

# The best in digital marketing

*When it comes to digital marketing, which firms are headed in the right direction? We asked some of Canada's top legal technology experts to separate the fab from the drab in nine different categories. The results of National's biennial nationwide survey are in.*

**F**irst, a caveat: Canadian law firms haven't exactly been quick to embrace emerging trends in digital marketing, whether that includes developing online communities, a mobile presence or nurturing a strong following through social media, all of which can go a long way to meaningfully engage with potential and existing clients, as well as prospective talent.

Instead, most Canadian law firms still think of their websites as static online brochures, not as a service to their clients. Few stand out. "Most law firm websites are indistinguishable from each other," says Jordan Furlong, senior adviser with Stem Legal Web Enterprises. "Switch the names and logos on two random firm websites and you'd have a hard time noticing the difference."

And while digital marketing holds immense potential, it's still impossible to tell how it will evolve. "We don't know yet what digital marketing is," says Furlong. "Twenty years from now, we're going to look back at Twitter, blogs and Facebook and think to ourselves, 'Isn't that quaint?'"

That's why our magazine updated its biennial survey from "Best law firm websites" — inaugurated in our December 2009 issue — to "Best in digital marketing."

The term website sounds like a one-stop destination, when in fact,





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OVERALL DESIGN



RECRUITMENT OUTREACH



CLIENT OUTREACH

successful marketers strive to have their content and brands consumed across a variety of interactive platforms, whether on Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, or mobile apps. In today's world, there ought to be nothing static about online content.

What's more, as we have often pointed out in these pages, the legal industry is undergoing tremendous change in Canada and around the world. A tougher marketplace and the growing use of information technology have imposed a new reality on the profession.

Increasingly, law firms have to compete with a new and aggressive breed of global legal service providers who know how to make information technology work for them effectively. It's to be expected that before long they will be deploying creative digital marketing strategies to engage existing clients, drive sales and even generate new leads.

Browse around the world and you'll find law firms that boast about their clients' achievements

as much as their own (Fenwick & West), others that offer online training courses (Eversheds) and firms that take the time to produce accessible and regularly updated blogs on matters of interest to their clients.

But when we asked a panel of seven judges who spend a good deal of time browsing law firm sites to tell us which ones they like and why, a clear consensus emerged: Broadly speaking, Canadian law firms still have a long way to go to raise their game in digital marketing. Encouragingly though, there are a few that distinguish themselves from the pack by displaying a keener sense of esthetic, a better understanding of social media and more creative client outreach initiatives.

We hope this rundown will generate some ideas and encourage law firms to push the boundaries of digital marketing even further and in time for our next survey.

### Overall design

“The design of a law firm website is just as important as its content and functionality,” says Furlong. “So I look for websites that are fresh and original while still remaining professional and accessible. Very few sites are pulling that off.”

Warren Bongard, co-founder of ZSA Legal Recruitment, likes Fasken Martineau's ([www.fasken.com](http://www.fasken.com)) “warm and personal” approach to individual lawyer profiles, as well as the “international spin” on Dickinson Wright's ([www.dickinson-wright.com](http://www.dickinson-wright.com)) site.

Carol Fitzwilliam, founder of Fitzwilliam Legal Recruitment, praises a design choice made by both McCarthy Tétrault ([www.mccarthy.ca](http://www.mccarthy.ca)) and Blake, Cassels & Graydon ([www.blakes.com](http://www.blakes.com)). “Both firms make it easy to search for a

lawyer and provide a list of lawyers with bar year, title and telephone number without having to open their profile,” she says.

“I really like Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt's new look. ([www.osler.com](http://www.osler.com)),” says legal blogger Omar Ha-Redeye, a 2011 Ontario call. “It's standard in many ways, but clean and easy to use.”

### Recruitment outreach

“Canadian firms could do much more to get to know students,” says Ha-Redeye.

“No law firm stands out in this respect,” Furlong adds. “Firms say most of the same things in the same ways because that's what's expected.”

