

2021 LEGAL MARKETING TRENDS & PREDICTIONS



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P R E F A C E

“Unwavering incremental change can create remarkable and monumental results.”

- Ryan Lilly

Well, based on the amount of...underestimation on the fluctuant nature of 2020...it's hard to imagine the shelf-life of marketing advice these days, is any longer than a banana, duct taped to a wall.

However, in the human world, and in the world of effective law firm marketing, the implementation of useful advice, is a much slower process.

We predict the marketing buzz-word that successful law firms will use in 2021, is “incremental.”

This past year during the health crisis, we saw the absolute best of humanity shine through the legal community, in an historically tumultuous environment.

Head partners handing out masks, crowd-funding for struggling local business, pivoting to remote & digital operations; all while making incremental, memorable, impacts in their marketplaces & communities.

In 2021, a reliable law firm business development strategy will be built on a strong, foundational brand, with marketing tools, techniques, and partnerships, dedicated to incremental, but unwavering progress.

New innovations, like Google LSAs, and the disruption of the third-party tracking industry, are signs that change persists in online legal marketing. But the importance of compelling words, strong SEO, and Design for Conversion web design, will never go out of style.

In 2021, strong partnerships and a consistent strategy, will be essential as the latest “industry-standards” in legal marketing, quickly become buzzworthy, or get tossed in a bin.

This year, legal marketers will learn how to measure and set strategic goals, cut through all the hysteria, hype, and hope, and hone the basics of legal marketing and advertising – one step at a time.

I am extremely proud of all the hard work, research, and insight, that went into this project, and I'm proud to present our **Consultwebs 2021 Legal Marketing Trends and Predictions Report**. Please enjoy!



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WEB DESIGN

Legal web design that goes beyond the campaign



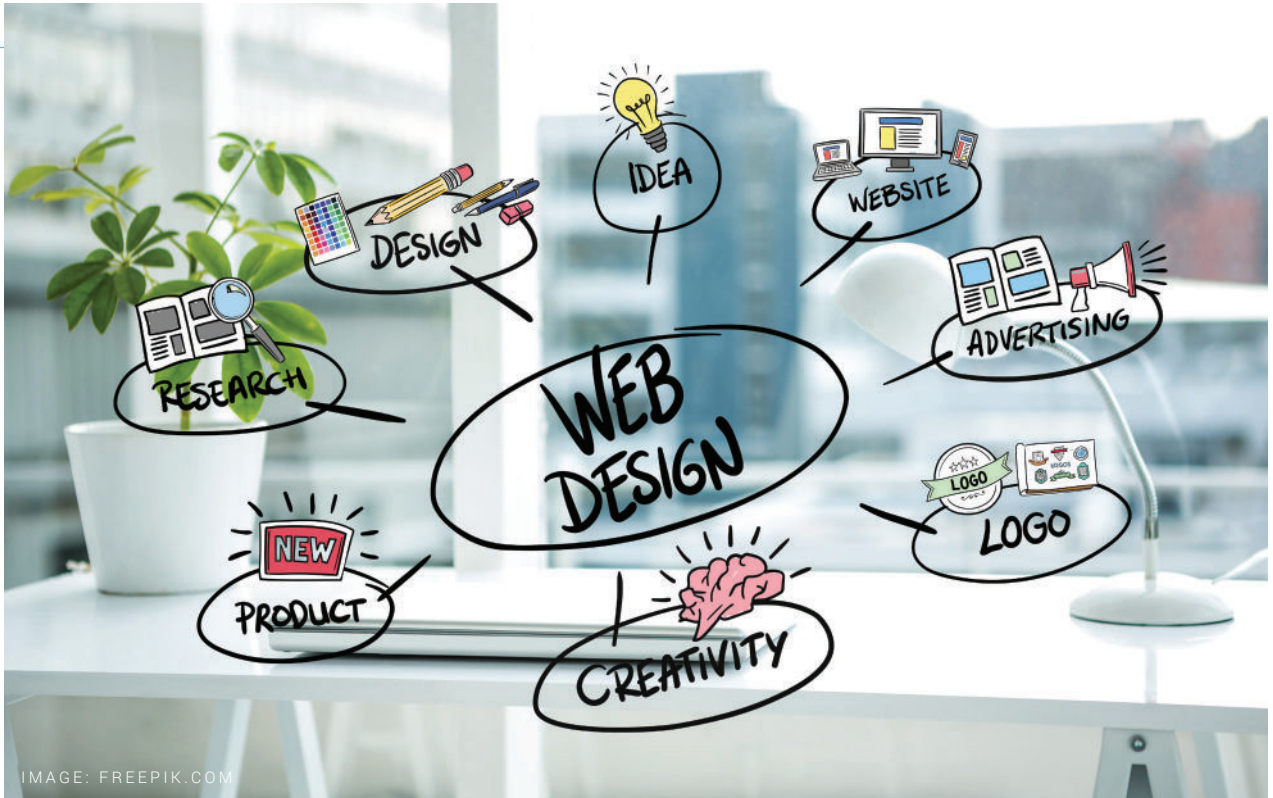


IMAGE: FREEPIK.COM

■ INTRO

Law firms are among the many verticals grappling with the tectonic shift in consumer behaviors around digital marketing and e-commerce, catalyzed by a global health crisis.

