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## A good Web site is a vital part of law-firm marketing

By Debra Kamys

Your personal Web site and blog are all about you. You can write to an audience or to yourself; the real audience is you and what you want to share with the world. Your law firm’s Web site, on the other hand, has an audience: your current and potential clients. With the astounding growth of the Internet over the last decade, your law firm’s Web site is your strongest marketing tool ... if used correctly.

A great Web site design will capture your visitors’ attention when they arrive at the site, but it’s the content that keeps both your audience and your search engine rankings. Keep in mind a few basic rules.

### Keep it simple

The Web site should be easy to use. Links – especially the primary navigation – should be clearly titled, making it easy to find content on the site. If your visitors can’t find the content they’re looking for easily, they’re likely to give up and find a law firm whose Web site is easier to navigate. This applies to both your Web site design and your content.

As an example of a site design issue, a large law firm may have a search form for its attorney section, but a small law firm should have the list of attorneys immediately available once the attorney section has been selected. Even a large firm should have some way to circumvent the search form, in case the visitors want to see the entire list of attorneys. Any size firm can enhance the use of the attorney landing page by including contact information for the attorneys listed on it, reducing the number of links visitors have to click.

In terms of content, don’t overcomplicate the options for your visitors, and keep in mind an external perspective when you create it. Your internal structure is not necessarily what the world needs to see; practice groups that seem obvious inside the firm may be too convoluted for a visitor who’s only interested in one practice area. For example, what’s the difference between estate planning and wills? How many different links would you click before giving up and finding a simpler site? And how long a list of practice areas are you willing to look through? If it’s not immediately obvious, I may skip trying to search the content on the page. Wouldn’t you?

### Keep it brief

I once had a professor who told us the same thing two or three ways during class. He would then start the next class session by repeating the same point, before moving on to the multiple ways of making his next point for the day. To say I was bored would be an understatement. None of his points were brief, and the constant repetition, rather than enhancing

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## Law firm Web sites

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*Debra Kamys is one of the principals of Inherent, Inc., a provider of identity and Web-related services for law firms. She graduated from the University of California at Davis with joint degrees in Psychology and Rhetoric, and earned her Master's Degree in Educational Psychology at the University of San Francisco. More information about her company is at [www.inherent.com](http://www.inherent.com). Contact Debra at 415.399.9733 or [debra.kamys@inherent.com](mailto:debra.kamys@inherent.com).*

the learning experience, made the class drag.

Don't let your content drag. This is particularly true of your attorney biographies and practice areas content, two of the most important areas of your Web site. If you list the attorney's education in bulleted lists, for example, don't repeat that information in paragraphs unless you can add something significant to it. Don't list every case your attorneys have won; list the most recent and most relevant to their current work.

The same holds true for your practice areas. The large case you won last year should be featured more prominently than the one from three years ago. And too much content will likely scare off the reader, so clear out the older information periodically. Your Web site content becomes a careful balancing act between providing too little information and too much. Your focus should be on providing concise, quality information.

### Keep it readable

The Web site design should make the text readable on the page, both by using contrasting color and an easily readable font. Making your content readable is a bit more challenging. While attorneys may expect to read pages and pages of dense paragraphs in a Supreme Court (or other) decision, your Web site visitors do not. Dense paragraphs are likely to go unread online. Your content should be split up into readable chunks, using bullets and subheadings to define sections, with the occasional bold or italic type to highlight important areas of text.

### Keep it current

Keeping your information current gives your visitors and the search engine "spiders" a reason to keep returning to the Web site. The first time someone visits your site, they may not be ready to hire you. If they see that you're updating the site regularly, usually with firm news, articles, or other media items, they'll be more likely to return to see updates or subscribe to your RSS feed. Not only will this encourage your visitors to return, but the more frequently you update the content, the more

often search engines will visit your site looking for changed content. The more often the search engines visit, the higher your ranking will likely be, which will result in more visitors.

### Keep it up!

The hosting environment for your firm's Web site should be reliable, stable, and accessible. It is vitally important that your site be available whenever a user attempts to access it, which means you must find a reputable hosting partner. The optimal situation would be a host who provides redundancy, nightly backups, multiple connectivity providers, a backup generator, off-site fire-proof storage, and a firewall for security.

Furthermore, you'll want to make certain that you have the ability to maintain the content on the site, from any computer and at any time. A Web-based content management system (CMS) is best, whether it's a simple WordPress site or an enterprise-level system that uses a relational database. Your hosting partner should not limit your ability to access the Web site, or to transfer it to a new host if you so desire.

