A Few Words about August...

August was a tough month! It always is. Everyone takes vacations, and those not on vacations have to take over for the people on vacation. Don't be too worried about your visitor count and your contacts for the month of August. I have been doing this for a long time now, and I can tell you that August always has low numbers (Except at the beach…). People are on vacation, remember! Don't worry, things pick-up again in September and many wish for the quiet summer days again. Feast or famine...

August was busy in other ways for Foster Web Marketing, however....

It seems that we have angered someone terribly. It is still unknown who this entity is. And perhaps I will never know (but I have my suspicions). But we were maliciously attacked on August 27 and 28 by a hack that seemed to know our architecture and knew how to get in. Just to put things in perspective, we have anywhere from 200-300 attacks on our servers every day, and we are able to defend our websites against all of these. However this was very different. Let me give you an analogy. It is very similar to a common burglar that would go from house to house looking for an open door. Doesn't care who it is, just looking for an unlocked door. We protect against these 200 or 300 burglars everyday. However, if someone targets you specifically, and watches your comings and goings, knows when you're home, what time you go to bed and what time you get up, if you have a dog, or an alarm - just about everything about you...They will find a way into your house. This was very similar. In any event, our IT director, Toby Crandall, worked relentlessly to find the breach and stop it. We were back online with systems at 100% Thursday afternoon.

This may cause some of you to worry about our server architecture. I can assure you that we spend a considerable amount of resources on securing our Web environment. Each month we add new gadgets and widgets to protect our servers and make them faster. Even the most robust and secure network is open to attack and downtime (Network Solutions was down as I was writing this column…). As a result of this attack on Foster Web Marketing servers, we have bolstered our security even more so, and that has made us even stronger than we were before.

On a positive note, we got a lot of upgrades done on the DSS system. We continue to make the DSS system the most robust application for updating websites there is. We move as fast as we can. None of our competition has anything like this. It is the magic wand, and all you have to do is use it to make a big difference for yourself.

Lastly, it is very busy at the Foster House. My oldest daughter will be a senior this year and turned 17 in August -- she also got her driver's license this month. My 15 year old, Samantha, is a sophomore and made the JV field hockey team at her school -- a big accomplishment. Thomas who will be 14 next month is the quarterback of his football team. The baby, Maddie, is six months old already. Her big accomplishment was to eat as much as she could and keep the rest of us sane and laughing - which she did magnificently. Babies are really amazing.

Mad Brenda has been hard at work on new original songs. We hope to finish the CD sometime this fall. We will be playing live at the January super conference -- so don't miss that.

Thanks to all you for being great partners!!

Dedicated to Your Online Success.

Tom

DSS Webinar - Secrets to Web Marketing Success

Join us on Wednesday, September 17th at 1:00 PM EDT!
Learn from Attorney Webmaster Guru Tom Foster and Power User Mischelle Davis to help you master DSS, the secret weapon to STOMP your competition!!!
The three things you will learn this month:
1. New features in DSS
2. DSS refresher
3. Top 5 Things YOU HAVE to do to get to #1 in Google!

Space is limited. Check your email for your invitation!

What's Coming to DSS?

This is all stuff we are still working on for you:
- Video Module
- Integration with Blue Orchid Marketing
- .Mobi Integration
- Photo Gallery Upgrade

The Top 7 Page Title Rules for High Ranking Lawyer Websites

Hands down, the page title tag continues to be the most important part of each page of your Lawyer website and organic search engine placement.

