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Your Website is Your Shop Window

Whilst I do feel that I have written often about the SRA's push for 'Transparency', I am not surprised to do so, and I feel it remains important and will continue to be. Modern Law advised us on the Editorial Board that in a recent survey, 83% of consumers are now influenced by a company's website and will choose one that provides clear information.

Given this modern phenomenon, how appealing, welcoming, and clear your website is, becomes critical. Your website becomes your shop window for the undecided consumer browser, who based on the Legal Services Consumer Panel and the SRA's own research, might be assessing 2 or 3 sites, or even more. This is why, since the rules came into force in December 2018, I have encouraged solicitors to see the regulator's Transparency Rules, not as a begrudgingly undertaken compulsory chore but as an exciting challenge to embrace and enter the spirit of.

This is your opportunity to differentiate your firm from the other local legal services providers, solicitors or otherwise. It is about describing the services you offer in concise plain language and not in legalese. It is not about the possible price you feel you should not have to display, but about detailing all work and stages of delivery for the service and the qualifications and experience of who will be delivering it, so the potential client can truly see the value on offer. It is your chance to have biographies of your staff, and the whole team - not just the lead solicitor. It should also include not just professional but personal detail to make your firm more approachable.

In short, it is recognising that your firm is in competition with other firms for the next client. Consider yourself in a beauty parade and having accepted this, decide how you might add those final touches to your website that might be the deciding differentiators. For example, it might be blogs written by members of your team about how they work with clients, it could be using short punchy videos to describe your services or even interactive tools or calculators that don't require personal information.

One final point I always stress is that whilst the website is vital, it will only come into play in the absence of a personal referral. Without a trusted adviser recommending me to a provider, I will start the research process, but with one, I may not need to. So please, ensure to make the positive referral to financial advisers or accountants when your clients need complementary financial planning or tax advice and encourage them to do the same with you.

"It is about describing the services you offer in concise plain language and not in legalese"



Alex Holt
is Business Development
Director at The Cashroom

Changing Consumer Habits

I've said this before...I am old. Putting it into context, when I was a newly qualified lawyer, we didn't have mobile phones. Computers were only just arriving, and they were mainly for word processing. Email wasn't a thing.

Looking back, time pressures were very different, as was client expectation surrounding speed of response. If I dealt with a matter, it meant I would dictate something. It would then go to a secretary for typing, then back to me for signature, then it would be posted. Very regularly it would be over a week before I would receive a response. Compare that to the present.

Clients expect an almost immediate response to email. They expect to be able to contact their lawyer whenever they want, and they also expect that lawyers in a transaction will be constantly progressing their matter at either end. All of this is often accompanied with a requirement that fees will not be excessive - especially in conveyancing where the client's demands are particularly strident.

So, what habits do consumers now exhibit when choosing to purchase something?

They expect to have access to a clear and concise website with fully detailed products and clear pricing. They'll be viewing things on their phone of course and will expect to be able to communicate questions at that point. They will look at 'star ratings' - google reviews, trust pilot etc. And when they decide to purchase, in this case a service, they expect to be able to track its progress. To be kept updated. To receive the promised outcome timeously.

These pressures need a response, and that response comes in two forms I'd suggest. Technology and outsourcing.

Tech tools are now available which ease the onboarding process, manage the flow of data, enable communication, and create cost efficiency as a result. Practice management systems provide workflows and data to help with management and business decisions.

Outsourcing elements of the business enables a law firm to create flexible resource, expert in a particular element that lawyers themselves might not be. This resource can augment the tech, support the lawyers, and create a much-improved experience for the firm's clients.

So, the pressure on a modern lawyer has changed in many respects, but at least they now have the incredible tech tools and skilled support to meet the challenges. It's actually exciting!

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