When you're ready to develop a new Web site and/or move your existing site to a new hosting environment, be sure to ask the right questions to ensure that you don't end up trapped. Have someone in the firm read the small print in the hosting agreement and request modifications if you feel anything is limiting. I suspect you know one or two attorneys who can help.

### Content and design work together

A lot of the effort needed to have a great Web site for your law firm is in creating and maintaining the content. A great Web site design, tailored for ease of use, is intended to enhance high-quality, concise content that is presented to your visitors and updated regularly. The content should be written with an "outside-in" focus, taking into consideration how a client or prospect would likely look for information. ■

## Getting the word out: how public speaking can make it rain

By Traci Ray, Attorney at Law



Traci Ray is the Director of Marketing at Barran Liebman LLP, a Portland-based employment, labor, and benefits law firm. Traci is a member of the Oregon State Bar and teaches in the ABA Accredited Paralegal Program at Portland Community College. Contact her at 503.276.s2115 or tray@barran.com.

**T**argeting and signing new clients is the overall objective of law-firm marketing. Attorneys and their time, however, are consumed with practicing law and providing clients with sound legal advice, leaving little energy to actively seek out new clients and master the “sales role” of business development. Nevertheless, as statistics show, marketing when your practice is peaking is the best way to market, akin to the benefit of looking for a new job while currently employed.

Selling one’s services often proves difficult, both in planning and execution. Many attorneys are concerned about the cost and time marketing can require to achieve successful results. Legal marketing includes many proverbial puzzle pieces, and my suggestion is that you pick and choose to find the right combination of strategies for your particular law practice and personality. Advertising, community activities and sponsorships, leadership roles, writing, and public speaking are all tools attorneys use to pitch their legal services and capture new business. Of these techniques, speaking on legal topics is an efficient, economical, and effective marketing tool. Public speeches can build your competence and credibility and ultimately your career.

### Be an approachable expert

Speaking in front of an audience cements a face to a name. You can showcase your personality, create a relationship with every member of the audience, and be remembered.

Best of all, you have the opportunity to establish yourself as an expert who is approachable: someone who colleagues and clients will want to call the next time your expertise is required. Speaking on a legal topic can quickly gain you the respect and confidence of the audience. You may find that soon you are being referred to in the community as the “go-to” attorney on the topic and are receiving referrals from your colleagues and calls from clients.

### Working the audience

When you agree to speak—on a panel, at a Continuing Legal Education program, for a local association meeting, at a client training,

or in any other number of scenarios—you are committing to a group of people who want to hear what you have to say. In other words, you are lucky! You are about to enter a room where the audience chooses to listen to you and your expertise. This makes the atmosphere much friendlier and less like a sales presentation, even if you are speaking to clients or a group that you hope to impress for future work.

If you are uncomfortable speaking in front of large crowds, start small. Gradually work up to larger audiences as you gain confidence and become relaxed.

Be mindful that you can damage your credibility by not preparing or having inadequate background to speak and answer questions about the topic. Winging it is never advised—commit to preparing and practicing all presentations.

Finally, if you can get a list of attendees prior to the speech, make note of who you would like to target as potential clients and be prepared with questions for them about their company, interests, and legal needs. Use their company bios, Web pages, social networks, and news articles to research and learn about them in advance. If this type of information is not available beforehand, be sure to take notice of the attendees most engaged by your speech and personally introduce yourself after the program. Exchange business cards and always be sure to follow up with a note and an invitation to coffee or lunch if you feel that a future relationship, either as a client or potential referral source, is possible.

### Capitalize on your 15 minutes of fame

Three additional things you can do when creating your speaking strategy are:

#### 1. Create handouts that are useful and branded.

A key element is to provide a handout at your speech that includes all of your contact information, and possibly instructions for more materials on your Web site.

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**Public speaking**

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You want the audience to be able to contact you easily (especially with questions), and you need to provide them with handouts that are useful enough that they will actually refer to them when needed. Include your name, firm name/logo, email, phone, and Web address on each handout.

**2. Pair your speech with an article.**

Pairing your speech with an article is not only smart, it is easy. Because you are already an “expert” on the topic and are preparing slides and handouts, go ahead and pitch a complementary column to a local paper or Bar publication. Now you are really solidifying your expertise and – if you can get the column published before the time of the speech – you can advertise your presentation in the column to attract an even larger audience.

