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Right now,  
we could use a little  
artificial intelligence



# Content marketing, a sea change in how law firms can produce new cases

## AI: The gigantic elephant in the room

BY DEAN GUADAGNI

*“So long as I know it not, it hurteth me not”* or more commonly known as *“What you don’t know can’t hurt you”* – Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs written by G. Pettie 1576

This ancient proverb seems to apply to the very young with such little experience that they don’t know enough to be afraid of the consequences.

What we do know is this: What you don’t know can hurt you and likely will. Law firms and attorneys, in today’s hyper-competitive landscape, can’t afford to miscalculate the critical role content marketing plays in supporting an effective marketing plan that consistently generates a flow of new cases. In our experience working with plaintiff firms since 2009, the marketing hot buttons of choice have been search engine optimization (SEO) or pay-per-

click (PPC) advertising. They are the two most-talked-about digital marketing strategies and there is no shortage of success stories for firms who have leveraged the power of SEO and PPC to land new cases.

But there is a caveat. The creation of original, targeted content and the implementation of a content marketing plan that delivers the right information to the right audience in the correct position (sales funnel) during the buyer’s



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journey, is the key foundation for all of your other digital marketing activities. Without good or great content your SEO program and PPC campaigns won't have the backbone needed to prove your worth to each prospect as they perform their due diligence on you and your firm.

### **AI: The gigantic elephant in the room**

But what about artificial intelligence (AI)? The biggest breakthrough in technology since the Internet itself. The technology that promises to be the dominant news and force in our lives in 2023 and beyond. The technology that is accessing millions of datasets and outputting brainstorming ideas, research, written content of all types, image compilation, and a list of applications that could circle the earth by the end of this article. What about that?

#### **AI benefits**

AI is an amazing sea change in how content can and will be created today and in the future. The possible uses of AI are nearly endless, and the incredibly fast growth of this technology will uncover even more value. AI promises to save valuable time on human-performed tasks as well as create automation for many business processes.

#### **Your superpower**

But there's one thing missing, right now, as of this writing, that AI can't replace: your firm's story, evolution, triumphs, mindset, ambitions, and goals that have not yet been shared with the world. AI compiles from previously published content, accessing what already exists. What isn't publicly available can't be regurgitated by AI. AI isn't ready yet for actual real-time compilations of what makes your firm special because your story evolves.

What hasn't been produced and published by your firm shouldn't be compiled into a beautiful piece of content without human review and editing. Your firm's story moves, things

change and with those changes you want to write, create videos, newsletters, author books, broadcast podcasts, or access the dozens of other methods to deliver fresh – and this is a key – never-seen-before content.

AI can help you create content right now, but human management and input is the safeguard to creating successful content pieces.

### **Possible future restrictive AI regulation**

As of this writing, Italy has banned AI platform ChatGPT. The European Union has been working and continues to double down on efforts to pass a possibly restrictive Artificial Intelligence Act. The goal is to bring sane and safe regulation to AI and how it is used. With privacy and plagiarism concerns, countries around the globe are moving to place limits, and in some cases, ban generative AI.

Why did Italy ban ChatGPT and why does this matter? According to Search Engine Journal, Italian Data Protection Authority (also called Garante): "OpenAI did not properly inform users that it collected personal data. OpenAI did not provide a legal reason for collecting personal information to train its algorithm. ChatGPT processes personal information inaccurately without the use of real facts."

### **Brand perception, plagiarism, and hallucinations**

Until AI normalizes the idea of plagiarism to the point where we either don't care or we are desensitized and accepting that future content will not be 100% human generated, using AI technology should come with great care.

How your law firm is publicly and privately perceived can be based on the honest communication you have with your clients. This is no different with the content you produce. Brand perception and authenticity is everything.

**Tip:** If you decide to use AI to create content, Google's help page: "Creating helpful reliable people-first content" emphasizes the "Who," "How," and "Why" of content production. Within these guidelines, Google requests that you include a transparency statement with each piece of AI-assisted content. The statement should include an estimate of the percentage of the content that is AI-generated and the reason you utilized AI for the piece.

AI Hallucinations are defined by futurist and AI expert Bernard Marr as "... the generation of outputs that may sound plausible but are either factually incorrect or unrelated to the given context. These outputs often emerge from the AI model's inherent biases, lack of real-world understanding, or training data limitations. In other words, the AI system 'hallucinates' information that it has not been explicitly trained on, leading to unreliable or misleading responses."

### **The what and why of content**

Or more precisely: What type of content is best for your marketing efforts and why is this content valuable to those efforts? The answers to both questions can be found by learning the intention of your prospective clients when they are searching for legal services.

### **Uncovering your audiences' intentions**

A list of questions must be answered to begin to understand user intent during their due diligence process.

- What keyword phrases are people using when searching for the legal services your firm provides?
- How are people finding and visiting your website? Via PPC, SEO, content, or another method?
- What are people looking for when they hire your firm?
- What pages are people visiting on your website?
- How long do they stay on site?
- What pages are they most often entering your site on?



