

Marketing with Directory Listings

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This year marks the 150th anniversary of James Martindale's first publication of a directory that listed lawyers in every state. Martindale's Directory continued in print for 140 years until it was replaced with an online edition in 2008. Read on to learn more about lawyer directories and how to optimize your listing to attract more clients.

The Martindale-Hubbell Lawyer Directory is now owned by Internet Brands, a media powerhouse that owns several law sites (Avvo.com, Lawyers.com and Nolo.com) and consumer websites (eDoctors.com, CarsDirect.com, and WebMD.com). Other major directory publishers include Justia Inc. (Justia.com) and Thomas Reuters (FindLaw.com, LawInfo.com, and SuperLawyers.com). Most of these publishers provide website design and hosting services for a fee in addition to offering free directory listings.

Selecting a Directory

There are dozens of legal directories that offer free listings. Criteria for choosing directories include cost of premium features, number of visitors, and relevance to your practice areas. To attract clients, consider focusing on popular lawyer directories

like Avvo.com, FindLaw.com, Justia.com, Lawyers.com, Martindale.com and Nolo.com. Also consider listing in general directories like Apple Maps, Google My Business, Microsoft's Bing Business, and Yahoo Local Listing to further enhance your visibility on the Internet. Listing at Google My Business is especially helpful for visibility due to the popularity of Google's research tool, Google Search.

Managing Your Listings

Start by assigning responsibility to a staff member for creating and updating directory listings. The staffer can prepare a list of directories for your approval and then confirm that up-to-date information has been posted on them. To add information to a directory, your staffer can go to each directory's website to find guidelines for posting. It should take no more than 30 minutes per directory to annually audit your listings and add or update information for each partner and associate.

What to Include in Your Listing

Your directory listing should include attorney names, bio details, and practice areas. To distinguish your firm, consider paying for premium features like enhanced placement and the option to add information about your achievements, practice areas, publications, and speeches. Include links to your website and to your social media accounts at Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Benefits

The growth of the Internet brought the decline of printed directories and the growth of online directories for lawyers. Listing in multiple directories will bring clients to your firm by making your firm findable by prospects who search the Internet for a lawyer. Directory listings also improve the ranking of your firm's website with search engines like Bing, Google and Yahoo.

Budgeting

It has been estimated that the legal profession now spends in excess of \$1 Billion annually to advertise using directories, billboards, Internet, radio, and television. Marketing experts recommend spending

about 2 to 5 percent of annual revenues on marketing activities. Although most directories offer free listings, paying for premium features should improve your firm's visibility. Carefully examine your options and comply with ethical requirements. Consider using a consultant to track results and optimize benefits from directory listings.

Conclusion

Directory listings will make you known to prospective clients who use the Internet to research their legal problems and locate lawyers to solve them. Use the tips mentioned in this article to create effective directory listings that attract new cases and clients. Carefully crafted listings can help you stand out in a legal marketplace that is crowded and competitive.

Michael L. Goldblatt—*Mr. Goldblatt has authored numerous books and articles about marketing for lawyers.*