

MAKING RAIN ON THE NET

Today's Web Offers a Wide World of Marketing Tactics, if You're Savvy

BY JASON KRAUSE

David Wochner's day starts with a quick read of news reports on the liquefied natural gas industry. Then he writes news summaries and analyses of industry events. With the help of another colleague and an intern who is a recent journalism school graduate, he publishes a Web log, the LNG Law Blog.

But Wochner does not work for a business or trade magazine, or any other kind of traditional publishing venture. He is a fourth-year associate with Sutherland Asbill & Brennan in Washington, D.C., working on liquefied natural gas accounts. Along with Rebecca Day, an associate in the same practice area, Wochner has developed a blog that has become one of the few resources covering national news on the industry.

To most attorneys, a publishing venture might seem like a waste of billable hours, but Wochner believes it is a valuable marketing vehicle for the firm. "We've become well-known enough," he says, "that when we go into a business pitch, before we even have to say anything, people will say, 'Wow, you do the blog.' "

For much of the history of law in America, legal marketing depended on who you knew (and, sometimes, how well you golfed). It was only 29 years ago that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it was legal for lawyers to advertise at all, in *Bates v. State Bar of Arizona*, 433 U.S. 350 (1977). Since that ruling, attorneys have learned to market themselves like any other business, though most attorneys probably still rely heavily on connections to get new business.

"Law firms are acting more like businesses. When I started in law firm marketing in 1992, it was more like individual efforts within the firm, not like teamwork," says Kathleen Flynn, the director of client relations and marketing at the Sedgwick, Detert, Moran & Arnold law firm in San Francisco.

Now, with the rise of the Internet and digital marketing tools, lawyers have to relearn the marketing game. According to a June 2005 Harris Interactive poll, more Americans use search engines to find a lawyer than any other source. Online marketing is beginning to allow any firm to stay in closer contact with clients, offer more services, offer targeted marketing efforts and win new clients for less financial investment.

PAGING THE WEB

It wasn't too long ago that a Web site was a rare extravagance for most law firms. But according to the 2004-2005 ABA Legal Technology Survey, all firms with 50 or more lawyers now have Web sites, and 68 percent of all firms have a site.

The result? Simply having a Web site means very little anymore.

"...A web site is useless unless potential clients can find it..."

"...firms are building landing pages designed to attract clients for specific practice areas..."

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