

Law firms Cannot Afford To Ignore Online Reviews

With this expert advice, you can turn client reviews into a potent marketing tool.

Of all the components of digital advertising, online reviews cause the most confusion and frustration among law firms. How are you supposed to know where clients are leaving reviews? How important are testimonials to your business' reputation?

Even though it takes a little time and effort to create a strategy for handling online reviews, if you are proactive you can turn reviews from a hassle to a powerful tool for building confidence, winning new clients and improving your search engine ranking.

What are clients saying about your law firm? Find out now with a [FREE Online Reviews Report](#).

1. What Are Online Reviews?

Online reviews are just what they sound like: feedback left by clients on websites such as Google, Facebook, Yelp and many others. Online reviews also appear in Google search results and Google Maps when clients try to find a business.

2. What is My Online Reputation?

It's the collective view of the brand or law firm, but it's made up of many components: trustworthy content, third party reviews, testimonials, case studies, social proof, and more. Collectively, these are the components a law firm needs to manage.

Naturally, all your law firm reviews from throughout the web and on your social networking pages are a big part of your online reputation because they come from clients. Your online reputation is an important way for you to differentiate your business from the competition.

How does an attorney distinguish itself from another one? Well, thanks to online testimonials you get a clearer idea of their support, the time they chose to respond to your inquiries, how well the case was handled, and so on.

3. Online Reviews Can Be a Highly Effective Marketing Tool.

Clients will see them whether you like it or not, so it's worth your time and effort to encourage good reviews and capitalize on the results to get the trust of new clients.

Instead of viewing testimonials as a necessary chore, treat it as a promotion strategy. Clients who have a positive experience are often happy to write a 'goodwill' recommendation and

review, which makes them a valuable inbound marketing channel. Word-of-mouth testimonials lead to high-converting leads and traffic.

Online reviews, over time, will address virtually every aspect of your firm including service level, responsiveness, and successes.

4. How Influential Are Online Reviews With Prospective Clients?

The short answer is online reviews are very influential with prospects. In fact, they can make the difference between winning or losing a client.

According to BrightLocal's [2016 Local Consumer Review Survey](#), most people (91%) regularly or occasionally read online reviews. Online reviews are becoming the new word-of-mouth advertising.

5. What Are the Best Online Review Sites?

The best site for You may depend on the type of business you own. These Websites are important for Almost Every law firm owner:

- Google
- Facebook
- Bing Places
- Yellow Pages
- Better Business Bureau
- Avvo

6. Google Reviews

Before you start asking customers to leave a review of your company on Google, be sure to claim your [Google My Business](#) profile. When you claim your business on Google, you can get notifications when a client leaves a review, and respond to each review individually. These reviews and the accompanying star rating will show up when clients see your business on search results pages and Google Maps.

7. Facebook Reviews for Law Firms

Facebook's ratings and testimonials feature is automatically enabled whenever your page is categorized as a local business with a physical address. You do have the option to [disable reviews](#) on your Facebook Business Page, but then you won't get the benefit of favorable reviews from customers and the boost in your search ranking from having reviews on Facebook. Be sure to monitor and respond to all of your testimonials on Facebook, just like you would on any other platform.

8. Yelp Reviews for Law Firms

Out of all the review sites, Yelp causes the most frustration for all business owners.

Yelp's filter is a large headache for law firms because it can often hide some of their best five-star reviews. It is frustrating for sure, but it's important to know that the filter is fluid, meaning that a concealed review can resurface again.

It's better to play by the rules and try to get as many positive reviews as possible. I strongly recommend law firms put a Yelp plan in place to use it to their advantage, otherwise they may find themselves dragged along for an unpleasant ride.

Tips for working With Yelp:

1. You cannot buy reviews for your organization. Yelp has a sophisticated algorithm and is far too smart for this behavior. Yelp filters these purchased reviews from your clients and it can even result in your profile being flagged.
2. You cannot solicit reviews at your law office. Yelp knows if reviews are coming from one IP address. (Yelp discourages business owners from asking directly for client reviews.)

9. Effects on Search Optimization

"The impact of Reviews on ranking is highly debated among search experts," said George Freitag, local research evangelist for [Moz](#). "Firms with many online reviews and photos often show up more prominently in local search results. Whether the amount of reviews is what causes a company to rank or if it is simply due to the business being so visible remains unclear."

However, Freitag added that having reviews does raise clicks and interactions with your company from search results, and that increase in interaction does have a positive effect on your site's search engine optimization (search engine optimization).

