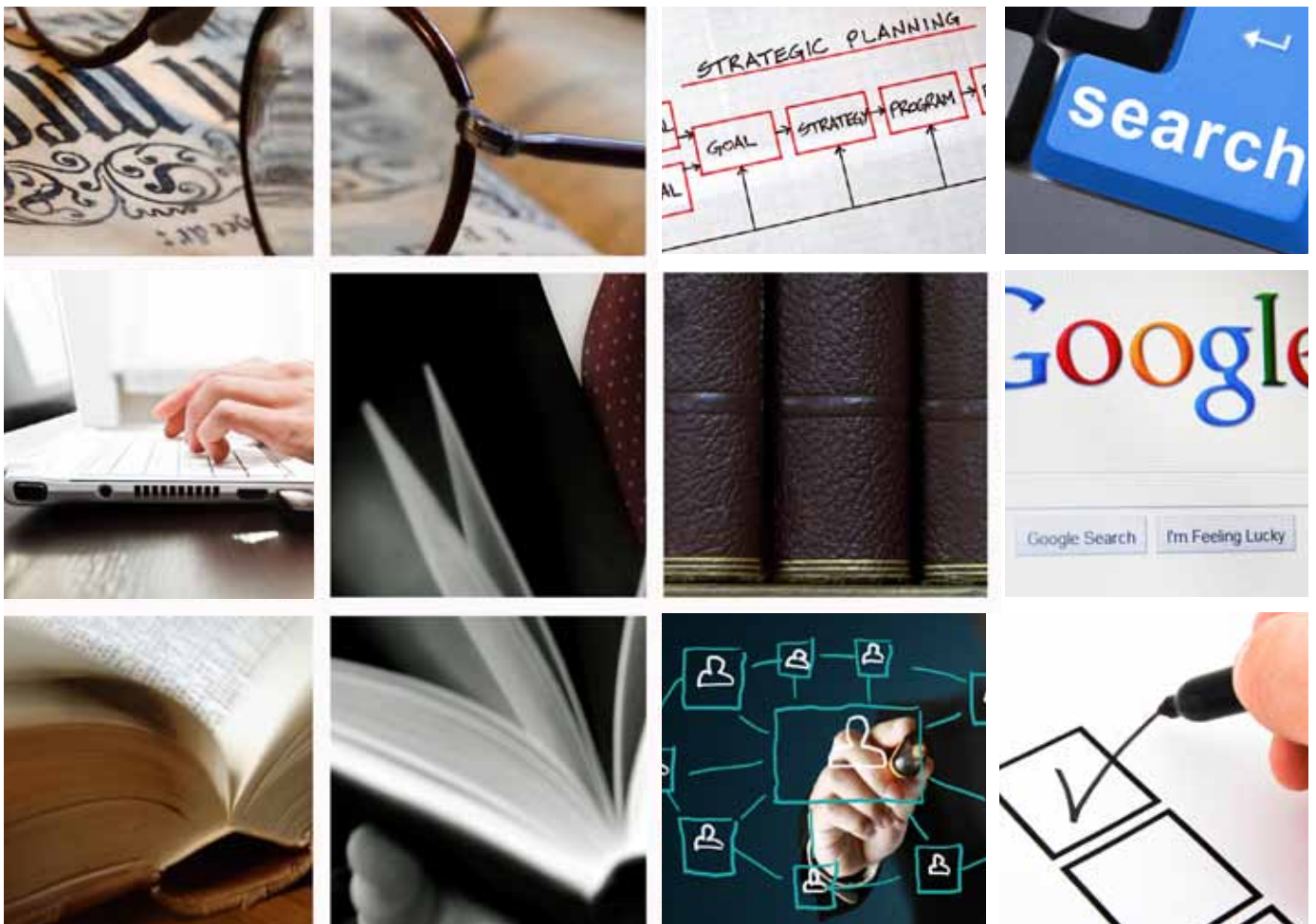


# ElderLaw Online Marketing Secrets Revealed

## Get More Visibility, Traffic and Leads

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## Introduction

Are you an elder law attorney who is looking for a few simple and effective ways to get more business online? Perhaps you know you need to do more when it comes to online marketing, but you aren't sure where to start.

If this describes you, you've just discovered an extremely valuable guide that contains virtually all the information you'll need to get started down the path of ultra-effective online marketing for elder law attorneys.

We're experiencing one of the most significant changes in modern history in the way people search for, evaluate, and choose local services. If you're like most elder law attorneys, you're probably well aware of this great online migration, but you may be surprised at just how massive the Internet stampede has become:

Each day, Americans perform more than 600 million searches for local products and services alone.

## Benefits of Online Search for Consumers

The Internet (and search engines like Google) provides us with an incredible amount of current information, giving the Web several distinct advantages over traditional media (such as the Yellow Pages), for both consumers and local business owners:

- **Relevance.** Because search engines produce results based on the terms and phrases we specify, we (usually) only see information related to our specific query. We can assume that information found online is fairly current, at least more so than that in printed publications. (Did you ever hear of the Yellow Pages doing a recall based on a change of address?)
- **Interactivity.** The Internet gives us access to user-generated reviews, comments, and feedback related to the local products and services we're looking for. Access to peer validation greatly aids in the decision-making process, especially when it comes to something as serious as selecting an elder law attorney for oneself or for one's parents.
- **Convenience.** After a few keystrokes and a single click, we can find virtually every piece of information we could possibly need related to local services, from directions and distance to pricing, photos/videos, and reviews.

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## What About We Attorneys?

This is where things start to get interesting (and it's why we wrote this e-book).

As wary of the Internet as you and many seniors may be, this new playing field has given us several new and amazing tools that our predecessors never dreamed possible ("predecessors" referring to attorneys way back in the 1990s, in this case):

- **Relevance.** Yes, this is the same number-one benefit consumers enjoy, and for the same reason. The fact that consumers can type in a few key words (more on key words later) and get specific results means that you can target consumers who are only looking for the specific services you provide. No more "spray and pray," spending thousands on advertising aimed at the masses while hoping to reach a few folks looking for local legal assistance.
- **Engagement.** The Internet allows us to reach and deliver our message to our target audience in ways never before possible, going far beyond simple text and photos that print media provide. We can use our Web site to engage visitors with compelling videos, audio, and other multimedia, creating an experience instead of a one-way sales pitch.
- **Measurement.** The digital nature of the Internet and online marketing provide the great benefit of instantly quantifying results. By looking at a few simple metrics related to our online presence (traffic, leads, consultations, and client conversion), we can know which marketing programs are making money and exactly how much.

