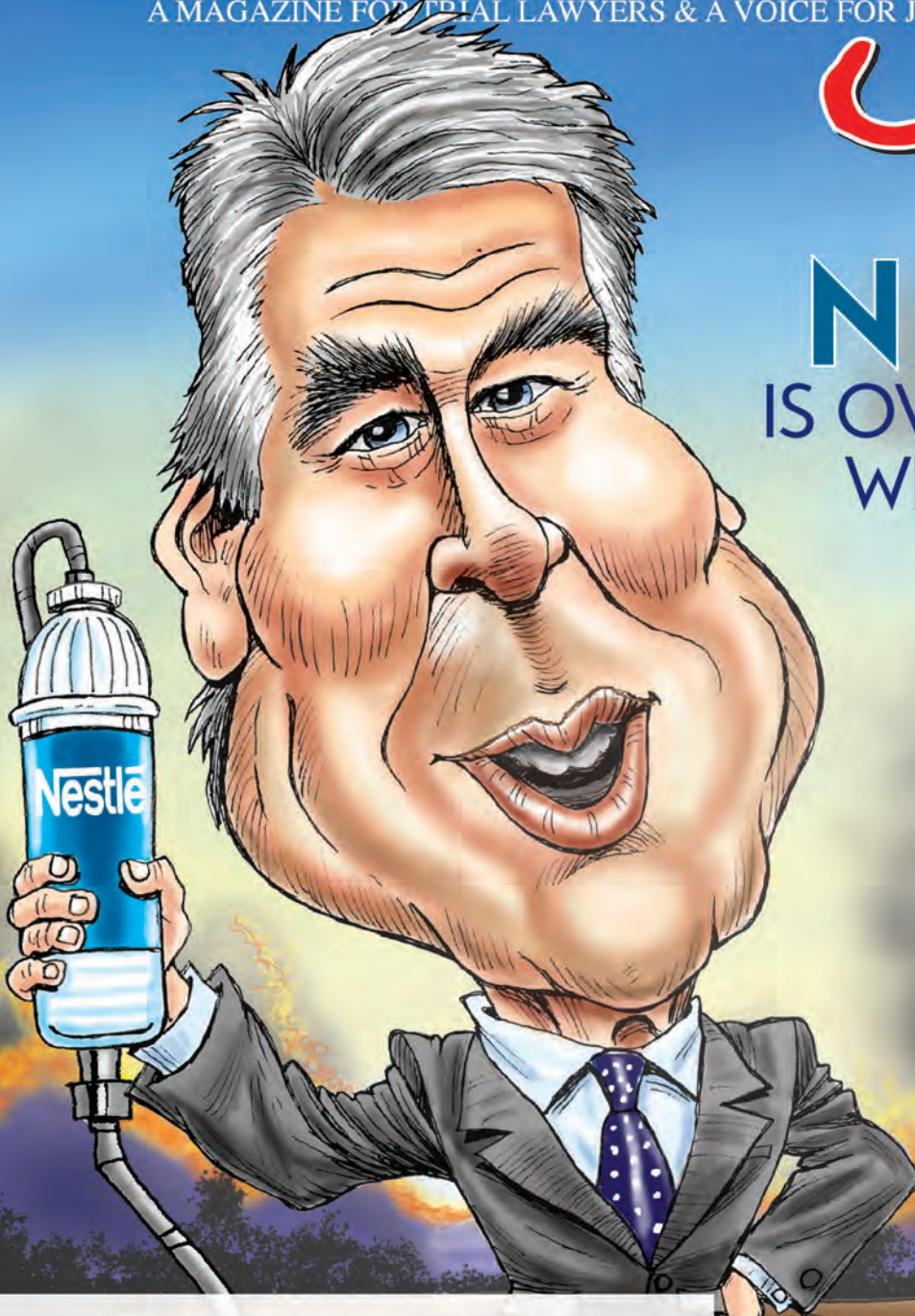


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HOW IMPORTANT ARE GOOGLE SEARCH RANKINGS ANYWAY? *(Answer: Probably More Than You Think)*

By Steve Nober

Before the late nineties, searching for a local business, like a law firm, was a lot simpler. Maybe you had a referral from a friend or family member, or you saw an ad on TV or a magazine. Maybe you went to the yellow pages and picked the law firm that had the biggest ad or whose name came up at the top of the alphabetical list.