10. Can I Request Clients to Leave Online Reviews?

Yes! In fact, you should make a habit of asking clients for reviews. It's one of the best ways to get more of these. (The exception is Yelp; see the section above.)

I recommend a review strategy to almost every single client. It is important to continually request feedback in more ways than one.

11. Should I Ask Clients to Leave Reviews on One Site or Them All?

It's best to target a few review sites instead of just one. You want to be sure positive reviews appear in as many places online as possible. However, you also want to remain focused so that

you don't become overwhelmed monitoring and posting answers (and so you don't overwhelm your clients with requests!) . If you don't have any reviews, try beginning with one site and then move on to others as you gain more opinions.

Because of Google's major prominence as a search engine, it is the main place we urge our clients get reviews. However, Avvo, Yelp and Facebook are also very important. These review websites can also help your Google rankings because they have high domain authority (Google trusts them)

12. What Should I Don't Have the Time to Ask for Reviews?

Have client feedback cards published that give customers very easy instructions on how they can provide you a review online.

Include a link to your business profile on your favorite site (such as your Facebook page or Google My Business profile). Then you can hand out the card at the conclusion of your work with the client with a polite request. You can also include this information in any automated emails you send to clients after a transaction.

Encourage past clients to share honest feedback about their experience with your law firm that will assist you continue to improve your client experience with time.

13. How Do I Track Online Reviews?

There are online software solutions in addition to service solutions. It is going to really depend on how much work the firm wants to do themselves or how much they wish to outsource the job. You need to understand when people are leaving testimonials so that you can monitor what is being said about your law firm and, most importantly, if someone posts something negative, you can respond quickly.

14. How Should I Handle Negative Reviews?

You must respond. A response from a representative in the law firm actually can help mitigate the damage caused by a negative review. Ignoring a bad review is never a good idea, as it shows to people that the firm doesn't care or doesn't understand what's being said.

Naturally, how you react matters, too. Don't write anything defensive or argumentative--you'll only alienate the client even more. Instead, attempt to resolve the client's complaint.

Here are some hints:

First, reach out to the client by telephone or email and see if you are able to resolve their issue. If you are able to solve the problem, ask them if they would be willing update the review. Many will.

If you don't solve the issue or can't reach the client, some review websites allow vendor responses. Go ahead and respond, but keep a professional and positive tone.

Finally, bury the negative review in positive reviews. 1 negative review doesn't hurt if there are five or 10 glowing five-star reviews posted over it.

This might sound obvious, but make your law firm easy to contact. Put your phone number and support email address on your site and make it easy to discover. You'd be amazed how many bad reviews come from clients just having trouble locating contact information for a company.

15. Should I Respond To Negative Reviews?

It's just as Important to respond to positive reviews as it is negative ones.

You must make sure that you're engaging with your clients by responding to reviews, both good and bad. Thank people for favorable reviews. The more involvement, the better!

That engagement helps you grow your great reputation and develop more faithful clients.

16. Should I Ever Pay for Positive Reviews?

Paying for or otherwise bribing customers to leave reviews is a bad idea. Do not fall for companies offering to get you good reviews for a fee. Clients have an expectation that online reviews are unbiased, which means that paying for testimonials will destroy your credibility if you're found out (and most client can tell when a review isn't genuine).

17. Can I Review Your Own Business?

No. Not only is this unethical, you're likely to get caught. Clients are sensitive to this, and won't respond well to fake reviews from friends or relatives. Even trying to influence clients can be bad.

18. How Do I Eliminate Bad Reviews?

Typically, it's impossible to eliminate reviews. Attempting to silence customers typically backfires, and the review hosting website will know that. However, in some cases you may be able to appeal to the website to have a review taken down.

Law firms should know that reviews online are allowed to have negative opinions, but they cannot offer facts that are false in their review. You might also be able to have a review taken down if it's downright abusive or irrelevant to your company.

19. What Can I Do About Bad Reviews?

You can do what you can to have false or abusive reviews taken down. Otherwise, it's ideal to try to outweigh the bad review with lots of good ones.

Creating a review Page on your own site does help to control the dialogue. Additionally, it ranks extremely well in search.

20. What Are the Biggest Mistakes Law Firms Make With Online Reviews?

The first is ignoring them entirely. Second, you need to monitor your online reviews. Negative reviews happen, but responding to them is a great way to not only smooth things over, but show future customers that you really do care about them.

What are clients saying about your law firm? ForLawFirmsOnly Marketing, Inc. can help you take control of client reviews and boost your online reputation. Get started with a FREE [Online Reputation Report!](#)

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