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## Top 6 Challenges for Elder Law Attorneys

At ElderLawAnswers, we talk to hundreds of elder law attorneys each month looking to partner with us and tap into the more than 70,000 adult children and family caregivers who visit our site monthly. They are also seeking to create and enhance the value of their own Web sites.

This high volume of interactions with attorneys and consumers gives us unique insights into the challenges, techniques, and trends associated with online marketing.

When asked about the challenges related to online marketing, most attorneys respond with the following top six concerns:

1. "Our firm has a decent-looking Web site, but it's not generating enough leads."
2. "We're experiencing reduced results from traditional (offline) marketing, and we understand that more people are searching online for legal services."
3. "We need to beef up our online marketing efforts, but we have limited resources, both in terms of finances and time; it's difficult to evaluate the various options available."
4. "Given our limited marketing budget, it's important to invest in channels that produce an immediate return on investment."
5. "We lack the time to research and implement online marketing tools and strategies."
6. "Frankly, we just don't know where to start."

The bottom line is that elder law firms, like most small-business marketers, lack the time, knowledge, and budget to make the change from traditional to online marketing, or to do so in a way that produces great results.

Making matters worse are the dozens of options being pushed to attorneys: SEO, PPC, Web site design, online directories, social media, and on and on, ad nauseam. The murky waters of online marketing are saturated with sales folks and consulting firms, all promising to hold the keys to online success. Usually talking with them only confuses the matter. What's the elder law attorney to do?

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## Secrets of Online Marketing for Elder Law Attorneys Revealed: 4 Phases to More Traffic, Leads, and Clients!

There is a simple four-phase process that any elder law attorney can understand and use, often seeing positive results immediately. Each of these four sections tells you what you need to know and what to do.

Note: Because of the shorter e-book format, we've included links to additional tools and information when appropriate.

- **Phase 1: Marketing Overhaul: The 5 M's of Marketing.** Before spending another minute (or dollar) on online marketing, it's critical that you understand and implement the "5M" strategy. Four of the Ms -- targeting the right market, crafting your unique message, selecting the best media, and tracking critical metrics -- are 90 percent of the battle in marketing, both online and beyond.
- **Phase 2: Your Minimum Effective Dose of Technology.** This section will reveal what you need to know about Google, serving as a great primer on online marketing, how search engines work, finding the right key words for your site, and more.
- **Phase 3: Transform Your Web Site Into a Lead-Generation Engine.** Learn simple, effective steps to make your site people- and search-engine friendly, ensuring that you'll get found on Google and engage more visitors, compelling them to contact you.
- **Phase 4: How to Increase Your Online Visibility.** After crafting your marketing message, learning more about search engines, and optimizing your site, it's time to spread the word everywhere your next clients are looking online. This section will tell you how and where to advertise your community online for best results.



## Phase 1: Your Marketing Overhaul

Before you optimize your site, outrank your competitors on Google, and spread your message to the far reaches of cyberspace and beyond, we need to address one indelible truth that holds hostage the success of the small-business marketing world:

### Bad marketing = Bad Internet marketing

Bad marketing is rampant among small businesses in all reaches of the planet. Bad marketing doesn't discriminate, affecting all businesses, in all categories and regions, the same way. Bad marketing was around 10,000 years ago ("We sell wheels. They're round."). It will be around long after the Internet passes, and after whatever other client communication tools lie ahead.

Bad marketing can be defined as poor use of, or complete lack of, fundamental marketing concepts. These marketing concepts, known as the 5M's, are:

- **Mindset.** Focus on growing your business in addition to running your business.
- **Market.** Know your ideal clients (target market).
- **Message.** Craft a compelling message that speaks to the needs of your audience and separates you from your competition.
- **Media.** Know which places (including online) to reach your audience.
- **Metrics.** Measure the essential numbers that relate to your marketing.

Many attorneys fail to implement these core elements, often resulting in poor return on investment from valuable marketing dollars and, worse yet, failure to grow or even stay in business.

Everyone's heard the common and scary statistic that "90 percent of small businesses fail." A more accurate variation may be that "90 percent of small businesses fail to market properly." Why is this relevant to you? Because all sole practitioners and small law firms are in fact small businesses. We'll explain why most small businesses and small law firms fail to market, but first, let's dig deeper into the 5M's of marketing and how to put them to work.

### The 5M's of Marketing: How to Get the Most From Your Marketing

Building a strong foundation will "raise all ships," increasing the results of virtually every marketing endeavor that follows. The 5M's of marketing apply to every available outlet an elder law practice may use to grow.

## 1. Mindset: Focus on growing your business in addition to running your business.

Mindset is the first M of marketing for a reason: Without the proper mindset, nothing else you do matters.

Most attorneys go into law based on their great passion for the skills required and choose elder law in order to perform valuable services for needy clients, not to sell products. Going back to the “90 percent of all small businesses fail” quote: Do you think your local pizza shop closed its doors from lack of tasty dough, or an inability to sell pizzas?

Probably the latter. Perhaps the owner went into business to make great pizza and not to sell great pizza, finding him- or herself in the common conundrum of marketing illiteracy -- when it's too late to recover.

Here are a few tips to start you on the right path toward a great marketing mindset:

- You're in the business of marketing quality elder law services, not just providing them.
- You should spend as much time gaining tools and knowledge related to marketing your firm as you can.
- Your marketing and your Web site are your reputation and are too valuable to outsource (at least until you understand them in detail first).
- You must become a provider of valuable content that helps people understand their estate and long-term care planning options.
- Reviews are everything in this connected world; people place great value on the experiences of others and are more likely to contact firms that have more reviews.
- You must pay close attention, as often as you can, to basic metrics related to your marketing.
- How do your marketing skills compare with your elder law and estate planning skills? If you've identified the need to add more arrows to your marketing quiver -- and fast -- the rest is simple, as long as you've got the right mindset.

