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Getting online quick way to make a sole practitioner an army of one

When many of our state's more seasoned sole practitioners first joined the legal ranks, attorney advertising was limited, the Internet was just coming online and marketing plans generally relied on word of mouth.

Back then, lawyers typically found clients through a local network of friends, business connections and colleagues. Having solid skills, a strong work ethic and a quality reputation seemed to be enough.

Not so much now.

Today, vibrant competition for legal services requires active online marketing efforts. As confirmed by Comment 1 to Professional Conduct Rule 7.1, "contrary to the tradition that a lawyer should not seek clientele," modern advertising can assist "the public's need to know about legal services."

As long as the information is not "misleading or overreaching," the comment goes on, "lawyers should be allowed to make known their services ... through organized information campaigns in the form of advertising."

Below are some basic online marketing options, and a profile of an adventurous solo who uses unconventional radio streaming to increase his client base.

Set up a search-engine-friendly website

For sole practitioners who have not set up a website, or allowed their site to become dormant, now is the time to act.

Paying for a Web presence is always an option, but setting up a site yourself has never been easier.

Among other low-cost options, consider using a "managed" Wordpress site through a Web-hosting company like GoDaddy. Open an account; choose a domain name; choose a template; and publish your content. The process is straightforward, and the yearly cost for the domain name and basic hosting service can be as little as \$70.

Next, make your site work for you by posting quality content on

a frequent basis. Search engines like Google are tasked with including relevant, useful and responsive websites in search results and exclude sites that are stale or merely copy or link to other locations.

With well-written submissions on your area of expertise, your website is more likely to reach people looking for the kind of services you provide.

Market through LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter

For solos who believe social media marketing is not useful or appropriate, think again. Judicious use of popular messaging sites — within the limits of ethical rules on advertising — can improve your prospects. Further, the one-on-one collaborative nature of social media can be particularly suited to the self-employed attorney.

LinkedIn is a network of roughly 300 million professionals who maintain an online identity, keep in touch with connected colleagues, endorse each other's skills and look for new employment opportunities. Join for free, describe your practice area, experience and abilities and connect with other professionals.

Add your publications, notify your connections of new posts and status changes and contact other members through the company's messaging service.

Facebook also has a business application, called Facebook for Business. Easily set up the business page in your firm's name, publish content and interact with

other members for no cost. By setting up the account with an identifiable address like facebook.com/smithlaw and supplying good content, your page will be accessible to more than 1 billion users.

Twitter, a real-time social media platform that limits posts (called

SOLE SPEAK



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tweets) to 140 characters, can be an effective marketing tool for sole practitioners. Open a free twitter account for your firm — @SmithLaw, for example — and gain access to more than 300 million active users. Label your tweets with a descriptive hashtag symbol (#), such as "#familylaw," and any member's search for that term will include your tweets as well.

All three social media sites are free with add-on options for paid advertising and are readily populated with photos and content. Many solos already use these accounts effectively. Check them out and follow suit to boost your profile.

Tech-savvy solo merges old and new with radio streaming

Sole practitioner Timothy J. Fiscella is an experienced online

campaign, through online streaming radio at a prominent Chicago sports station, WSCR-AM 670.

Now in his ninth year as a lawyer and a sole practitioner, Fiscella concentrates in criminal defense and civil rights violations. Initially, he handled a large number of DUI and serious traffic matters, but saw his traffic-based caseload wane as he devoted more time to complex criminal and civil rights actions in state and federal court.

Fiscella wanted to recover the DUI and traffic business that once formed the core of his practice.

From the start, Fiscella was attracted to online radio streaming, because it was an unusual marketing approach and combined a classic medium with cutting-edge advertising methods. In a world where television ads and online pay-per-click models are popular in legal circles, Fiscella wanted to try something different.

"I wanted to zig when others zagged," he explained.

Already familiar with WSCR, Fiscella knew the station's typical listeners fell within his target client age range. He secured a well-produced spot that highlights his experience with DUI cases and serious traffic offenses. The ad is streamed to a designated geographic area and is broadcast repeatedly to maximize Fiscella's exposure, reaching a minimum of 125,000 listeners per month.

Although Fiscella's radio marketing strategy is in the early stages, and an ongoing sizable financial commitment is required, he is encouraged by results so far.

Not only have the radio spots provided instant name recognition, but Fiscella plans to build a long-term association with this practice area and sees online radio playing a key role.

Simply put, Fiscella wants his firm name to be synonymous with DUI defense, and he is taking forceful steps to bring that about.

So take a page from Fiscella's book and give your marketing strategies a fresh look. Don't be left behind. As @TJFiscella_Law might say in a tweet, #solosmarketsmart.

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marketer of his firm, the Law Office of Timothy J. Fiscella. He maintains a robust website and actively uses LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter.

Recently, Fiscella decided to take a bold stab at a less conventional marketing approach. He launched an impactful advertising