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- Why are people contacting your firm and what channel do they prefer for making contact?

### What type of content and why do prospects choose a particular content to consume?

When you can answer the aforementioned questions, you will begin to uncover your prospects' intentions. Just as important is the fact that the answers to these questions will also help you identify what types of content your prospects prefer to consume. Here's a partial list of content types that may provide answers in the method they prefer consuming content.

- **Blogging:** People who want detailed answers and prefer reading in depth or browsing at their own pace.
- **Video:** Short-attention-span consumers who prefer watching over reading. Video provides a more intimate opportunity to connect with a brand or prospect. Visual learners enjoy this format.
- **Podcasting:** Not all podcasts provide video viewing options. Some people prefer listening rather than reading or viewing. Fans of radio programming fit into this category.
- **Infographics:** Visually pleasing and easily understood, infographics can provide a robust outline that is quicker to consume than lengthy blog articles. Visual learners love this format.
- **Email:** A longtime staple, email is still considered one of the best channels where people prefer receiving messages.
- **Whitepapers:** For prospects that want to take a deep dive into why a firm is more qualified, a whitepaper is often perceived as the best social proof and value.
- **Webinars:** Most people appreciate being educated. Since the pandemic, many in-person webinars have been replaced by Zoom meetings for safety and convenience.
- **Seminars:** As the pandemic eases, many people want to reconnect in person. The opportunity to meet, ask questions, and gauge reactions are the big reasons

this is important. Creating compelling written content, slide decks, and video provide seminar attendees with a variety of content types. Something for everyone.

- **Social media:** Is your prospective audience younger and loves Instagram? Are they Boomers who have taken over Facebook? Or do they enjoy the one-on-one opportunity to communicate that Twitter provides? Do your prospects use social media?
- **Checklists:** A checklist is the most popular type of blog article. People tend to like lists whether in digital or real-world format.
- **eBooks:** For prospects who have a harder time reading printed materials, eBooks are simple to read online using a mobile device, an eBook reader, tablet, laptop, or smart phone.

### What are the benefits? Why create content at all?

Content creation is the cog necessary to support your SEO program, PPC campaigns, brand awareness projects, a lead generation program, and provide your firm a voice in telling your story. Other important benefits of content creation include:

- Supports the top of the funnel (TOFU), creating awareness for your firm with content that doesn't try to sell your services, but rather educates, helps, and answers common questions.
- Supports the middle of the funnel (MOFU) also known as the consideration/engagement stage of your client's journey. Your firm will provide tips, strategies, and proof of the value of your service(s).
- Supports the bottom of the funnel (BOFU) or the buying stage. Here the prospective client is in the final decision-making stage. Content should include testimonials, client reviews, case studies, or use cases in some instances.
- Demonstrates the firm's expertise.
- Announces breaking news or changes in your industry.
- Audience retention for your website and other digital platforms.
- Improves your website conversion rate.

- Reinforces the perception that your firm is up-to-date, current, and cutting edge in your digital assets and marketing efforts.

### Content marketing trends 2023 and beyond

We now have a tiny snapshot of what is ahead as AI's dominating technological march continues at an unprecedented pace. AI is the number one trend in marketing. But what about 2023 and the coming months? Why should we believe content creation is important? Answer: From 2023 through 2027, the global content marketing market will explode, growing by \$584.02 billion.

Here are some predictions for marketing trends that your firm could leverage.

#### *Purpose and your differentiating factor*

If you don't have a content plan with a purpose for your content, your firm will have a difficult time making progress in Google search results pages (SERPs). Understanding what your prospective clients want to consume and where to deliver those messages is critical.

Creating content that emphasizes your firm's differentiating factor(s) and using creative ways to convey that content (a new format or unique approach) will help you stand apart from your competitors. Many brands seek out the important socio, economic, world, and civil rights issues their prospective and current clients passionately support. Law firms have the opportunity to differentiate their brand by using content and communications as a force for good. The idea that you are advocating for material change on behalf of your audience is powerful.

#### *Short form video*

It seems like video content is on every list of content trends every year. And rightfully so! Attention spans continue to wane but there is a sweet spot for 15- to 30-second video clips. According to the Digital Marketing Institute (by way of Sprout Social), "More than half of marketers say video is the most valuable



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content type. . . As a result, all social platforms prioritize video content and their algorithms, including platforms that may be traditionally text-based like LinkedIn.”

#### **Repurpose old and new content**

There’s gold in your older content as well as your new everyday tasks. Whether updating an old blog article with new information or creating a short form video from your speaking engagement, repurposing content is about creativity.

**Tip:** If you spend valuable time responding to email inquiries, look to repurpose those efforts. If you know you have to compile a long email response, write your response in a Word document. This provides an editing platform and a format you can convert to a blog post, outline for a podcast, video script or email newsletter.