## 2. Market: Know your ideal clients (target market).

The first step one should take in starting or marketing a business is to identify a target market, learn as much as you can about that market (or, at the very minimum, who they are, how many of them there are, and what specific problems they're trying to solve), and formulate products or services that meet these needs.

How does one go about conducting this market research? Simple: Write down and answer a few basic questions. What separates success from failure is often a simple action like this.

### Sample Elder Law Market Research Worksheet

- Who is our target market?
  - a. Adult children, ages 52-66
  - b. Mostly female
  - c. Household income: \$97,000
  - d. Occupations?
  - e. Hobbies? Interests?
- How many adult children are in our target area (20 square miles)?
  - a. 70,000 households with parents ages 77 and above
- What are their top concerns in selecting the right counsel?

- a. Making the right choice/being informed
  - b. Protecting assets from long-term care costs
  - c. Mom/Dad doesn't want to leave home
  - d. Financial strain
  - e. Firm's reputation
  - f. Level of service provided
  - g. Location
  - h. Cost
  - i. Other
- What percentage of this market do we aim to reach and secure?
  - Who are the competitors?

Answer all the same questions for them.

Although this sounds like a lot of work, it can greatly affect the growth and long-term health of your firm.

You may decide that it makes more sense to target your marketing towards potential referral sources rather than directly towards prospective clients. In that case, ask the same questions and answer from the point of view of referrers rather than clients.

Magic happens when business owners go through this process. Suddenly everything become much clearer, as the path to marketing success and customer abundance reveals itself.

Once you've completed your basic market research worksheet, you can start putting these newfound insights to work.

### 3. Message: Craft a compelling message that speaks to the needs of your audience and separates you from your competition.

This is where things get interesting. Now that you know exactly who you're trying to reach (your ideal clients or referral sources) and what their most pressing needs are, you can craft a unique message that engages them and positions your business as the obvious choice.

Your unique marketing message should be consistent across all media (the next section covers this).

Most local businesses miss this step and make two common mistakes when it comes to messaging:

1. The message is about the law firm (advertiser) and not the audience (targeted client).
2. The message describes what the firm does instead of what makes the firm unique and why someone should pick your business over all the others.

#### How do you know if your firm needs a better marketing message?

Take this quick test:

Look at your Web site and compare it with your competitors' site.

- If you switched only the law firm name, would the Web site still work? If you answered "Yes," you probably need some marketing message updates. "Elder law" is not a unique selling proposition.
- Looking at the same Web sites, ask yourself who the subject of the message is. Who/what is the site speaking to? Usually it's about you and your firm instead of the needs of your desired clients. If so, read on.



### The formula for the perfect marketing message:

**(Your clients' most significant need and desire) + (The single thing that makes you stand out from your competitors) = THE PERFECT MARKETING MESSAGE**

For example, when you analyzed your market in Step 2 above, you may have discovered that clients who consider hiring your firm are concerned with the level of service you provide above all else.

And if, after investigating and recording the major qualities of the major competitors in your area, you realize that no other firms have nearly the devotion to service and the caring staff that you have, your unique marketing message may look like one of these:

“We Care About Our Clients”

“The Highest Level of Service for Elder Law Clients”

“More Experienced Staff for Better Service”

**Tip:** Remember, listing the services your firm provides (e.g., “Elder Law in Seattle”) is not a unique marketing message!

Now that you have the right mindset, understanding of your target market and unique marketing message, it's time to spread the word.

## 4. Media: Know which places (including online) to reach your audience.

This step is where the rubber meets the road. While the first three M's are critical to the success of any law practice, they fall under the “preparation/research phase” of an effective local business marketing strategy.

It's the fourth step, determining where to reach these elusive clients or referral sources, that makes all the difference (think: would PETA run an ad in Bowhunter magazine?). In order to reach marketing success, you have to deliver the right message to the right people in the right place(s).

Potential online media sources for elder law attorneys:

- Your Web site (from natural search traffic)
- Paid advertising (display and pay per click (PPC))
- Social media sites
- Online directories (general, local and niche-specific)
- Multimedia sites

So how do you find the right places to advertise and broadcast your message? Here a few surefire tips to ensure that your marketing dollars are going as far as possible:

How to select the right media for your marketing message -- otherwise known as where to advertise:

1. **Start with investigating your competitors.** Never stop here and follow the herd entirely, but as a rule, there's a reason companies spend money somewhere: because it's working. Spend time studying all the available media for your niche and pay attention to which of your competitors are there (and which are not).
2. **Use the ultra-targeted demographics that the Web provides.** Social media sites and search engines like Google can provide super-specific targeting in your advertising. Want to reach out to 55-year-old women who have two or more kids and belong to senior-care interest groups? These days, nearly all online media outlets can offer targeted ad runs. The same is true for print media as well, though to a lesser degree.

3. **Join online communities that are centered around your niche.** Community outreach probably plays an important role in your marketing efforts, and the same holds true for the online community -- and that's becoming truer each day. Join online discussions on social media sites, forums, and large senior-based sites such as Caring.com to stay in tune with the needs and patterns of your clients. Reading senior care blogs is also a great idea.
4. **Ask people.** Talking to people has always been and always will be one of the most effective marketing strategies you can use. The term "market research" comes to mind here. Ask your prospects, friends, clients, family, friends, enemies, and strangers where they would look for elder law services. Most of what you hear may come as little surprise, you're sure to find insights that you can put to use.

## 5. Metrics: Measure the essential numbers that relate to your marketing.

Metrics, the fifth and final "M" of marketing, is the most important. Most law firms (and local businesses in general) lose thousands of dollars and potential clients each year by simply not paying enough attention to the performance of their marketing. Marketing without metrics is not strategic at all.

Most small-business owners (and even a few "marketing experts") we talk to cannot answer even the most fundamental questions related to their marketing metrics (see below). Can you? Fear not, soon you'll be able to rattle off answers faster than auctioneer on a five-hour energy drink.

As we've said before, the days of "spray and pray" marketing (spending dollars or time on untrackable, unaccountable advertising and marketing and hoping for a result) are officially over. Or at least they should be. Given the limited marketing budgets and easy access to valuable information that are available to small law firms and solo practitioners, we must all become metrics-based marketers.

