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The Ins and Outs of Paid Online Advertising for Law Firms

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Paid online advertising can be an important part of a law firm's digital marketing strategy, and it yields results in both the short and long run. If you want to optimize your online reach in 2023, your law firm should be looking at its online presence through both organic and paid search results.

Throughout the year as a part of our larger blog series, we'll be covering digital marketing and how your law firm can build its 2023 digital marketing strategy. In this article, we'll get into the nitty gritty of paid online advertising like PPC and PPL and how your law firm can benefit from incorporating these digital marketing tactics into your strategic plan.

What are the main types of paid digital advertising used by law firms?

The three major types of paid digital advertising that law firms use are pay per click (PPC), pay per lead (PPL), and Google Local Services ads. We'll cover all three in this article, with an emphasis on PPC and PPL.

What is PPC?

With pay per click (PPC) advertising, your law firm pays for the number of "clicks" it receives from online users. For example, your law firm's ad is featured on a given platform (e.g., websites, social media, or search engines), an online user clicks on the ad, and your law firm is billed for that click. [Google Ads](#) is the most popular system for placing PPC ads, as it enables your business to create ads that appear directly on Google based on a user's search.

This seems like a straightforward process, but optimization (and getting the biggest ROI) requires strategic thinking and regular re-evaluation. As with all other digital marketing campaigns, you'll want to begin by getting a feel for your target audience. Think about who they are, how old they are, where they live, and why they might be seeking legal advice. Focusing on your target market is important for creating the keywords that will be used in connection with your PPC ad.

What is PPL?

With pay per lead (PPL) advertising, the amount that your law firm will pay depends on the number of [leads](#) generated by a third party. As a reminder, a lead is a person or business that has shown interest in using the legal services that your law firm offers. Typically, your law firm will be able to define what constitutes a lead and thus only pay when those requirements are met. An

example of a PPL arrangement is one where a firm pays by the number of leads who provide their contact information or who apply for a free consultation.

Google's Local Services Ads

With Google Local Services ads, your law firm can connect directly with people who search on Google for services in their area that your firm offers. It works like this: your firm's advertisement will show up for customers in your geographic area who search for legal services related to your firm. Similar to standard PPL, your law firm will only pay if the lead calls or messages directly through the advertisement.

These Google ads require multistep verification and a fairly rigorous screening process. As with other advertisement strategies, Local Services ads should be optimized to showcase your law firm's expertise.

When it comes to PPC and PPL, which one is better?

The right answer depends on your law firm's goals. Both PPC and PPL advertising offer your law firm the chance to increase visibility and build a strong reputation.

Keep in mind that you don't have to choose between the two; you can opt to implement both PPC and PPL if your law firm's budget allows. In making your decision, check out this chart, which highlights some key differences between these paid forms of online advertising.

	PPC	PPL
Time and effort	With PPC, you have more control over branding, over which type of clients are acquired, and over what messages your law firm sends. However, this process is time-consuming and requires learned skills, as you'll need to monitor your performance and tweak your strategy to optimize your results.	With PPL, your law firm can rely on the skills of a third-party provider without having to implement strategies or conduct the keyword research yourself. If your law firm or marketing team is smaller, this can take a significant amount of workload off your plate.
Cost	The costs of PPC strategies are less predictable than PPL. Law-related keywords have some of the highest costs per click out there: some have even reached \$500+ per click . It might be difficult to find keywords that match your budget and your ambitions.	Because your law firm pays a specific amount for each lead acquired, you'll be able to calculate your costs upfront, so you'll be better able to predict your budget.
Quality	PPC is known for its quick results via increased web traffic. By routing visitors who click on your ad to your law firm's website, you're creating increased visibility. This is great for your law firm, but it doesn't guarantee that the click will turn into a lead or paying client right away. However, with PPC, you can retarget these people by showing them your ad again and encouraging them to get in touch when they need your services and are ready to move forward.	PPL can lead to higher-quality leads. The leads acquired from PPL have already expressed interest in legal services. That means your firm should have an easier time converting them into paying clients. However, some PPL providers send the same leads to multiple firms, leaving your firm to duke it out and nurture the attorney-client relationship.

In sum, the major difference is that with PPL, a third-party platform captures leads that are far along the journey of buying legal services. PPL services are doing their own marketing to attract those leads. PPC directly links to your law firm's website through keywords in a search engine. A PPL arrangement is a great option for small law firms or solo practitioners who want their law practice to grow but don't yet have the capacity for dozens of new clients.

If your firm has the time and capacity to focus on lead generation, starting with PPC is likely the right route. If your firm just wants to follow up on leads and see how they play out, then PPL is probably more your speed.

How does paid online advertising help my law firm?

Paid online advertising takes some of the guessing out of the new-client pipeline. By advertising online through any of the methods mentioned in this article, your law firm will get its name out there and start building a reputation in the community.

If your law firm is looking for results, paid search campaigns are an important digital marketing tool to consider. They offer tried-and-true [ROI](#) in the short and long term. Both PPC and PPL are useful tactics to obtain new clients while simultaneously growing your digital presence and brand.

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