Certain sites do, however, offer bright spots for job seekers. “Goodmans ([www.goodmans.ca](http://www.goodmans.ca)), and Torsys ([www.torsys.com](http://www.torsys.com))

feature online video collections,” says Ha-Redeye, who also praises the Thomson Rogers ([www.thomsonrogers.com](http://www.thomsonrogers.com)) “Resource Library” for containing “lots of educational material for younger lawyers on a wide variety of practice areas. As someone still starting out, it's great information to have on hand.”

Connie Crosby, principal of Crosby Group Consulting, notes that Blake, Cassels & Graydon distinguishes its recruitment site by using a separate url ([www.joinblakes.com](http://www.joinblakes.com)). “There's lots of diversity evident, especially compared to other firms.” She also applauds Borden Ladner Gervais's efforts to tell students about the lawyers who already work at the firm. The opening page of the student section includes “pop-outs” showing the many achievements of firm lawyers outside of the office.





USE OF VIDEO

NATIONAL WEBSITES

According to Fitzwilliam, Montreal's BCF ([www.bcf.ca/recrutement/en/index.asp](http://www.bcf.ca/recrutement/en/index.asp)) has a great student outreach website indicating programs, current recruits and salaries. The site even charts past increases in revenues and the age breakdown of the firm's partners.

**Client outreach**

“Frankly, clients are more interesting than the law firms themselves,” says Furlong who cautions firms to avoid just talking about themselves, particularly on Twitter feeds, which serve all too often as a conduit to push out uninteresting press releases. But he does praise the site of one of his firm's clients, Gowlings: “The firm's new Knowledge Center is also a market leader in terms of client-facing content.”

Obviously, a firm's website should aim to persuade visitors of the quality of its team of lawyers. It's not enough to state that a lawyer has been practising X-type of law for over 30 years any more, says Marni MacLeod, client services director at Skunkworks Creative Group Inc. in Vancouver.

Still, keep it snappy. “Most lawyers can easily describe in one or two sentences the last three matters they worked on,” MacLeod continues. “Those descriptions can give clients confidence that you know what you're doing and have recent experience with specific types of cases.”

“Sites like Davies Ward Phillips & Vineberg ([www.dwpu.com](http://www.dwpu.com)) have easy-to-find tabs on their home page for representative work by expertise,” says Fitzwilliam.

“Goodmans ([www.goodmans.ca](http://www.goodmans.ca)) lists their significant transactions and cases by year in the Deals & Cases section,” MacLeod adds. “Descriptions are concise but provide the salient information and they link to specific

practice areas.”

Friendliness can infiltrate law firm websites, according to Crosby. “Field Law ([www.fieldlaw.com](http://www.fieldlaw.com)) appeals directly to their Alberta and Yellowknife audiences with a site full of warm personality, while the ‘areas of law’ section allows for browsing and searching,” she says. “The ‘Expertise’ section is easy to view, and I like that they break out specific industries.”

“Photos of real people on Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt's ([www.osler.com](http://www.osler.com)) site make it seem friendlier than certain competitors' sites,” Crosby adds.

Certain lawyers regularly engage the communities their clients frequent, and show this online. “Rob Hyndman ([www.hyndmanlaw.com](http://www.hyndmanlaw.com)) doesn't just do outreach, he is part of the tech community,” says Crosby. “His blog covers issues of specific interest to his clients.”

Crosby sees Hyndman's outreach extending beyond prospective clients. “He has password-protected client-related forms directly on his site, which makes working with Hyndman Law very efficient.”

**Use of video**

Professionally produced videos can intimidate would-be law firm videographers.

But video need not be Hollywood calibre. Take Blakes' flash mob dance in a Toronto food court to a Black Eyed Peas dance (before the band claimed copyright infringement forcing the firm to take the video off YouTube). Or Hull & Hull's Media Centre, ([www.hullandhull.com](http://www.hullandhull.com)) where prospective clients and staff can glean expertise and, in the process, get to know Hull & Hull lawyers.