### The 4 Metrics Every Small-Business Owner Must Commit to Memory

If you're new to online marketing, you may feel overwhelmed by the overflow of information that goes along with doing business in our digital world. But after a few weeks of adjustment and getting in touch with your "inner geek," you'll fall in love with metrics, because they provide immediate feedback and insight into exactly what's working and what's not, saving you and your business a great deal of misspent time and money.

However, until then, here are the four metrics that every local business marketer (even the most advanced) must remember:

1. **Visibility:** Where you rank on Google for your target terms
2. **Traffic:** How many visitors your site receives in a given month
3. **Leads:** How many of these visitors contact your company (via phone, e-mail, or lead form)
4. **Sales:** How many new clients (and the related dollar amount) you generate from these leads

That's it: V-T-L-S. Of course, you can, should, and eventually will measure dozens of data points for each of these four main phases of this basic online marketing "funnel," but you'll achieve great success if you begin with this basic version.

### Using Google Analytics to Measure Web site Traffic

It's all about the numbers when it comes to your local online marketing strategy. If you don't know how many people are coming to your site, you're not going to be able to make changes that add up to true success for your business.

You need to look at your numbers.

With Google Analytics (<http://www.google.com/analytics/>), you don't have to be a rocket scientist. What you do need to do is install a little code into your Web site, and then you'll be able to log into Google to see what your site's been up to. According to Google, "This code goes on the bottom of every Web page you want to track just before the </body> tag. You'll either want to add it yourself or share it with your Web developer."

Within about 24 hours, you'll begin to see results about your Web site.

By tracking your numbers, you'll learn about:

- **Visits.** How many times did people visit your site during a particular time period?
- **Page views.** How many pages have your site visitors viewed?
- **Pages per visit.** How many pages were viewed, on average, during a site visit?
- **Bounce rate.** How many times did a visitor come to your site and then quickly "bounce" to another site? This number can seem high, because sometimes people come to a site by mistake, having used the wrong search term. Or this number can signal that your key words (see below) aren't suitable and that people are coming to your site based on key words that aren't related to your business.
- **Average time on site.** How long did a person stay on your Web site?
- **Percentage of new visits.** How many new visitors have come to your Web site during a specific time period?
- **Conversions.** What percentage of visits turned into leads (because users completed a lead form on your site)?

All this information is highly valuable. It can help you create the best possible strategy for changing your Web site, evaluating new changes, and tweaking your site to get better results.

Tip: Use Google Analytics (<http://www.google.com/analytics/>) to measure your Web site traffic patterns. It's simple to install, and it's free. The site has plenty of tips and resources if you need assistance.

### Measuring Your Competition

Even if you'd rather just forget that you have competition, you can't. You need to look at your competitors to see how they're doing versus how you're doing. When you do this, you'll be able to tweak your Web site to increase your effectiveness.

While your competition certainly isn't going to let you peek at their numbers, if you review their site pages regularly you might see how well they're doing. The Internet provides unique and useful insights into your competitors' marketing strategies and metrics, clearly visible to someone who knows where to look and what to look for.

For example, you might notice that all of your competitors' Web sites include a certain sort of front-page welcome. If you notice this, you can be assured that this is a good marketing strategy. You can also learn which key words your competitors are using to drive traffic, what pricing they offer, and more. We recommend using a simple spreadsheet to track your online competition. List your competitors across the top columns, and then list each element you intend to measure in its own row. After you set up this grid, you'll have a clear view of your local elder law and estate planning market, with clues pointing out opportunities to outperform your competitors.

### Key Elements of the Competition That You Should Track Online

1. **Traffic:** How many visits each competitor's site is getting monthly. Use [www.quantcast.com](http://www.quantcast.com) or [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com) to measure traffic.
2. **Design:** Describe the look and feel of each competitor's site. What are your likes and dislikes? How does each site differ from yours? Which elements can you experiment with?

3. **Marketing message:** Remember this from Phase 1? How are your competitors positioning themselves online? What can you do better or differently to stand out?
4. **Pricing:** Who are the high-value (high-cost) versus discount (low-price) firms in your market?
5. **Backlinks:** How many other sites link to each of your competitors? Which of these links can you obtain to outrank them? Use the Yahoo! Site Explorer (<http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com>) to find backlinks to any Web site. (We'll discuss the importance of backlinks in Phase 3.)
6. **Social media:** How many "fans" or "followers" belong to your competitor's pages on the most popular social sites, like Facebook and Twitter? What methods are they using to grow their followings?
7. **Lead-generation strategy:** How does each of these sites generate leads? They may use video, lead forms, and e-books.
8. **Content:** What are your competitors blogging about, and how often?

Look to see what the others are doing and then see how you can one-up them on your own site. Keeping tabs on your competition, in a structured format, will help ensure that you're in touch with your competitive market and ready to beat them at their own game.

As with each technique described in this guide, you can take competitor tracking as far as you're inclined to. Many companies offer software and services to help with this function, but we recommend you start with the aforementioned data points for now -- keep your methods simple enough that you'll actually use them.

### Search Engine Rankings

Finally, you can begin to measure the success of your Web site by keeping track of how well it ranks on search engine results pages for different key words.

Try this: Perform a Google search for "elder law attorney in [your city]". Where does your firm show up? If you're somewhere on the 20th page, your Web site needs an overhaul. If you're on the first page, you're doing something right -- very right.

As you'll learn in Phase 3 of this guide, SEO (search engine optimization - ways to make your Web site rank higher in search results) is an area that most law firms struggle with. We'll cover methods for improving your rankings, but it's important to start tracking your rankings now. This way you'll have a baseline to start improving from. Knowing where you rank on Google compared to your competitors will help you understand which of your online marketing and SEO efforts are producing desirable results -- and which aren't.

### What's the Best Way to Track Your Search Engine Rankings?

Keep it simple and focus on the most important information. As with all online marketing functions, there are advanced tools and even whole companies devoted to SEO and key word tracking (more on key words in Phase 3). For most small businesses, however, these are overkill and your time and money are better spent on other activities.

