

Reviews & Millennials Part 1: How Your Online Presence Can Make or Break Your Firm

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Let's go back 16 years to 2005. The youngest millennials were what? Around 8 years old? And if you were to take a look at websites and law firm's online presence 16 years ago, what you would see was an unaesthetic, barebones framework with an 'About Us' section, a stock photo (if you were lucky), and a phone number. Having an online presence back then meant really one thing: you had a website.

Fast forward to 3 years ago, and what do we have? An internet that looks wildly different. Being online doesn't mean you just have a website, it means you are immersed and engaged in the multitude of layers that make up this new age online presence. We know that sounds vague, so don't stop reading because we're about to dig in.

Let's talk about some facts first.

In a 2019 survey, a hypothetical question was posed to the participants stating: "If you were faced with a legal issue, where would you search for help? [64% of those people](#) indicated that they would go to Google before any other platform, resource, or person to get help.

But when the question was posed about where one would go if they actually needed an attorney, as opposed to merely researching, 62% of those people said they would get an attorney or law firm referral from a friend or family member, not google.

Now with this in mind, that same group of people also stated that they would visit a law firm's website prior to meeting or calling the firm. And this can be true for many service-based industries.

Today, millennials and the younger generations are seeking information on their own, prior to picking up the phone. It is also important to note that while they are making decisions and

researching, comparing, and analyzing which of the many firms would fit their needs, they are also reading client reviews. And with the advent of the internet, and everything that has come with it, these online reviews are not only prevalent but incredibly important.

A Generation Raised on the Internet



Millennials

According to the Pew Research Center, millennials are born between 1981-1996, they're in their 20s and 30s now, and if they are not your current clients, they will be.

We know what you may be thinking, millennials have gotten a bad rap and you would prefer to carry on how you have been and let them involve themselves elsewhere, but we are telling you now, don't do that! Don't believe us? Keep reading.

This demographic grew up with the internet and mobile phones, they are digital natives. To put bluntly, this age group knew more about Amazon the company than they did about Amazon the river when they grew up. And not only are millennials the largest generation, but they are also the largest population when it comes to the workforce.

What makes a millennial unique?

Millennials communicate very differently than other generations. They do not prefer to talk on the phone, rather they prefer communicating via text or with images. This is important to note because many people (millennials included), will look for alternatives if the organizations they originally searched for do not communicate the way they do. That isn't a threat, it is simply just the way it is. Think of it as a relationship. If your partner only communicated with you one way,

but you preferred another and there was no compromise or change of action, the likelihood of them becoming your spouse is very low. It's the same with communicating with your clients.

Additionally, millennials are "addicted" to social media and the happiness and overall validation it provides. Now, if you don't think social media is important or relevant to your business, let's take a look at why you may be wrong. [Visual Capitalist's](#) conducted "A Minute on the Internet in 2020" where they estimated the amount of data created on the internet in one minute. Here is some of what they found:

- 41.7 million text messages are shared
- 500 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube
- 347,222 Instagram stories are posted
- 319 new users join Twitter

And this is all in 60 seconds, that is crazy! It took longer than 60 seconds to even type that information out...

Reviews

We're in a numbers kind of mood today, so without further ado: [91% of people](#) between the ages of 18-36 (cough millennials), trust strangers reviews online as much as personal recommendations, and [93% of those consumers](#) say that online reviews influenced their purchase decisions.

And for the bad news bear, a 3.3-star rating is the minimum for what business consumers would feel okay engaging with, where only 13% of people will consider buying from a business that has only a 1 or 2-star rating. 94% say an online review has convinced them to avoid a business, and you risk losing as many as 22% of customers when just one negative article is found by users considering buying their product.

Now for Millennials specifically, [a study showed](#) that 8 out of 10 millennials will never buy anything without reading a review first and 77% trust reviews they read on brand websites. So what is the takeaway here? Reviews are crucial.

And from an SEO standpoint, Google places a high priority on them. Reviews provide value, Google knows this, so these reviews will take up real estate on the first page before even paid ad

content. The better your reviews are, the higher you will rank on this search engine.