**3. Add to your bio right away.**

Finally, always be sure to immediately add your speeches (as well as your publications, accolades, and updates) to your resume and online bio. You want to keep your bio fresh and up-to-date so when another group is looking for a speaker and it comes across your information, the decision to invite you to speak to its audience is an easy one.

**Speaking can be a good investment**

Using public speaking as a marketing tool is a great way to publicize your expertise and showcase your personality. It takes only one client or colleague to involve you in a case, so that the time and energy spent on the speech results in an overwhelming return on investment (ROI). Remember that there are many tools to help you “sell” your services, and if you like to speak, lining up some presentations in your near future could prove very beneficial to your practice. ■

**Important elder law numbers**

*as of July 1, 2011*

<b>Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Benefit Standards</b>	Eligible individual.....\$674/month Eligible couple ..... \$1,011/month
<b>Medicaid (Oregon)</b>	Long term care income cap .....\$2,022/month Community spouse minimum resource standard ..... \$21,912 Community spouse maximum resource standard .....\$109,560 Community spouse minimum and maximum monthly allowance standards.....\$1,839/month; \$2,739/month Excess shelter allowance ..... Amount above \$552/month Food stamp utility allowance used to figure excess shelter allowance .....\$397/month Personal needs allowance in nursing home.....\$30/month Personal needs allowance in community-based care.....\$152/month Room & board rate for community-based care facilities ..... \$523.70/month OSIP maintenance standard for person receiving in-home services .....\$675.70 Average private pay rate for calculating ineligibility for applications made on or after October 1, 2008.....\$7,663/month
<b>Medicare</b>	Part B premium for those enrolled in 2011..... \$115.40/month* Part B deductible..... \$162/year Part A hospital deductible per spell of illness .....\$1,132 Part D premium: .....Varies according to plan chosen Skilled nursing facility co-insurance for days 21-100.....\$141.50/day * For those enrolled in 2010, the premium is \$110.50. For those enrolled in 2009, the premium is \$96.50. For those enrolled prior to 2009, the premium is \$96.40. Premiums are higher if annual income is more than \$85,000 (single filer) or \$170,000 (married couple filing jointly).

# The basics of networking: it's easier than you think

By Scott Weimer



*Scott Weimer is the marketing manager in the Portland office of Schwabe, Williamson & Wyatt. He is the 2011 president of the Northwest chapter of the Legal Marketing Association.*

There seems to be no end to the new and emerging ways for attorneys to market their practice. From Web sites and blogs to social media and Internet advertising – not to mention the cost and effort needed to use them all to their full potential – it can seem a bit overwhelming. However, in spite of all the modern technologies, there still remains one tool that continues to serve as the most effective means for developing business: you!

No amount of brochures or Tweets can promote your practice as succinctly and as effectively as having person-to-person conversations with clients, prospective clients, and referral sources. Wherever business owners and other professionals gather, there lies an opportunity to tell your story, listen to theirs, and learn how you can align your legal services with their needs. It's called networking. And though many people approach it as a "necessary evil" in today's marketplace, when done in a targeted, strategic manner, networking can be the bedrock that establishes the long-lasting business relationships that bring new clients in the door.

## Get involved

The most essential element of networking is meeting the kinds of people to whom you want to market your practice. One ideal place to find them is at a trade association. For tax and estate planning attorneys, this may mean joining a local CPA or wealth managers' organization. Not sure where to start? Ask some of your current clients what meetings they attend, and see if you can accompany them to the next one. Not only will this point you toward the right association, it can also impress upon your client your interest in getting to better know his or her industry.

The main objective of joining any trade association is to get involved. Ask the group's leadership what opportunities there are for you to volunteer your time. Whether it's stuffing envelopes, conducting research, or writing an article for the newsletter, get active, be visible, and volunteer often. By volunteer-

ing, you'll start to meet and work alongside others – your potential new clients – establishing and cultivating relationships along the way. Ultimately, your goal should be to join a committee and eventually the board of directors. Getting involved at higher levels will give you greater exposure to a wider audience, and further bolster your reputation as an attorney who knows your clients' industries inside and out.