To track your rankings, we recommend that you use a simple Excel spreadsheet (or a Google Docs version if you prefer). Follow these steps to create a basic search engine ranking tracking tool:

1. Open a new Excel (or Google Docs) spreadsheet and name it "Search Engine Rankings," or anything you prefer.
2. In the first column, list the eight to ten most important search terms, also called key words, that you'd like to turn up under (show up on the first page of Google).
  - a. **Note:** You'll be adding to this list after we cover SEO and key word research in the next section. For now, just list the top cities and search terms you feel are most important, like so:

**Key word****Ranking**

San Francisco elder law attorney

7

San Francisco Medi-Cal planning

4

Elder care lawyers in San Francisco

2

3. Perform a search on Google for these search terms and log the search result ranking and date on your spreadsheet (see example above).
4. Repeat the previous step at least once per month and note increases and decreases in your company's rank for each important term.

In the next section (Phase 2: Your Minimum Effective Dose of Technology), we'll delve deeper into finding the best key words, comparing Google Places and normal results, and much more related to tracking and improving your search engine rankings. For now, the important thing is that you're tracking these important marketing metrics.

**Measure All of Your Marketing, Not Just What's Online**

Although this e-book is focused on online marketing, it is critical to measure all of your marketing, not just your Web-based campaigns. This includes any and all activities that your firm employs to generating leads, including bar activities, support of non-profit advocacy organizations, public speaking, writing, and professional networking.

Magical things happen when you have a complete picture of your marketing programs. By keeping your finger on the pulse of each activity, you can easily determine what is working and, more importantly, what is not. Think of the advantage you'll have once you can easily measure exactly how much return you get for every dollar or minute you spend. Marketing metrics allow you to trim the fat and constantly improve the traction of your efforts.



## Phase 2: Your Minimum Effective Dose of Technology

In this section, we'll get better acquainted with Google by learning the basics of how search engines work, what it takes to get better rankings, and a few other technology tips.

### **But You May Say: I Have Someone Else Who Handles Google and All That!**

This is a response that many law firms give when asked about their online strategy, Web site, content plan, or why they aren't getting enough leads from the Web. And this response makes most of us Internet marketers always think (but seldom say): "Warning: Danger, Will Robinson!"

In this day and age, every law firm owner, marketer, manager, salesperson, and, arguably, employee must know a few key things about Internet technology and how it relates to their business. Not doing so puts them (and their business) at risk of failing to generate leads and grow in our new online environment. This knowledge also goes a long way in helping people make better decisions (and avoid costly mistakes) when it comes to advertising, Web design, and consulting.

The good news is that you don't have to be a Web geek to learn the important concepts surrounding search engines and online marketing. This section is a great primer that will be sure to leave you with a much clearer picture of the Internet landscape.

## Google 101: What You Really Do Need to Know About Search Engines

A search engine functions like a giant catalog of the entire Internet.

For example, let's say a person sitting at the computer goes to Google and types in "San Francisco elder law attorneys." How does Google "know" which law firms should show up on the first page, and in what order? The answer is much simpler than many people think.

In a nutshell, here's how Google determines what's on the Web and how to rank results from searches like "San Francisco elder law attorneys":

1. **Crawling.** Long before you enter a word or phrase into the search box, Google's "spiders" (also called Googlebots) have "crawled" over nearly every page on the entire Internet. They do this by following links between pages (also called hyperlinks). For example, if you have a link to ElderLawAnswers.com on your Web site, Google will notice this link and follow it to its destination. It will do the same with all the links on that page, and all links on linked pages, and so on -- until almost every page on the Internet has been visited by Google's "spiders."
2. **Indexing.** As Google crawls a Web page, it also scans the page's contents to determine

what the page is about. This is why the proper use of key words is so important: If you want to appear in search results for “elder law,” you must use this term in the title, description, and on the page itself.

3. **Ranking.** This is what most law firm owners need to know: How does Google “decide” which page gets the coveted number-one spot in the results? It’s basically a popularity contest. By that we mean that Google looks at which of the relevant sites has the largest number of other trusted sites linked to it. To clear up any confusion, let’s rephrase.

- Google ranks pages based on:

Key words -- Words related to the content of the Web site.

Relevance to search -- Whether the Web site is relevant to the search terms used.

Popularity -- Defined by the number of other trusted sites that link to a given page (more on these “backlinks” to come) .

Content quality -- Google ranks Web sites based on how high the quality of the content is. Just posting pages that are filled with key words is not enough (and it’s annoying to readers).

**Resources:** For more information related to Google and search results, see Google Webmaster Central.

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## Key Word Research Basics: How to Find the Best Key Words for Your Site

Key words (also called search terms or key phrases) are words that you need to include on your site if you want to move up the search engine rankings. The more targeted key words you use, the more likely you are to get in front of a customer at the perfect moment -- right when they’re looking for your specific services.

### Key Word Research Best Practices

First, you need to find out what the best key words are for your site. Start with a laundry list of potential terms, then narrow this list by determining which terms get the most searches on Google. We suggest the following steps to find the best terms for your site:

1. Write down the names of all the services you provide, combined with the cities you serve. A good first key word may be the name of your firm.
2. Ask your coworkers, employees, and clients to add to the list -- the more the better!
3. Look at your competitors’ sites and add their top terms to your list. You can do this by simply looking at the page titles on each competitor’s site, or by using a tool such as SEMrush.com (we recommend that you do this manually in order to best understand the process).
4. Run your list through Google AdWords Key Word Tool and sort the terms by the number of local monthly searches. The top eight to ten terms will be the best to target on your site. Also included in the results are other popular key word searches that may be worth adding to your site.
5. Next, add your selected key words to your pages’ titles, content, “meta tags,” and descriptions (see Google’s Beginner SEO Guide and the next section of this e-book for more details).
6. Add your laundry list to your search engine ranking spreadsheet (from Phase 2), and start tracking your rankings each month.

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## Other Helpful Online Resources for Small-Business Marketers

### RSS Reader

Part of your online marketing strategy should be to stay informed about news and updates that apply to your industry, competitors, and online marketing in general. If you tried to do this manually, you'd have to log onto the Web each morning and check dozens or even hundreds of Web sites for updates -- a daunting and unrewarding task.

RSS readers, on the other hand, make it easy to receive all the news you want, delivered in a nice, organized format right in your inbox. RSS -- Really Simple Syndication (or Really Simple Stalking) -- is a way for readers to subscribe to a feed that updates them whenever a Web site is updated -- yours or someone else's.

