

Managing Your Reputation Online

The new NORM - New Online Reputation Management

To understand and use this system there are five phases:

1. Phase 1 Concepts, what to know and do about your online reputation
2. Phase 2 NORM Set-up various configuration options
3. Phase 3 NORM Implementation –obtaining reviews and sharing online
4. Phase 4 NORM Monitoring – analyze use and track results
5. Phase 5 Declaring victory! – How to define and Measure Success

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Phase 1 Key Concepts

Managing Your Online Reputation, Dress for Success Online

The most important factor of success online, is also the most overlooked, for over 90% of estate and elder law attorneys. Regardless of the source, new clients increasingly search about you online before hiring. Fortunately, a few slight adjustments, outlined below, can quickly secure a competitive advantage for your practice specialty in local search.

Reviews, What Reviews?

The presence or absence of certified, high quality client reviews is a significant differentiating factor for exceptional new business generation. Law firm owners who pay attention to this important factor can enhance their online reputation and results. Clients reviews, are the empathetic voice of your clients and their brief stories and unique styles are very compelling. Furthermore, your online rankings are rewarded by Googleⁱ and other search sites when they find good and frequent reviews balanced across several venues. Google and other search sites use reviews to help establish who should be displayed as the best current, local resource. (See our endnote for proof.)

New web services can aggregate independent reviews and syndicate publication to your website and social media. Imagine your 5 star AVVO reviews appearing in a Facebook review tab. In addition, this new technology makes it easy to direct your clients to your review pages on popular independent search sites, such as Google, AVVO, Yelp, Martindale, Lawyers.com and Facebook.

Reviews = Ratings = Online Reputation

Our consumer culture has changed. We increasingly rely on reviews to make choices every day, especially for expensive products and services, purchased infrequently and falling outside our expertise. Can finding a lawyer be much different? Of course not.

Your web site and blog are a *menu* of information, but where are your *ratings*? Independent reviews are how you are rated online. It's the new word of mouth, on steroids. You just can't top great reviews from highly satisfied clients.

Google as a Case in Point

To view your online reputation status, enter a Google search, such as, 'estates, elder law, probate, special needs' attorney in 'your city, state'. *Ideally, you want to appear on Google page one, in the center area (the 3-pack). You should also strive for a star rating which is only assigned after a minimum of five reviews.* Five star reviews help your firm get and stay in this

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preferred online location. You can remove a barrier if a potential client can quickly see that you are top rated, otherwise they may delay and keep searching.

A Step Not Taken

I often ask lawyers:

'When you complete a file, you send a closing letter, right?' the answer is usually *'Yes.'*

Then I ask, *'Do you also include a satisfaction survey?'* they hesitate then answer *'No, but we should.'*

The most successful firms are those who send the survey and, at the appropriate time, ask for an online review. It is also very useful to get client feedback whether it is positive or negative.

Two Types of Online Reputation Management

There are two styles of online reputation management, *passive* and *active*. The passive approach results in a far fewer reviews, some may be old and one or more may be negative. The alternative is an active approach which can yield frequent, high quality reviews. A lonely negative review, especially with a thoughtful response from the attorney, mixed in with predominately positive reviews, can actually build credibility. The reader knows you are not just cherry picking firm posted testimonials.

Two Steps for to Improve Your Online Reputation

The first step is to change your internal procedure, so that a satisfaction survey/review request is included as a standard procedure in your client process. Use one or more document templates, consider dedicating the task to a responsible staff member and maybe even create a filtered list in your practice management program displaying closed files and track the 'client review' status. *The bottom line is to get a client review, you have to ask.* The second step for improving your online condition is to clean up your directory listings and to facilitate frequent new client reviews across a variety of popular review sites.

Search sites look at each other's directory listing to help confirm who you are. Slight variations in your firm name, address and telephone number prevent your listing from being considered as a single entity, therefore your aggregated online presence is diluted. The bottom line here is to check and make your listings both accurate and consistent. There are free tools available to scan your business and other tools and methods that can clean up these listings.

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How New Technology Can Help

You need to provide the motivation step across the doorway to your practice. If the Internet and social media are your menu, then great client reviews are the user ratings that convince contacts to become new clients. Consider using new tools that perform some neat tricks:

1. Facilitate - make it easy for clients to write certified reviews on independent sites
2. Notify - receive an alert as each new review is posted
3. Aggregate – automatically consolidate online reviews and publish to your web site
4. Associate – client reviews with your practice areas and locations (as meta data)
5. Syndicate – integrate your reviews to other online locations including social media
6. Balance – obtain client reviews across a wide variety of search sites
7. Campaign – use email templates to request a review, and to share the review

It is common sense to want look your best online on your firm web site and in social media. Don't miss your opportunity for low hanging fruit just waiting to be claimed by you or, Oh no!, a competing local lawyer. Chances are your peers have not yet addressed their online reputation. The key is to have not just information on your web site and blog, you also need ratings. You get improved ratings thru more and better online reviews.

This is an unclaimed opportunity, especially for estate planning and elder law attorneys. I know this is all true, because ...wait for it, I looked it up online.

Contact: Tom Caffrey Tel. 856.429.3010 support@premiersoftware.com

Direct from Google: <https://support.google.com/business/answer/7091?hl=en>

Prominence is also based on information that Google has about a business from across the web (like links, articles, and directories). Google review count and score are factored into local search ranking: more reviews and positive ratings will probably improve a business's local ranking.

Manage and respond to reviews

Interact with customers by responding to reviews that they leave about your business. [Responding to reviews](#) shows that you value your customers and the feedback that they leave about your business. High-quality, positive reviews from your customers will improve your business's visibility and increase the likelihood that a potential customer will visit your location. Encourage customers to leave feedback by creating a link they can click to write reviews Prominence is also based on information that Google has about a business from across the web (like links, articles, and directories). Google review count and score are factored into local search ranking: more reviews and positive ratings will probably improve a business's local ranking.