Now if you're wondering how to get reviews the answer is simple! Ask your current clients. If they're using Gmail, leaving a review will be quick and painless. You can create surveys and provide your clients with all the information they would need to take 3 minutes of their time to write about how their experience was. Firms obviously handle a lot of sensitive information, you may have clients who are reluctant to publicly disclose their stories, but fortunately, millennials are very open, honest, and very straightforward. [A study](#) showed that 25- 34 year olds are the most vocal when it comes to reviews. Roughly 23% of reviews are left by people are in that age category. Let's dig deeper.

Building a culture of reviews within your firm

The first thing you need to do is establish that your firm takes reviews seriously. And how do you do this? You communicate it with your staff. If your team doesn't know that it is important for them to ask their clients for reviews, they probably won't do it. Once everyone is aligned on expectations, you need to have a very clear system on how to get a successful review from your client.

Here are some things you should be asking yourself in order to build a system of reviews and ensuring you're getting the best possible reviews from your clients:

1. Standardize your post-case procedure across the firm.
2. What is your timeline for follow-up and or asking your client for a review?
3. Will you send follow-up emails or calls?
4. Will you offer a referral program?
5. Will you offer an incentive to your team?
6. Will you send your clients a survey or have them write whatever comes to mind?
7. Will you have an internal paper review or an online platform set up on your website to collect the information?
8. Will this be available via mobile?
9. Will you provide guidance on what to or what not to say?
10. Will you follow up with your review requests?
11. Will you follow up with your clients whether they leave a good or bad review?

A good rule of thumb for asking for reviews is to ask as soon as possible. If you leave too much time between when you ask and the close of the case, the likelihood of getting a 'yes' will be lower.

Practice management software will allow you to automate the follow-up process so that you can create [workflows](#) that will trigger a specified email template to be sent to your client following the conclusion of their case (or whenever you set it in the system to be sent). Survey's are beneficial because you can control the questions being asked and they are relatively fast for your clients to respond to. Keep in mind that you can control some of this conversation. Make it as easy as possible for your clients by giving them guidelines of what they should stay away from (specific case details), and what it is okay to talk about (their experience with your firm, attorney responsiveness, customer service, etc.)

Make referrals easier. 62% of all legal clients are asking their friends and family for firm recommendations. In your [intake process](#), you should be tracking where referrals are coming from and at the close of a matter, you can have referral forms automatically generated and emailed out for your clients to fill out.

Uh oh. You got a bad review. Now what?

First of all, it is important to remember that bad reviews happen! If you get one, it may not be an accurate indication of the actual services your team provided, your client could just be having a bad day. So don't sweat it. Also, we all know there is "that person," the person who is never happy or just prides themselves on leaving tough critiques. So take it in stride and don't take it personally!

If you do get a bad review, the first things you should do are:

- Take a deep breath and relax. If you are the kind of person to get angry, just take a step back and realize that this happens.
- Step away from the issue and do not reply right away until your emotions are level-set. Your responses to all reviews are read by the next client and or reviewer, so make sure you respond appropriately and calmly.
- Offer an apology. A sincere apology goes a very long way. Don't even forget that
- Don't offer specifics. Make it known that you are sorry and ask if you could correspond with them privately to figure out a solution or hear more about their complaints.

It is important that you follow up with your clients after the review has been written, especially if it is not favorable. Doing this will provide you with the opportunity to speak with that client and ask if there is anything you can do to improve their experience. Always lead with asking "What can I do better?" or "How can I fix this?" Instead of, "I'm sorry you had a bad experience, but do you think you could write a better review?" Also, a bad review can simply be taken as a learning experience.

Review Ethics - Confidentiality

The rule here is simple...

Do not respond to a review in which you disclose confidential information. End of story.

And we are just going to throw this one out there too - don't pay for reviews.

The Takeaway

If you walk away with one thing from reading this, it should be that reviews are important. And as the adage goes: "Closed mouths don't get fed," so ask your clients! You'll be surprised at how willing they will be to help you.