1. **Title Length:** You can use so-called stop words (words that are ignored by engines), such as the, is, of, a, and, as well as punctuation. This means that you can use stop words to make your tags make more sense to users without running the risk of diluting the importance of your target keywords. When creating titles for your home page, practice area pages and library pages, anything more than 63 characters is mostly unnecessary. From a search engine ranking perspective, you should limit titles to only your best keywords. Typically, pages rank better when there is more than one keyword within the tag.
2. **Word Proximity:** Search engines actually do pay attention to the distance between words for multiple keyword searches. For example, use Virginia Medical Malpractice Lawyer instead of Smith and Smith Medical Malpractice Lawyers serving Virginians for 100 years.
3. **Keyword Location:** Make sure your keyword is before your firm name. As a general rule, the closer you place your keyword to the beginning of the title the better the ranking advantage.
4. **Word Order:** The search engines do pay attention to the order of your keywords, so be sure to position them in the most likely order that real people typically use when expressing them in everyday language. However, be aware of the keyword search opportunities that may also be available when you switch the keyword order around. There may be instances where you'll find that reversing the keyword order sends good traffic with less competition. Try different variations on different pages.
5. **Repetitions:** Certainly you should take into consideration the typical search-phrase usages as well as research the top scoring pages before you decide. Just be sure to bear in mind that simplistic duplication of words without regard to human readability will typically work against you. Can or should you use the keyword more than once in the title? Sure, but do it logically. Do not repeat keywords one after the other as in keyword, keyword, keyword. However, you should keep in mind that the vast majority of the top scoring lawyer sites do not repeat keywords within the title. Once is usually enough.
6. **Titles for Humans:** Because the tag is displayed as the headline for your page in the search results, its role is to motivate people to click your link. Therefore, the tag becomes the headline for your page. Its job is to reassure the searcher that, indeed, your page's content is all about exactly what they are looking for. Otherwise, why would anyone bother to click your link? Be compelling - there is one enduring constant of tag content creation that must remain a top priority—how well the text appeals to your human prospects.
7. **What Words to Use:** However, it's surprising to see how many sites are apparently unaware of this very basic and simple fact of search engine marketing and optimization. We are still seeing many, many attorney web sites that use the same tag on every single page of their site — usually the name of the attorney or firm. That's a big mistake. By inserting descriptive, keyword-rich tags into your web pages you'll be giving the engines exactly what they need to better index and rank your pages and bring you the prospects you are looking for. It should be clear that you should carefully select your best targeted keywords as your tag.

What is the Google Sandbox and how can you avoid it? By Ken Pearce

The Google sandbox is many things to different organizations. Some experts think that it is a holding area for new web sites to prove that they are worthy before having access to the higher ranking pages of Google. Other analysts say that it is an unusual and unpredictable algorithmic element that is difficult to define. There are theories that the sandbox is like a filter that will place newer web sites on top of older web sites that will funnel out of the bottom of the sandbox in an unspecified amount of time (anywhere from two to six months) from the launch site date.

Search Closing in on E-Mail as Most Popular Online Activity

The Yellow Pages are going to go the way of the dodo bird and television antennas.

An article in the *New York Times* confirms what we have suspected for quite awhile now. 49% of internet users turn to search engines to get information, recipes, addresses, directions, oriental rugs, or anything that you can imagine. As we definitely know, they are using search engines to find legal help. They look for divorce attorneys, criminal defense attorneys, tax attorneys, and most certainly personal injury attorneys. And the lawyers who are smart about search engine optimization are the ones who will benefit.

As the population gets older and more computer-savvy, the number of people who use search engines on a daily basis isn't going to do anything but go up. There is no better time to position your website to take advantage of these rising numbers.

Contact Foster Web Marketing to see how your firm can benefit from attorney search engine optimization.

Autumn begins
September 22, 2008

A Little too Expensive for This Kind of Error

Apparently, Google AdWords weren't functioning properly last month. With the amount of money that it costs to run an AdWord on Google, even a half second where it isn't doing what it's supposed to is a horrible waste of money.

While AdWords might be the simple way to get prominently listed, the costs are more than your average PI law firm can bear. Working the search engines organically is a much more cost effective way of achieving good search engine placement, especially if there are the inevitable crashes and bugs in the AdWords system.

Google Sandbox (continued from page 2)

It has been theorized that the 'Google sandbox effect" is a method of keeping the spamming web sites out of the higher page rankings for a short term, but at the same time is affecting the truly valuable web sites that have been recently launched.