In today's digital world, a customer's journey to your firm is likely to begin with a web search. And as the most used search engine for decades, Google will likely be the source of your next client.

Google's setup is not all that much different than the yellow pages. You'll see both paid ads as well as non-paid listings, arranged in an order that you can scroll through. The difference is that they're no longer just listed by alphabet.

Who gets the top spots can be mysterious to those who don't delve in the art of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and understand the complex and ever-changing algorithms that Google has established to rank content on search.

So, you may be thinking, 'our firm has a great reputation; we've won lots of cases in our area; people know us and respect us; therefore, our listing must be in those top spots.' Unfortunately, this may not be the case.

Many lawyers who Google their firms by commonly used keywords or phrases, such as ‘personal injury lawyers near me’ may be dismayed to discover much lower rankings in search results than they had expected. They may also be surprised, as they move throughout their town or city, to see how their listings vary from place to place and get lower the farther they get from their home office location.

And if you’re thinking that Google search results aren’t *that* important, consider this — statistics show 93% of online experiences begin with a Google search. In fact, studies show 75% of users never scroll past the first page of search results.

This means if you’re not in the Top 3 of search results, you’re losing clicks to firms that are. Each of those lost clicks means one less potential client for you and one more for your competitor across town.

The Map Pack: Your Friend (or Foe)

When a potential client Googles law firms close to their location, they’ll find local results in what is commonly referred to as the Google Map Pack. This is an interactive map of the area they’re searching or based on the location of a mobile device. The Map Pack displays the Top 3 listings that Google determines are the best match for a search.

How does Google determine the best match? Local rankings are based on a combination of three factors: relevance, distance, and prominence. At times, the algorithms may determine a law firm that is located farther away might be a better match, which would mean a higher ranking for that firm.

Getting into the Map Pack Top 3 is not the same as buying Pay Per Click ads. If you’re not there already, however, you’ll find that by taking certain targeted measures, you can rise in the listings organically. It won’t happen overnight, but if you can plan and execute a targeted SEO strategy, your firm can rise in the listings.

You can take some of these actions on your own; however, it is incredibly helpful to have an expert working with you who understands the nuances of Google’s rules and algorithms. This will ensure you’re moving up in the listings the right way; and to avoid any shortcuts, which could lead to your firm



being penalized and moved lower in the listings.

Consumer Attorney Marketing Group (CAMG) has several top-notch SEO experts on staff who know the right way to optimize your website and content to get your firm higher in search, so you can reap the benefits of many more leads.

Keywords, Backlinking, Mobile Optimization and More

Identifying and targeting the right types of keywords are essential components of a successful search strategy. Writers incorporate these keywords into content on your website, including webpage copy, blogs, articles, papers, and other content. If done properly, this can increase search rankings.

At CAMG, our team is focused on keywords that matter, avoiding “exact match long-tail keywords” used in other agencies that pump out a high volume of blogs. Our team is dedicated to deliberate, high-quality long-form content creation, which gives you an advantage.

Another strategy we avoid is “keyword stuffing” or overusing keywords to rank higher in search. Google’s algorithms have been set up to recognize this tactic. Providing high-quality, relevant content is essential to Google’s rankings, as the search engine’s goal is to highlight best content first. Therefore, the content you publish should be useful for potential clients and other attorneys practicing in your field.

Mobile optimization is yet another way that Google ranks your site in search, rewarding websites with faster load

times with higher search positions. In fact, Google recently rolled out its Core Web Vitals update, which boosts sites that adhere to its technical and speed requirements. CAMG’s SEO experts are well versed in these new requirements and are working with clients to ensure their websites are optimized for the new requirements.