Torys got creative with their video M&A: Torys' Top Trends for 2011 ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGThEsCFvgo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGThEsCFvgo)). “I have always liked Torys annual M&A

Trends publication but this year they have taken it to a new level with a simple animated YouTube video summarizing the content of their 2011 report,” says Wolf. “Imagine... an M&A trends report that is actually fun!”

“Miller Thomson's ([www.millerthomson.com](http://www.millerthomson.com)) Multimedia Centre provides exposure for lawyers in formats more engaging than print,” says MacLeod. “Podcasts and videos are great ways to recap recent CLE presentations or lunch-and-learn seminars that a firm's lawyers do anyway.”

Distribution outside the firm's url can help. Torys maintains a YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/torysmedia](http://www.youtube.com/torysmedia)) as well as its own video centre.

**National websites**

For lawyers, business attire is de rigueur. What about their websites? “Major law firms need to be central information hubs,” says Ha-Redeye, “so they post publications and bulletins directly on their websites.”

“I really like Osler, Hoskin & Harcourt's new look. ([www.osler.com](http://www.osler.com)). It's standard in many ways, but clean and easy to use,” Ha-Redeye explains. “The firm prominently displays notable cases and key articles on the front page, not buried deep within the website.”

“It makes good use of a colourful icon on its eye-catching front-page imagery to promote its federal budget commentary as well,” Furlong adds. He says similar things about McCarthy Tétrault's ([www.mccarthy.ca](http://www.mccarthy.ca)) since a “recent redesign that reflects the trend toward minimal text, larger images, and lots of white space.”

“Miller Thomson breaks the News & Events section into Latest News, Upcoming Seminars, and Speaking Engagements ([www.millerthomson.com](http://www.millerthomson.com)),” MacLeod says. “It's easy to see what





**REGIONAL WEBSITES**



**SOLO/SMALL FIRM WEBSITES**

they've been up to and would allow a client thinking about hiring the firm to attend a presentation by firm talent."

One former national firm, Ogilvy Renault, earned several plaudits as well — none of which matter any longer. Since OR's merger with Norton Rose, many OR-based links "went dark."

Furlong likes how Gowlings has updated its website. "Almost all law firm websites cling to traditional landscape formats with rows of banners and tabs. Gowlings' new site is one of the very few to break that mould: its front page stands on a vertical axis and makes good use of strong rotating images."

**Regional websites**

Regional firms don't enjoy the geographic reach of national competitors, but their websites can still go big. Western Canada's Clark Wilson, for instance, "runs multiple blogs and websites, offering plenty of information," says Ha-Redeye.

Crosby singles out McInnes Cooper ([www.mcinnescoper.com](http://www.mcinnescoper.com)) and Field Law ([www.fieldlaw.com](http://www.fieldlaw.com)) as "well-designed, uncluttered sites in an industry where sites feel like they have been designed by committee," she says. "The

national firms could learn from them."

"Farris ([www.farris.com](http://www.farris.com)) is that rare firm whose website has a high-class professional feel to it," says Furlong, "thanks to its colour scheme and rotating photos of the firm's polished interior. It also prominently features glowing testimonials from its clients. More firms should do this."


"I like Brazeau Seller's ([www.brazeauseller.com](http://www.brazeauseller.com)) interactive front-page gallery of lawyers. I also like how they feature their community work, support of women and law, and connection with the Meritas worldwide law firm network."

**Solo/small firm websites**

Smaller firms with fewer resources are wise to focus on web initiatives that they can do well.


"Garry Wise's sites ([www.wiselaw.net](http://www.wiselaw.net), [www.wiselaw.blogspot.com](http://www.wiselaw.blogspot.com)) feature frequent updates," says Ha-Redeye, "which makes them major legal news sites."

"Hull & Hull's website ([www.hullandhull.com](http://www.hullandhull.com)) is bright, interactive, and client-friendly," says Furlong. "Visitors are immediately introduced to the firm's blogs, videos, newsletters, and other resources. The firm also asks precisely the right question on its front



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page: 'Can we help you?'