#### **Written content needs more. . .**

Written content is now being infused and integrated with multiple content types. Writers will be more effective if they are willing to add infographics, video, audio, higher quality images, and other media to their pieces. Robust and versatile content are the goals. Attention is such a precious commodity today. Creating a written piece that allows the reader to access more than the written word has a better chance of being read all the way through. The impact you make with these content pieces is often enough to inspire the reader to share your work.

#### **Strategic SEO**

Search engine optimization continues to evolve along with Google’s ever-changing algorithms. Content marketing firm Contensify succinctly describes the landscape: “Google’s most recent update prioritized people-first content that gives significant value compared to other content. . . For 2023, making an SEO framework around content that speaks volumes about your services and targets problems in your niche will provide you with the best ROI in the age of democratization of consumption.”

#### **Visual content is powerful**

According to the National Institute of Health (NIH) “65% of the population is visual learners.” In most cases this means that people are more easily able to process and retain information through visuals. The added component that neither written nor verbal content can match is the speed in which a person processes visual content. Multiple researchers assert that people remember and retain 10% of what they hear, 20% of what they read and a colossal 80% of what they see. With those numbers in mind, creating and utilizing high-resolution, high-quality images, infographics, and videos continue to return positive results.

#### **Content personalization**

When you understand your target audience and know what they look for when in need of legal services, you are ready for content personalization. With content personalization, you tailor your content to match the preferences, characteristics, and behaviors of the individuals within your target audience. For example, if your firm is a PI firm representing motorcyclists injured in accidents, your goal would be to create content that resonates with the lifestyle, the hobby, and the joys of riding the open road. Personalization helps a firm connect with their target audience, build trust within the community, and remain relevant as a service provider to their niche. The power of personalization is that this type of content is applicable to the funnel at TOFU, MOFU, and BOTU. Raising awareness, proving value, and showcasing social proof all play a role in converting prospective clients to new clients.

#### **Content fatigue**

The old adage “less is more” may apply in some instances when it comes to creating and distributing content. If your marketing program forces your prospects to sift through daily updates, longer-than-necessary webinars, or brain-taxing messaging, it’s time to consider a change. Your audience could be suffering from

content fatigue, where instead of eagerly opening your content, your prospects begin to ignore all messages.

#### **User experience (UX) and user interface (UI)**

Consumer expectations are sky high when it comes to visiting a potential provider’s website or other platforms. It’s tough enough to consistently create compelling content without diminishing that content through poor user experiences. UI refers to the visual elements of a website, app, or platform such as buttons, icons, dashboards, and screens. If prospects can’t navigate through your site easily, they may never find your content to consume.

If your site or platform UI is a problem, the user experience (UX), or the complete interaction a prospect has with your site, can negatively affect their perception of your firm. Is it difficult for site visitors to navigate your site? Does your site look outdated? Is it slow and does the site have the number one most basic element – mobile responsive design? Do prospects see the text, images, navigation, and graphics size fluidly on any device they are using? How these people feel about your site counts, which makes UX a high priority.

#### **What can you do now to improve your content?**

If your firm’s content creation and marketing are exactly where you want it: raising brand awareness, supporting your sales funnel, and consistently generating new cases, you have tapped into the power of content. But there is always room to improve. With the dawning age of artificial intelligence, the content game is going to change. And that is the only constant.

In another scenario, you’re great at what you do, you have deep expertise in your practice areas, and you succeed in bringing great value to your clients. Yet, you don’t have a content marketing plan, you’re not producing enough content, high enough quality content, or you don’t





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have a distribution plan for your content. Guess what? You're not alone. If this is your situation, then consider the following steps.

**Assessment**

Take inventory of your firm talent. Do you have people on staff capable of creating a content marketing plan, generating high-quality content, and staying up to speed on the changes in content marketing that AI promises to bring?

**Time**

If you do have qualified members of your team that can handle the rigors of a content marketing plan, can you afford to task those people, taking away time from their original job description(s)? Is it monetarily feasible and logical to multi-task your human talent. If so, then begin immediately.

**Strategy and expertise**

If your firm can afford to reassign time from staff members to take care of your content needs, do these people have the expertise necessary? Have they run

content marketing programs in the past? More important than experience is the idea that strategy plays a big role in content creation. Are your staff members capable of formulating an effective strategy?

If you don't have the manpower or expertise, when hiring outside help, apply the same questions to any consultant or agency. Ensure they know what they are doing by asking if they have worked in your industry. Do they have the manpower, brainpower, strategic chops, and ability to deliver consistent output of high-quality content?

**The final, final**

Although Mark Twain said, "Never put off till tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow," he was never a content marketer. Don't wait, hoping for the best conditions to start your content-creation program. Start planning now. Put the pieces together before the evolution of AI's role in content creation, and all other never-before-seen concepts,

become a staggering learning curve and massive mountain to climb.

Editor's note: The author assures readers that this article was 100% human-generated, with no utilization of AI content.

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