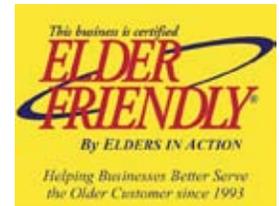
## Shake hands, then listen

One misconception people have about networking is that it involves a lot of talking: about you, your practice, your firm, fellow partners, law school, and so on. Yes, you can benefit from having a brief introduction prepared about who you are and what specifically you do (the emphasis here is on "brief": perhaps a sentence or two). But the real key to successful networking is asking others about themselves, and then listening to what they have to say. Ask open-ended questions, such as "How did you get involved in this organization?" or "What are your interests outside of work?" Be generous and allow someone the space to tell you his or her story, and genuinely listen and be engaged. The first impression of you will be of someone who is interested in knowing who he or she is as a person, which can be the first step toward establishing affinity and trust. Do keep your ears open for ways that you can help people in their businesses; there'll be opportunities to "talk shop" in subsequent conversations with them.

Meet as many people as you're comfortable with, though try to cast a wide net. While it can be easy to chat with the extroverts in the group, also seek out those standing on the sidelines. As you engage with a wider variety of people, you will become more comfortable and adept at the art of networking. Though not everyone will pan out as a business prospect, you may be pleasantly surprised by the ones who do. ■

## Promote your firm as an Elder Friendly® certified business

By Katie Gaetjens, MSW, Retired Attorney at Law; Elders in Action volunteer



**A**s an elder law attorney, you have chosen to focus your practice on serving the needs of elderly clients. But is your office truly “elder friendly”?

Elders in Action, a non-profit focused on advocacy and education to assure that “quality of life does not depend on age,” has developed an evaluation program to help you assess whether your practice is meeting the needs of your clients beyond providing legal counsel.

The Elder Friendly® business certification program covers Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties in Oregon and Clark County, Washington. The program has been in existence since 1993 and has continued to evolve and adapt to changes in technology and the marketplace.

The goal of Elders in Action is to work with businesses to make their offices a more welcome place for older adults. Volunteer evaluators attend a half-day training session and use an online survey tool that was developed by older adults through focus groups and a gerontology specialist who identified the needs of the older consumer.

### How the process works

The original certification involves three or four volunteer evaluators who contact and visit the business. The four main areas of focus are:

- Access to the site by phone (able to find, answering, information provided)
- Physical access to the site (parking, public transportation, restrooms)
- Layout of the site (lighting, flooring, ability to move around, seating)
- Customer service (communication, clarity of information)

Participating businesses receive a summary report presented by an Elders in Action staff person and a volunteer evaluator. The report includes an overview of the evaluations, recommendations for potential changes or improvements, and specific comments from the evaluators.

Every evaluation is confidential and provides an opportunity to learn how an older adult sees your office.

In addition, a Web site evaluation is done to provide feedback on the site from the point of view of an older adult.

Once your practice is certified you will receive an Elder Friendly® Business decal to display at your office as well as links to graphics that you can use on your Web site and printed materials.

For recertification, a smaller number of evaluators conduct a follow-up evaluation.

### Why does certification matter?

First, obtaining certification assures that as an elder law practitioner you have done everything you can to make your clients’ experience with you comfortable and stress-free. Seeking legal counsel can be intimidating for anyone at any age; it can be especially stressful for elderly people who may have to contend with additional obstacles such as mobility, vision, or hearing issues. You can help minimize these challenges.

Second, obtaining certification entitles you to be listed in the Elders in Action *Elder Friendly® Business Directory*, both in hard copy and online. As this program grows we receive calls from an ever-increasing number of elderly people looking for referrals for a variety of services, including legal services. We emphasize when making referrals that we are not endorsing the quality of service, but rather the access and customer service provided by a given business. Knowing that an office is certified as Elder Friendly provides a level of confidence that they will be treated well, respected, and feel comfortable in the business.

Finally, we receive feedback from people who have used referrals from our directory: often compliments and sometimes challenges they have encountered. We in turn pass this information on to certified businesses so they can address any issues that can be remedied so that their next client is met with the best service possible. This can be valuable feedback for organizations.

### What does certification cost?

The initial cost is \$300 for businesses with fewer than 50 employees. The annual renewal fees are \$200.

### How do I obtain more information or begin the process?

To be included in the printed 2012 *Elder Friendly Business Directory* you must start the certification process by September 15. Contact Joan@eldersinaction.org or call 503.235.5474. For more information about our organization, go to [www.EldersinAction.org](http://www.EldersinAction.org). ■

## Resources for elder law attorneys

### CLE seminars

#### Conflicts of Interest in Law Practice: A Practical Guide

OSB Quick Call Seminar  
August 2, 2011, 10:00–11:00 a.m.  
[www.osbar.org](http://www.osbar.org)

#### Guardianships and Conservatorships

Oregon Law Institute Seminar  
October 21, 2011  
Oregon Convention Center; Portland  
[law.lclark.edu](http://law.lclark.edu)