Furlong also likes Calgary family law firm Foster LLP ([www.fr.law.ca](http://www.fr.law.ca)). "Their home page features a banner that says 'Our clients look to us to replace complication with simplification.' The firm implements that message in its clean, clear website."

He also has good things to say about the Irving Mitchell Kalichman ([www.imk.ca](http://www.imk.ca)) message: "The site focuses the web visitor early and often on the firm's litigation and administrative law practice and its prominent position in various key rankings. The design is also open and airy, a nice change of pace from many litigation firm's button-down approach."

### Social media presence

Businesses cede some control when they use social media, which may explain why many firms stick to blogs and haven't made inroads into other social networking channels. Among those that do use Twitter, says Furlong, few "get it," with the notable exception of Ottawa's IP firm Ridout Maybee, which offers valuable information about its own activities, but also links to news about startups.

Ha-Redeye notes contributions made

by Heenan Blaikie lawyers on Slaw.ca and elsewhere outside the firm's url. "It creates a considerable presence," he says, also offering Bob Tarantino's Entertainment and Media Law Signal ([www.entertainmentmedialawsignal.com](http://www.entertainmentmedialawsignal.com)) site as an example.

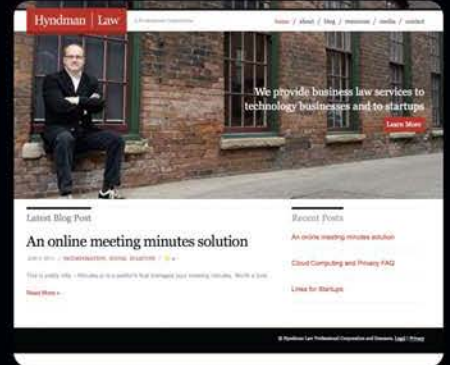
"Rob Hyndman ([hyndmanlaw.com](http://hyndmanlaw.com)) knows exactly where his audience is and meets them there," says Crosby. "Not only does he personally blog (he has separate law firm and personal blogs), but also he participates in Twitter, LinkedIn and sites other lawyers likely have never heard of such as GigPark, Venture Hacks and Giff Constable."

"I like that he hasn't wasted time with Facebook since he knows his tech audience is elsewhere."

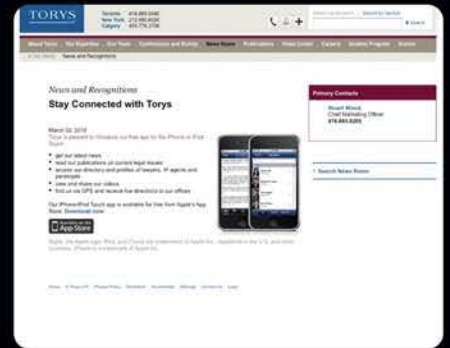
"Miskin Law Offices ([www.adrworks.com](http://www.adrworks.com)) punch above their weight," Crosby adds. "Murray Miskin is active in social media, using Facebook, YouTube and blog posts to connect with clients and potential clients."

### Best in mobile

Today's on-the-go web surfers increasingly visit sites using smartphones and tablets. While the browsers are getting better, savvy



### SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE



### BEST IN MOBILE

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## The 2011 Best in digital judges:

- Omar Ha-Redeye, legal blogger
- Jordan Furlong, senior adviser with Stem Legal Web Enterprises and blogger at "Law21: Dispatches From a Legal Profession on the Brink."
- Warren Bongard, Co-Founder, ZSA
- Carol Fitzwilliam, Founder, Fitzwilliam Legal Recruitment
- Connie Crosby, Principal, Crosby Group Consulting
- Allison Wolf, Certified Executive Coach, Shift Works Strategic Inc.
- Marni MacLeod, Client Services Director, Skunkworks Creative Group Inc.

marketers meet mobile surfers halfway by offering either smartphone-tailored versions of their sites or applications meant for small screens.

