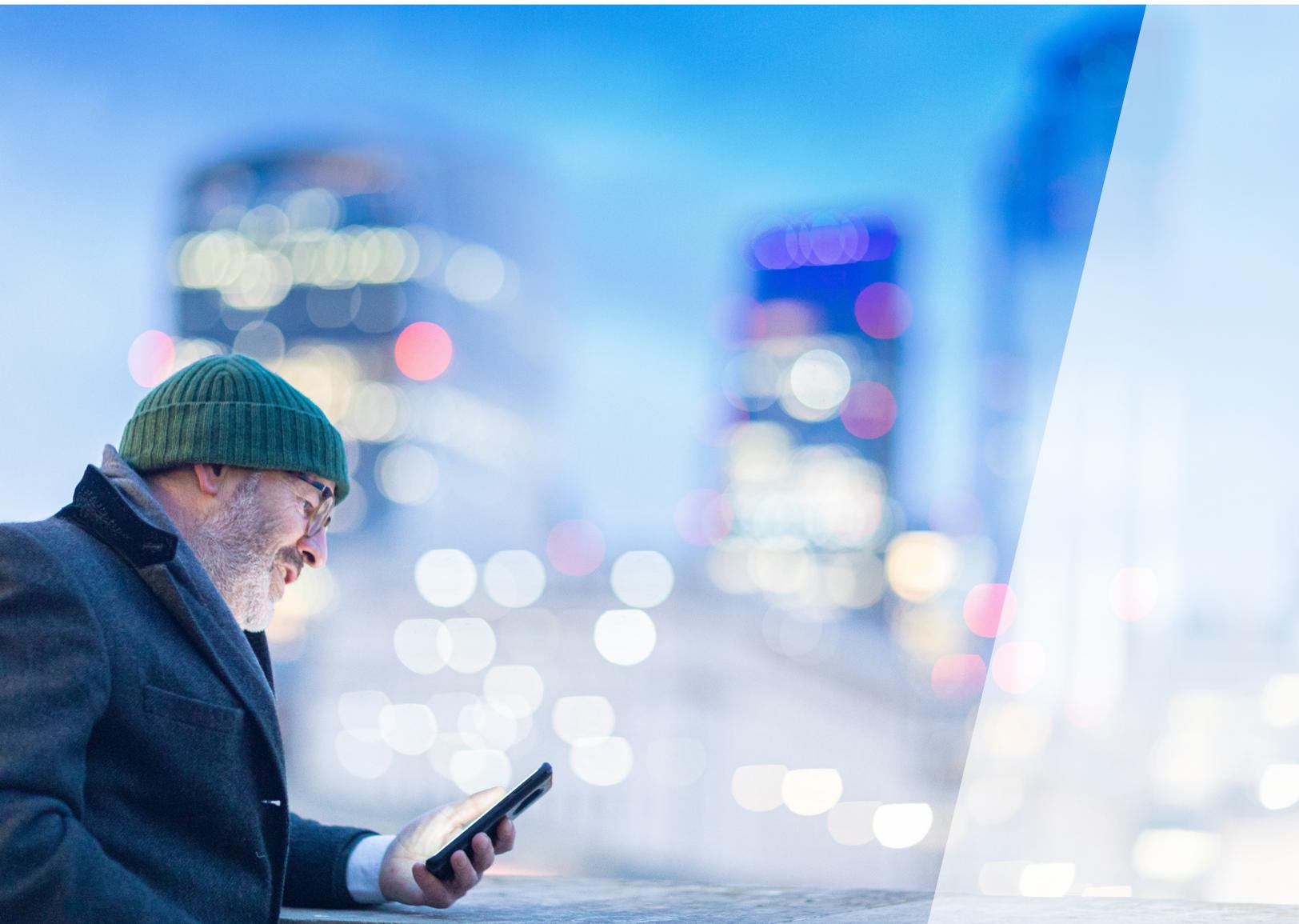


How do I know my strategy is working?

The answer might seem obvious: It's the number of new clients that your social media interactions have attracted. But it's not the only metric. Your social presence is likely to have had significant influence on a new client's decision to work with you. But often, it's just one factor. Also, it can take time for you to see an increase in your caseload from social media.

In other words, the level of new business isn't always the most precise way to measure your strategy's success. Another useful metric is the increase of traffic to your firm's website. Yet another is the number of followers your firm has on a specific social media platform.

One of the great advantages of social media is that the platforms provide objective ways to measure your success. Facebook is particularly strong in this regard. Facebook Insights, for instance, provides a significant amount of user data that you can analyze to cultivate your audience. These tools can allow you to measure your strategy's success through key performance indicators, or KPIs, such as engagement rate, total followers, and the number of comments.



Should I pay for it?

Regardless of the platform, it costs you nothing to set up an account, which is one of social media's advantages as a marketing tool. These platforms also allow you to pay for raising your profile, primarily through advertising. In essence, you're paying for your post to be seen.

Why might you want to advertise on a social media platform? What's called "organic" (that is, unpaid) social media can provide a powerful way for you to connect with people who are looking for an attorney and already know something about you. But if you want to attract new clients and get them to remember your name, you may need to use paid messaging.

That's especially true of Facebook. If you or your firm have a Facebook account, you've undoubtedly noticed that the number of ads that appear in your feed has exploded. That means that your posts are likely to be overlooked. By paying for what Facebook calls "Sponsored" posts, you can reach people who aren't your followers, but who might be interested in your services.

"Paid social" doesn't need to break the bank, by the way. Even paying just \$50 on a post will put your message and your brand in front of more people seeking the type of services — and the type of service — that your firm provides.

Social media and your brand: It's all one

Your brand is what sets you apart in the legal marketplace. It demonstrates who you are as an attorney to a market that is hunting for exactly what you provide in terms of both expertise and service. And your social media presence, if well thought out, can help them find you and your firm more readily.

Your firm's brand requires self-knowledge, and that self-knowledge is intertwined with a deep knowledge of your existing and potential client bases. Your content, your voice, your expertise, your service, your target audience, and the social media platform you choose are all interconnected — through your firm's distinctive brand.

If you think you could use some expert advice on building your firm's brand through social media, we are here to help. The approach FindLaw® takes to social media marketing for lawyers isn't about simply being present and chattering away. It's about using outstanding content to drive your law firm's social media marketing strategy. Put social media marketing to work for your law firm. Contact your local [Client Development Consultant](#) today.

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