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Why Web-Savvy Articles Are Important to Your Practice

By Linda Tancs

Considering the widespread use of the internet and the advent of social networking, establishing and developing your online presence is as important as ever. One good way to establish your online identity is to write articles on your area of expertise for syndication on the Web. But to get the most mileage out of that effort, you need to write text that can be optimized by search engines such as Google and Yahoo. Here's a primer on what to do when you sit down to write for the Web:

1. Look for other articles on your subject, and make your message unique. For example, if you work in the field of trusts and estates and most folks are writing on the benefits of wills and estate planning for couples with young children, then change the focus to stand out.

Consider writing an article directed to single parents or blended families.

2. Research keywords. Keywords are pivotal words or phrases that define the topic you're addressing. Suppose you practice matrimonial law and want to write about the topic of pet custody. A potential client looking for information on this topic is likely to search online using terms such as *custody*, *pet custody* or *custody disputes*. You'll want to optimize your content with words that are likely to be searched by your target audience so that they find your article. Not sure what those words are? You can brainstorm and then research the terms you think are relevant by using a keyword selector tool such as that found at <http://inventory.overture.com> or <http://adwords.google.com>. Also, don't neglect the title of your work in your battle for readers. For instance, how-to titles are one of the most popular formats, as any Web surfer will surely know. List-related headlines ("Nine Ways to Get Promoted") are also good hooks. The point is to maximize all of your content for the search engines, including the title and subtitle (if any) of your piece.
3. Keep content focused. Crawlers look for content to determine what your article is about. If, for example, you combine an article on estate planning with virtually an entire treatise on business succession planning (an element of estate planning in some instances), you are likely to make it difficult for search engines to categorize your content appropriately. Strive to write a detailed, focused piece on a single subject. Another aspect of content to keep in mind is that search engines are limited in the type of content that they read; tables and other graphics are not meaningful to search engines although they certainly

may be meaningful to your readers. Use them sparingly and judiciously.

4. Use links where appropriate. In Web articles, link text is the blue (and hopefully clickable) text that appears in articles. Search engines love links. You can use links to connect readers to your professional biography or other publication credits. If you use links, be sure that the nature of the information appearing in blue as a link is obvious to the reader (and therefore to the search engines) rather than using ambiguous terms such as "click here." For example, if you're writing on the topic of LLCs as part of a series of tutorials on the forms of business organization available to an entrepreneur, then a good link (using underlined text in this example where the link would appear) would read something like "for information on S corporations and sole proprietorships, see my tutorials."
5. Find good distribution channels. Depending on the policies of your employer and regulations in your jurisdiction on Web postings of legal advisory materials, consider law-related sites that may distribute your content. Other options include free article directory sites such as ezinearticles.com and goarticles.com. You might also consider creating your own Web site or blog and posting your articles there. Blogs, too, are favored by search engines.

With a little forethought, you can start to increase the traffic and recognition you receive on the internet by adapting your content to these guidelines. So start writing!