This can mean foregoing certain popular web technologies. For example, pages like BLG's student intro page ([www.blg.com/en/students/Pages/intro.aspx](http://www.blg.com/en/students/Pages/intro.aspx)) are both useful

and attractive on computers, but they don't work on an iPhone.

Ha-Redeye spurns Flash-based websites. Aside from not appearing on Apple Inc's popular iDevices, he believes they're "poorly optimized, difficult to manage and suffer long load times."

Ha-Redeye and Crosby both laud

Torys for having developed its smartphone app, essentially a website tailored for smartphone screens. "Torys was probably one of the first to develop an app in the entire world, which is pretty impressive," Ha-Redeye says. **N**

Comments by experts compiled by Luigi Benetton.

# Marketing numériques: les bons coups

*Quels sont les cabinets qui sont sur la bonne voie en matière de marketing numérique? Les résultats du sondage national biennal du magazine National éclairent la question.*

**T**out d'abord, une petite mise en garde : les cabinets juridiques canadiens ne se sont pas exactement précipités pour suivre les nouvelles tendances du marketing numérique comme les communautés en ligne, la communication mobile ou les médias sociaux. Il s'agit pourtant de moyens efficaces de nouer des liens avec les clients potentiels ou actuels aussi bien qu'avec les collaborateurs éventuels.

En fait, la plupart des cabinets canadiens considèrent encore leurs sites Web comme des dépliants statiques en ligne, et non comme un service à leurs clients. Rares sont ceux qui se distinguent. « La plupart des sites Web des cabinets d'avocats sont du pareil au même, affirme Jordan Furlong, conseiller principal auprès de *Stem Legal Web Enterprises*. Changez les noms et les logos de deux sites choisis au hasard et vous aurez de la peine à voir la différence. »

Si le marketing numérique recèle un immense potentiel, il est impossible de prévoir comment il va évoluer. « Nous ne

savons pas encore ce qu'est le marketing numérique, affirme Furlong. Dans 20 ans, nous repenserons à Twitter, aux blogues et à Facebook et nous trouverons que ça fait un peu vieillot. »

C'est ce qui a poussé notre magazine à mettre à jour son classement biennal (paru pour la première fois dans notre édition de décembre 2009) des meilleurs sites web canadiens en droit, pour en faire le palmarès du marketing numérique.

La notion de site web évoque une destination unique alors qu'en fait, les meilleurs spécialistes du marketing s'efforcent de diffuser leur contenu et leurs marques grâce à une variété de plateformes interactives : fils Twitter, pages Facebook ou applications mobiles. Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, le contenu en ligne devrait être tout sauf statique.

Nous espérons que ce palmarès engendrera des idées et encouragera les cabinets d'avocats à repousser sans cesse les limites du marketing numérique, et ce, d'ici la prochaine fois que nous établirons notre classement.

### Conception générale

« La conception visuelle d'un site web de cabinet d'avocats est tout aussi importante que son contenu et ses fonctions, selon Furlong. Je cherche des sites qui sont rafraîchissants et originaux tout en restant professionnels et accessibles. Très peu y réussissent. »

Celui-ci apprécie McCarthy Tétrault

([www.mccarthy.ca](http://www.mccarthy.ca)) depuis « une récente refonte qui traduit la tendance en faveur d'un minimum de texte, de plus grandes images et une présentation bien dégagée ».

Carol Fitzwilliam, fondatrice de Recrutement juridique Fitzwilliam, admire également l'orientation graphique adoptée par Blake, Cassels & Graydon ([www.blakes.com](http://www.blakes.com)).

### Section recrutement

« Les cabinets canadiens pourraient faire tellement plus pour se rapprocher des étudiants », soutient le juriblogueur Omar Ha-Redeye.

Par contre, certains sites offrent effectivement des éléments intéressants pour les chercheurs d'emploi, dit-il : « Goodmans