By placing the option for customers to subscribe to your feed, you allow them the opportunity to keep you on their minds. Likewise, you can sign up for your competition's RSS feeds, as well as those of other Web sites in your community that are of interest. By reading these feeds, you'll begin to listen to the discussions happening online and in your local community. Not only can you hear what others think about your market but you can also learn more about what people think about your company.

**Tip:** Use Google Reader for a simple RSS solution.

### Google Alerts

If you already have a Gmail account, you're ready to use Google Alerts. This system allows you to define certain key words and phrases (such as "Medicaid" or "elder care") so that Google can scour the Internet for news articles, blogs and updated Web sites in which the key words appear.

You'll get a daily (or less frequent, if you like) listing of the links that match your defined key words. You can set up as many alerts as you like, helping you see what your market is doing, what's important, and what's relevant to your firm.

**Resource:** [Click here to setup Google Alerts](#)

Now your minimum effective dose of technology has been administered. We hope you've gained a better understanding of how Google ranks pages and how to find and use the best key words on your Web site. This, combined with your "5M" marketing strategy, will lay a foundation to help you build a virtual elder law skyscraper, or at least fill your current cyberspace premises with more visitors who are likely to return.





## Phase 3: Make Your Site Search Engine- and People-Friendly

### Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

We've already talked about some basic ways to "optimize" your Web site so it will be found and ranked highly by search engines. Here are a few additional SEO tips to help you ensure that you're doing everything you can to maintain a search engine-friendly Web site:

- **Use key words in your title tag.** This is the tag that's included in the browser with your Web site domain name. Also, this is the link people click when they find your site on a search engine ranking page.
- **Use key word-rich domain names.** Google places significant value here (for example: [www.DenverElderLaw.com](http://www.DenverElderLaw.com) would be better than [www.SmithandSmith.com](http://www.SmithandSmith.com)).
- **Use key words in your site content.** When a person reads your site, they should find your main key words in the firm description and the content on all of your pages.
- **Use key words in your meta tags.** Meta tags are information inserted at the top of a Web page that is invisible to human visitors but that communicates important information to Web browsers and search engines. You should include your main key words in the meta tags of your site to ensure the maximum placement on search engine listings.
- **Use H1 tags to your advantage.** Right before you start to chatter away in your site's content, you should include a title with a key word in it. This is the heading tag H1, and Google loves it when you have key words there.
- **Know the first-sentence key word basics.** Your key word should be in the first sentence of your text. Think about how lazy you are when you're reading something: You might only read the first few lines before deciding whether the article is worthwhile. Google is the same way.
- **Use key words in links.** When you include links to other pages of your site via hyperlinks (and you should be doing this), make sure that you include key words in these highlighted areas. This is a simple way to show Google that you want to be at the top.
- **Site maps.** A site map, as you might guess, is a tool used to help search engines (and to a lesser extent, users) gain a complete view of all pages and files on your site. You can use [XML-sitemaps.com](http://XML-sitemaps.com) to submit a site map to search engines. For human visitors, it's best to incorporate a "site map" link in the top navigation bar or header of your site.

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## “On-Page” Versus “Off-Page” SEO

We know what you’re thinking: “Geek-alert! Stop. Reading. Immediately.” But please trudge on, as it’s crucial for you to understand the difference between “on-page” and “off-page” SEO.

Many business Web site owners run into great disappointment after learning and implementing the elements of SEO we’ve been discussing, only to find disappointing traffic numbers for weeks and months afterward.

Lack of “off-page” SEO (also called link building) is the common culprit. Think back to the “Google 101” section. Remember the three steps Google uses to produce search results: crawling, indexing, and ranking? Well, an ultra-simplified explanation of how this process affects your Web site might sound like this:

Your on-page SEO efforts (site maps; internal links; key words in page titles, descriptions, and content) help get your site crawled and indexed, but it’s your off-page work that gets your pages ranked.

Google ranks the most “popular” sites -- as defined by the number of backlinks or “votes” -- ahead of those with less authority. (Backlinks are links from other sites to your site.)

The key takeaway here is that you need to build relevant backlinks to your site in order to improve search engine rankings.

We’ll cover backlinks in greater detail in Phase 4: Increase Your Online Visibility.

### SEO Resources for Beginners:

Google’s Beginner SEO Guide (2011)

Get to the Top on Google -- This book is a great primer for SEO newbies, covering nearly everything you need to know in plain English.

Following these steps will help your site make great strides in search engine friendliness. In the next section, we’ll help you create a more people-friendly Web site. If you recall the traffic funnel we covered in Phase 2 (V-T-L-S), you may have made the connection between SEO and the first step of the funnel: visibility. The next section, “Make Your Site More People-Friendly,” will examine the third phase of the funnel: leads, which is all about ensuring that more people who visit your site become engaged enough to contact you!

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## How to Convert More Visitors Into Leads

You can’t create a site that’s just for Google (although many online marketers undertake the fool’s errand of doing so). Sure, you want Google to like you, but Google isn’t where your money will be coming from.

### What’s Wrong With Most Elder Law Web sites?

Nothing, if the year is 1995. We’re kidding, of course, but there’s more truth in this jest than many law firm marketers understand. Twenty years ago, when the first local business Web sites surfaced, few people were sure how to best use this new medium. So most small-business Web designers were a bit too literal, making “Web pages” by converting printed pages (brochures and sales letters) into digital format and -- voilà! -- the first Web pages were born.

Since then, advancements in technology have granted each of us access to incredible tools to communicate with our online audiences and to provide a true experience for site visitors, instead of boring sales copy that no one reads. Think about it: When you “visit” a company online, you should be going somewhere, reaching a destination that provides a unique feeling and experience.

Your site is designed for a real person who’s sitting down at a computer, thinking about stressful

senior care issues, and looking for local resources to help solve a serious family problem. It's of critical importance to be certain that your customer feels welcome at your site and feels that you're worth the time and effort.

There are a number of ways to make your site friendlier, ensuring that visitors are greeted with a positive first impression that leaves them with feelings of trust, warmth, engagement, and professionalism. The result should be that they're prompted to contact you.