Another way to improve your ranking in search is through backlinking. Google looks at the number of these links, the quality/reputation of the sites linking to you, and how you have setup your internal links throughout your site. The more properly set up backlinks of other sites linking to yours, the higher your listing will rank in search.

Black Hat vs. White Hat

In the world of SEO, there are several ways that you can cut corners to increase your rankings in search. Some of these we already mentioned such as keyword stuffing, as well as producing low quality content, linking to low quality sites and even guest posting or purchasing backlinks. Although these may result in a quick bump in your search rankings, they can come back to haunt you in the long run, especially if Google’s algorithms or employees catch you using these techniques. Law firm websites that don’t follow Google’s search quality algorithm updates will see a significant drop in both traffic and leads.

These so-called black hat practices go against what Google and other similar search engines want on their site, which is links to quality, well-constructed

content that will inform an audience of customers or professionals. Google is constantly updating its algorithms with the goal of providing better content that matches with their customers' inquiries. These black hat quick wins fly in the face of their goals and they are known to penalize offenders by sending them way down in the rankings.

That's why CAMG only uses white-hat SEO practices, which comply with Google's rules and goals for content quality. Although results may take a little longer to actualize, your content and listings will stay in the top results for the long run, ensuring a better return on your investment.

User Experience

Each website and practice area has different needs. However, there are some rules that are very important to follow in terms of user experience (or, as it's sometimes called, UX). Good UX starts with a well-constructed website that is easy to navigate and contains lots of useful and relevant content. This is the

main way that you can ensure that your website starts to rank higher in search.

It's also very important that your website's code is error-free. If Google crawls your site and finds errors in code, it's likely that it will miss out on some of the great content that you've been creating for your readers.

Getting To The Top

When coming up with your SEO plan, take some time to look at what the competition is doing. Look at those sites that rank high in search and compare their content, design and overall useability against your firm's site and other sites that rank lower in search. Find out what topics they're writing about and look at how they are incorporating keywords and backlinks. Check out their site on mobile and see how well it loads and runs.

Most importantly, note the way that they present information. Is it a blog; a newsletter; white papers; case studies? There are a lot of different types of content and different audiences will

react differently to each one. Take some time to figure out what your clients are likely to read. Tone, topic and length are all important considerations when looking to boost your website in search rankings.

Finally, when you are ready to make a commitment to having the best SEO-enabled site in your market and to lead in local search listings throughout your area, give CAMG a call. Our experts will work with you to create a comprehensive SEO plan. Our team will not only focus on improving your website but will also build a solid content plan, integrating with your social media, paid search

(pay per click), mobile optimization, and other components of an effective digital strategy.

I encourage readers to reach out to us to take advantage of a complimentary three-point SEO audit to learn what we can do for you.

As part of the audit, our SEO team will review three of the following areas:

- Local Visibility Map: We'll analyze your rankings by location and show you where you need improvement.
- Site Speed: How quickly does your site load for the user?
- Content Issues: Does your site cover in-depth, relevant, location-based content, including citations from authoritative sources?
- Backlinks: We'll scour the Internet to find backlinks that lead back to your site and assess them for quality, as well as other factors.

About Consumer Attorney Marketing Group

As an agile and media-agnostic marketing agency that works exclusively with the legal industry, Consumer Attorney Marketing Group (CAMG) has the tools and human resources to help you succeed in an increasingly complex marketing ecosystem.

As media preferences continuously change, we've kept pace with online and offline advertising, including mobile and placed digital, display, paid social and search, and traditional media campaigns (including TV, our exclusive informercial, radio, out-of-home, streaming, and more.)

With consistent tracking, analysis, and optimization as a brand pillar, we can dig into consumer response to online and offline media plans to close the loop between past and present learnings and run the most efficient campaigns possible that help connect you with clients.