#### Advanced Elder Law Boot Camp

November 10–12, 2011  
Seaport Hotel, Boston, MA  
[www.NAELA.org](http://www.NAELA.org)

#### National Aging and Law Institute

November 10–12, 2011  
Seaport Hotel, Boston, MA  
[www.NAELA.org](http://www.NAELA.org)

#### NAELA UnProgram

January 20–22, 2012  
Grapevine, Texas  
[www.NAELA.org](http://www.NAELA.org)

#### OSB Elder Law Section unCLE Program

May 4, 2012  
Valley River Inn, Eugene

### Web Sites

#### Amy Campbell's Web Log

Blog about new media, Web marketing, and  
law firm marketing  
<http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/amy>

#### FindLaw

Articles on legal technology, marketing,  
practice management  
<http://lp.findlaw.com/law-practice-management>

### NAELA-sponsored insurance programs

Administered by Association Health Programs, the NAELA-Sponsored Insurance Program provides access to insurance you need as an attorney and as a small business owner, including individual and group health insurance policies, long term care insurance, life insurance, professional liability, fiduciary, or other business insurance.

[www.NAELA.org](http://www.NAELA.org)

### Elder Law Section Web site

[www.osbar.org/sections/elder/elderlaw.html](http://www.osbar.org/sections/elder/elderlaw.html)

The Web site has useful links for elder law practitioners, past issues of *Elder Law Newsletter*, and current elder law numbers.

### Elder Law Section electronic discussion list

All members of the Elder Law Section are automatically signed up on the list, but your participation is not mandatory.

#### How to use the discussion list

Send a message to all members of the Elder Law Section distribution list by addressing it to: [eldlaw@lists.osbar.org](mailto:eldlaw@lists.osbar.org). Replies are directed by default to the sender of the message *only*. If you wish to send a reply to the entire list, you must change the address to: [eldlaw@lists.osbar.org](mailto:eldlaw@lists.osbar.org) – or you can choose “Reply to all.”

#### Guidelines & Tips

- Include a subject line in messages to the list, for example, “lawyer referral needed” on the topic line.
- Try to avoid re-sending the entire message to which you are replying. Cut and paste the relevant parts when replying.
- Sign your messages with your full name, firm name, and appropriate contact information.
- In the interest of virus prevention, do not try to send graphics or attachments. ■

### Newsletter Board

The *Elder Law Newsletter* is published quarterly by the Oregon State Bar's Elder Law Section, Brian Haggerty, Chair. Statements of fact are the responsibility of the authors, and the opinions expressed do not imply endorsement by the Section.

#### Editor:

Carole Barkley ..... [carole424@aol.com](mailto:carole424@aol.com); 503.224.0098

#### Advisory Board:

Erin Evers, Co-chair ..... [erin@evers-law.com](mailto:erin@evers-law.com); 503.640.1084  
Sylvia Sycamore, Co-chair ..... [sylvia@sylviasycamore.com](mailto:sylvia@sylviasycamore.com); 541.683.8124  
Dady K. Blake ..... [dady@q.com](mailto:dady@q.com); 503.249.0502  
Hon. Claudia M. Burton . .... [claudia.m.burton@ojd.state.or.us](mailto:claudia.m.burton@ojd.state.or.us); 503.378.4621  
Penny Davis ..... [penny@theelderlawfirm.com](mailto:penny@theelderlawfirm.com); 503.452.5050  
Prof. Leslie Harris ..... [lharris@law.uoregon.edu](mailto:lharris@law.uoregon.edu); 541.346.3840  
Phil Hingson ..... [phil@oregontrustattorney.com](mailto:phil@oregontrustattorney.com); 503.639.4800  
Leslie Kay ..... [leslie.kay@lasoregon.org](mailto:leslie.kay@lasoregon.org); 503.224.4086  
Karen Knauerhase ..... [karen@knauerhaselaw.com](mailto:karen@knauerhaselaw.com); 503.228.0055  
William J. Kuhn ..... [kuhnandspicer@windwave.org](mailto:kuhnandspicer@windwave.org); 541.567.8301  
Daniel Robertson ..... [drobertson@allermorrison.com](mailto:drobertson@allermorrison.com); 541.673.0171  
Mary Thuemmel ..... [marythuemmel@gmail.com](mailto:marythuemmel@gmail.com); 503.318.8393  
Prof. Bernard F. Vail ..... [vail@lclark.edu](mailto:vail@lclark.edu); 503.768.6656