## 10 Steps to Converting More Web site Visitors Into Leads

1. **Every page on your site should have a goal and a call to action (CTA).** Ninety-nine percent of the sites we see have great information, yet they fail to leverage it with a clear "next step" for visitors. Each page on your site should have a goal (for users to call you, fill out a form, or download a brochure).
2. **Create a welcoming environment that reflects your brand.** The use of colors, shapes, fonts, images, and logos add up to an overall first impression that triggers one of two responses in your visitors: leaving immediately (called a "bounce," as we covered in the Web metrics section of this guide), or staying a while to learn more.
3. **Navigation.** Keep it simple, placing emphases on a handful of options that you want your visitors to see and use. When faced with too many options, people usually just leave.
4. **It's not about you (really).** The copy on your site should focus on the needs of your audience and not on your business (remember the 5M's of marketing). Before you can introduce your firm as a potential fit for your visitors, their parents or their clients, you must convey that you understand their needs and concerns. The goal should be for each new visitor to view your copy or video and think, "Hey, this is speaking to me!"
5. **Use a lead capture form.** After all the effort it takes to get someone to your site, it's critical to capture information in a database for future follow-up.
6. **Add fresh content often.** Blog at least twice per month, providing helpful information that addresses the needs and concerns of your target audience.
7. **Include your physical address and local phone number on every page.** A good place to do this is in your header or footer. These elements not only build trust with users, showing your local community presence, but they set the stage for better rankings on Google Places and local directories (covered in detail in the next section).
8. **Include trust icons.** Elements such as professional membership logos, Super Lawyers and other local alliance seals, Better Business Bureau certification and so on give visitors a subconscious sense of security and familiarity, supporting your goal of presenting your business with trust and authority online.
9. **Leverage the power of social proof.** Nothing makes people more comfortable in making important buying decisions than peer validation (knowing that someone like themselves was satisfied with your services).
10. **Include pictures and videos.** You should include pictures and video on your site wherever possible. This goes back to the "buying environment" you aim to create on your site. A well-designed video can provide a near real-life welcoming experience, much more so than text alone.
11. **Use WordPress.** We know this is supposed to be a "top 10" list, but this one goes up to 11! We highly recommend you use WordPress (on your own domain, not on wordpress.com). The interface is extremely user-friendly; there are great designs and support available, and search engines love WordPress sites!

## Helpful Web Design and Conversion Resources

1. **Don't Make Me Think.** A great no-nonsense book on Web design and usability.
2. **Aweber.** Good and inexpensive software that allows you to easily create lead forms and send e-mails to your Web site contacts.
3. **Copyblogger.com.** Arguably the best resource for small-business bloggers, covering everything from topic ideas to copywriting, headline sculpting, and SEO. Check it out!

We've covered a great deal: you have the right marketing mindset, market research, and marketing message. You know more about selecting the right media and you've picked up a few valuable metrics tools to help measure and improve your marketing efforts. The foundation has been laid, the walls have been built and painted, and carpet has been cut and installed -- your online business is ready!

So what next? Now, finally, it's time to open the floodgates and tell the world you're here and open for business. We've built it, and now they will come! But only after we increase your online visibility.



## Phase 4: Get Noticed! Increase Your Online Visibility

It's time to spread the word, ensuring that your Web site and unique marketing message are in front of your target clients, wherever they hang out online. Phase 4 is all about increasing your Internet visibility.

There are a lot of options, both free and paid, available for elder law attorneys to get in front of target prospects, and the list seems to keep growing every day. This flood of choices causes confusion among most small businesses, as they all claim to be the "largest," "best," and "most highly trafficked" sources for your specific audience. What's an elder law attorney to do?

We recommend that you stay focused on a few simple goals when deciding where, among free and paid sites, to list your business:

1. **Reach your target audience.** This is measured by the traffic and demographics of a given medium (how many visitors and how many of them are your ideal clients).
2. **Provide SEO benefits.** This is measured by link value, as each link to your site can serve as a vehicle to increase your online popularity and authority. It's critical that you provide key word-rich anchor text when establishing backlinks anywhere on the Web.
  - a. **Note:** Use "Dallas elder law attorney" instead of your homepage or business name for the text within hyperlinks that point to your site (especially if you're in Dallas).
3. **Help increase your local authority.** This is separate from your general SEO authority, as you want your site to maintain authority within your service area (the cities you serve/draw clients from). We'll cover this more in the "local directories" section below).

There are several great places to list your business, but for the most bang for your buck, we recommend that you focus first on the following categories:

### General Online Directories

These are sites that categorize and list businesses in most categories. A listing on these sites serves SEO value more than it brings in human traffic, but Google still places weight on the backlinks and uses them to validate and rank Web sites.

#### Tips for Creating Online Directory Listings

1. Use key word-rich anchor text in links to your site.
2. Create good descriptions, with key words that clearly capture your services.
3. Be consistent with your business name, address, and contact information.
4. Use the same professional logo for all listings.

**Tip:** Here's a great list of general directories. List your business on as many of these as you can, paying close attention to key words and anchor text.

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### Vertical or Business Category-Specific Directories

These Web sites focus on a specific niche, often providing great SEO benefits and direct (human) lead-generation potential. Examples of great vertical directories include:

- [www.avvo.com](http://www.avvo.com) (lawyers)
  - [www.1800dentist.com](http://www.1800dentist.com) (dentists)
  - [www.Caring.com](http://www.Caring.com) (senior care providers)
  - [www.ElderLawAnswers.com](http://www.ElderLawAnswers.com) (elder law attorneys)
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### Local Business Directories

These include location-based directories that typically list most businesses, focused on location-based searches. Common local directories are:

- Google
- Bing
- Yahoo!
- Yelp
- Merchant Circle
- LinkedIn
- YellowPages.com
- WhitePages.com
- SuperMedia

### Tips for Local Directory Listings

1. Claim your profiles on the major local directories (see below).
  2. Create listings in the top 20 or more local directories (see resources below).
  3. Ensure exact match for addresses and phone ("suite" versus "ste." matters!).
  4. Use key words in categories.
  5. Add a link to the best page on your site (relevance).
  6. Add photos and videos whenever possible.
  7. Encourage reviews on Caring.com and other directories.
- 

### Local Business Directory Resources

- [5 Steps to Google Places Optimization Zen](#)
  - [UBL.org -- Join 100 local directories at once!](#)
- 

### Social Media Sites

Social media is a great way to engage your audience and build your list of qualified prospects in your area. We've all heard of Facebook and Twitter, but there are several other social sites that can serve as platforms for communicating with your target audience.