The Sandbox effect usually happens to web sites in the English language. It is noticeably absent from the Dutch and Italian websites. It seems to affect the commercial and private sector sites and does not seem to trap the .gov, .mil or the .edu sites. It started showing up after 2003 and does not affect well established web sites that were published before that time. Recently, releases web sites on Yahoo, MSN and Ask Jeeves are usually seen in a quicker time frame than on Google search engines.

Foster Web Marketing can help you get through the sandbox effect more quickly. We will provide you with a high level of design and a top notch information architecture. We will create exceptional quality content and through our CMP (Content Management Program) will continually update your web site while allowing you the ability to add content to your own web site through the DSS (Dynamic Self Service) program. Adding new content is the key to high page ranking on the Google search engine and will get you out of the sandbox quicker. Foster Web Marketing will assist you with a legitimate link gain at the beginning of your web site development to avoid the sandbox and high traffic is another opportunity to boost your Google ratings. We will also help you with your Search Engine Optimization strategies. This is another area that will hopefully shorten your time waiting in the sandbox. Unless you are planning to do a government or educational web site in Italian or Dutch we can help you avoid the "Google Aging Delay."

Six Essentials You Must Demand from Your Website Developer
By Lawyer Marketing Guru Ben Glass

Lawyer marketing on the Internet has exploded, and there are no signs of a slowdown in the growth of lawyer websites. All of your money is wasted, however, if you cannot combine great positioning on Google with an interesting website that makes an irresistible offer to the potential client. Most lawyer websites either do not position well on Google or are so boring that they do not give potential clients any reason to become excited about you.

Internet marketing is complex, and the competition is fierce for a high ranking on Google. If your web developer does not offer the following six essentials then you are not gaining the full advantage of having a web presence:

1. The ability to update and edit content instantly, without actually calling you webmaster. This includes the ability to add additional web pages (not just blog) to jump on breaking news. If you cannot instantly add pages to your website from your desktop computer, you are missing out.

2. You should be able to add and upload video to your site on your own from your desktop. Obviously, consumers expect to find video at your website. Your potential clients want to know you before doing business with you and even before picking up the phone to talk to you. You should not have to pay your web developer tens of thousands of dollars to implement video at your site. In fact, many lawyers are now shooting video in their own offices and instantly uploading them - not only to their own site but to the major video sites on the Internet. If your webmaster says that this cannot be done, they have simply not kept up with cutting edge technology.

3. The ability to upload your monthly offline newsletter. You should be able to mail to clients instantly to your site in a searchable form. You should be mailing a monthly newsletter to your clients. You should not have to call your webmaster in order to upload the PDF of the mailed newsletter to your site. This is additional content that Google spiders love.

4. The ability to know the exact search terms your prospective clients used to find you on the Internet. Whenever a client emails you from a link on your website, that email should be accompanied by information as to exactly what the potential client typed into the search engine box to find a lawyer. This information is vital, and lawyers who have it and understand it are continually re-optimizing their sites for these search terms. You should not have to guess at what words consumers are actually using to find you.

5. The ability to have the full contact information that you have collected from the web form on your site imported into a marketing database that kicks off a multistep, multimedia direct marketing campaign back to interested prospects. What good is it to have people come to your site, give you their information, and then never follow up with them? Your web developer should be able to integrate the data you collect from your online marketing into your offline marketing program. This is easy to do yet, unfortunately, most web developers are focused on the Internet and have no idea what else you should be doing to market your practice, let alone know how to help you do that.

6. The ability to actually convert visitors to clients. Lots of web developers' brag about the amount of traffic driven to your site. Basically it's pretty easy these days to drive hundreds, if not thousands of potential clients to your site every month. You need a web developer who understands how to convert visitors to potential clients and then to clients. Clue: it's not having a "contact us" form at your website. Your web developer needs to be able to help you create an "irresistible offer" that will provoke consumers to raise their hand and say, "I'm interested, let's start the conversation."

Internet marketing for lawyers is fiercely competitive, and there are plenty of vendors and web developers ready, willing and able to take tons of your money without really understanding the total marketing picture. Take this checklist to your developer and demand that they deliver to you what needs to be delivered in order to maximize the return on your Internet investment.

Find out more about Ben Glass at GreatLegalMarketing.com