## Social Media Tips for Senior Care Providers

1. Claim your business name on social media sites ASAP!
2. Use a professional and consistent logo on all profiles.
3. Use your target key words in profile descriptions.
4. Focus on one or two sites that you can commit yourself to managing regularly.
5. Join groups within your niche and interact with people, asking answering questions.
6. Do not sell on these sites. Position your law firm as a resource but refrain from spamming users with sales messages.
7. Post links to valuable information. This helps users see you as an authority.
8. Every time you blog, post these articles on social sites.
9. Include social media icons (Facebook “like” buttons) in all communications: Web site, e-mails, community displays.
10. Include a contact form on your Facebook business page.
11. Experiment with paid Facebook ads. This will help you become familiar with the power of online demographic targeting.

## Top Social Media Sites

- Facebook.com
- youtube.com
- twitter.com
- digg.com
- stumbleupon.com
- scribd.com
- reddit.com

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## Multimedia (Video and Photo Sites)

Everyone knows that Google is the number-one search engine in the world. Care to guess what number two is? You may be surprised to learn that it’s YouTube! Video is a great way to create an interactive, human experience (as discussed in Phase 3 above).

Video can be highly reassuring to those who are considering hiring an attorney, and it supports your goal of creating a welcoming experience on the Web instead of presenting a stale online brochure.

## Top Video and Photo Sites

- YouTube
- Vimeo
- Viddler
- Photobucket
- Picasa

## Video and Photo Tips for Elder Law Attorneys

1. Create several videos that answer frequent elder law and estate planning questions.
2. Keep all videos at or under two minutes in length.

3. Include a call to action at the end of every video.
4. Use your top key words in the titles and descriptions (sound familiar?). Again, many local businesses make the mistake of using the business name as the title; use your primary key phrase instead (“Dallas elder law and long-term care planning”).
5. As with all profiles, be sure to include a link to your site.

#### Video and Photo Resources

- Top free video-sharing sites
- TubeMogul: This is a great service that allows you to create one video account and syndicate (or publish) a video to several of the top sites at once.
- TurnHere: Provides professional videos for local businesses.

#### Comment on Relevant Blogs

Finally, you need to look at relevant blogs in your market and take the time to comment on posts. The more you engage in conversations, the more likely you are to be seen as an authority in your field.

Comment intelligently -- and respectfully -- to see what other readers think of your responses. As always, include your Web site link and try to answer with key words, if that makes sense. Not too many though. Just be yourself and show that you are someone others can trust online.





## Conclusion

If you're still reading this, you may be feeling excited, overwhelmed, or a combination of the two. This is normal. The important thing is that you've gained the exposure and mindset to use some highly effective tools and resources to help your firm be better positioned for the online gold rush -- clients who find you through the Internet.

### So What's the Secret of Online Marketing?

Although the strategies outlined in this guide do technically qualify as secrets, since few elder law attorneys are aware of them, the real secret lies in one word: ACTION!

Every week, countless self-help and business books are published and purchased by well-intentioned business owners looking to increase their knowledge and pick up new business-growing skills. Few of these books get read and even fewer are acted upon.

The strategies in this manual work. They represent the current best practices that some of the nation's top marketing organizations use on a daily basis. The results are real and measurable.

However, this manual should not be viewed as a complete resource on online marketing, Web design, social media, or marketing in general. Our goal is to expose you to the key concepts and structure of an effective marketing plan. Each of these categories should be explored, studied, and implemented.

But if you do each of the things listed here, you'll be well down the path of successful marketing. And we believe you'll be astounded by the results.

Feel free to share this guide with your staff and anyone working with you on marketing, whether on- or off-line. And if it seems like a bit too much to take on at once, start with the 20-Minute Online Marketing Review that follows.

Just don't show it to your competitors!



## SUPPLEMENT

### The 20-Minute Online Marketing Review

Whether you're new to online marketing or just want to ensure that your bases are covered when it comes to getting found online, this 20-minute audit should come in handy.

**Note:** This should serve as a quick glance at the major categories of online marketing, not as a solution or reference point.

#### On-Page SEO Factors

1. Title tags
  - Unique on each page
  - 64 characters or less in length
  - Use important key words (top terms and cities)
  - Important terms first
2. Use the best key words in appropriate places
  - In-page content
  - In-links
3. Address and local phone number placed on every page of your site (header or footer)
  - Must match every listing on the Web

#### Resources:

- Use Google Key Words Tool to find the most popular key words for your site.
- Google's SEO Starter Guide (2011)

## Conversion Factors: Convert More Visitors Into Leads

1. Use a Web form to capture e-mail inquiries.
2. Include a call to action.
3. Focus message on needs of audience.
4. Link to social media.
5. Give testimonials.
6. Use trust icons (BBB, ELA, NAELA logos, etc.).
7. Measure traffic, leads, and clients.

### Resources:

- Google Analytics: Free Web site measurement tools
- Is Your Web site an Online Brochure or Conversion Engine?

## Content: Quality, Relevance, and Frequency

1. Blog at least two times a month.
2. Blog must be on your own site/domain.
3. Use key words in your blogs.
4. Provide valuable information, do not sell.
5. Use a call to action at the end of every blog.
6. Encourage comments; end every post with a question. Do you agree?
7. Post every blog on social media sites.

### Resources:

- Copyblogger.com: Great resources for small-business bloggers
- WordPress: Excellent platform for small-business sites and blogs

## Spread the Word: Increase Your Online Visibility

1. Google Places and local directories.
  - Claim your profiles.
  - Use key words in categories.
  - Add a link to best page on your site (relevance).
  - Add photos and videos.
2. General online directories and elder law sites
  - ElderLawAnswers.com is the most-visited elder law destination online.

### Resources:

- 5 Steps to Google Places Optimization Zen
- UBL.ORG: Join 100 local directories at once!



866.276.0947  
[ElderLawAnswers.com/Attorneys](http://ElderLawAnswers.com/Attorneys)