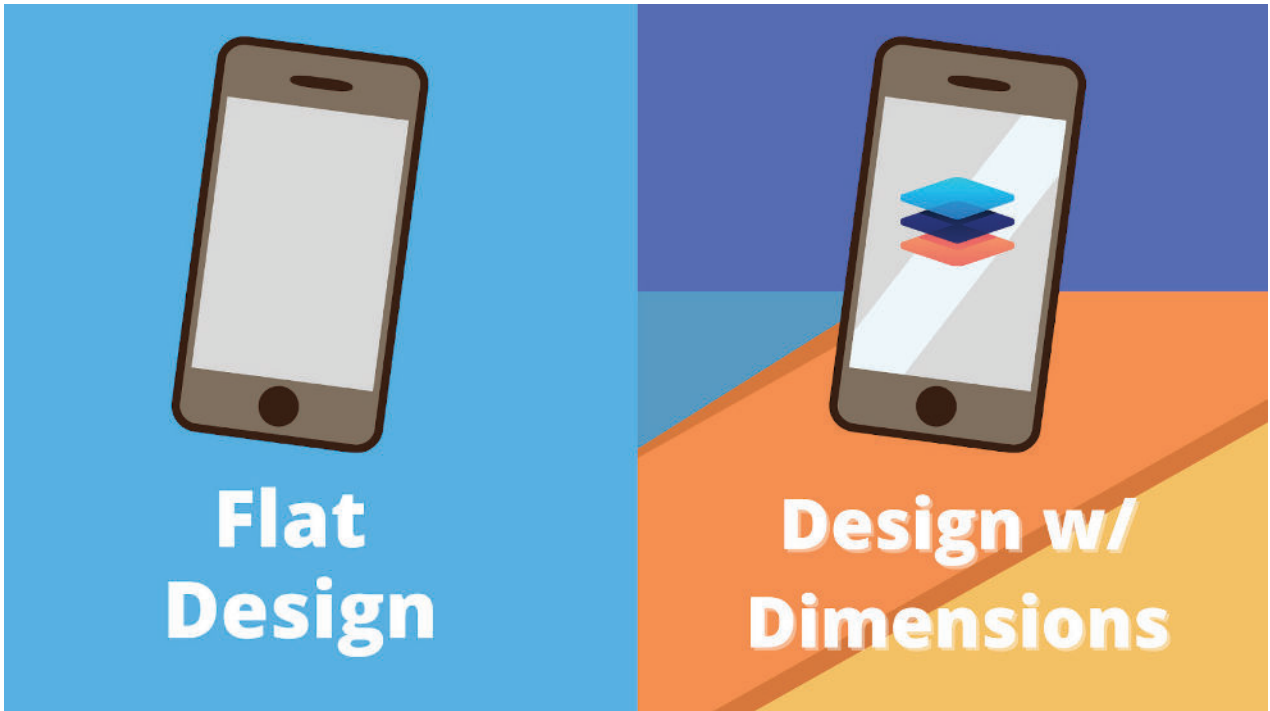
Ensuring the integrity and useability of a law firm's website, will be a marketing imperative in 2021, as more and more clients move towards adopting online pathways to legal services.

■ TREND/INSIGHT

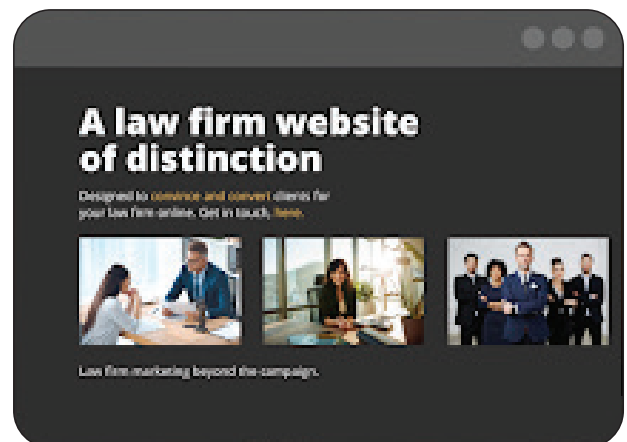
Getting the user experience and user interface right (UX, UI), for a law firm's website, are core tenets of "best-in-class" legal web design.

With the push towards more digital experiences for clients, law firm web design in 2021 should comport with client demands, and correlate with marketplace expectations.





Flat design will be replaced more and more with dimension, texture and gradients



Dark mode option on mobile and desktop will be critical for UX, but also for preference in the search engines and browsers that offer a 'dark mode' option.



As clients are starting to prefer online exchanges with law firms, and comparing sites to competitors, accessibility will be just as important as noticeability.

■ INCREMENTAL STEPS

Before you do anything fancy with design; take a look at the load times and page speed and for your law firm's website.

There are several ways you can make tiny adjustments to your existing website to increase load times and stay competitive. Go [here](#) to test your law firm's website.

Need more advice on how to speed up your site, [Get In Touch](#), we'll take a look.

The function and usability of your law firms website design, is not just a fancy pants marketing box to tick off - fast, responsive, high-quality web design is a competitive advantage, so if you're looking for an advantage in 2021, start small, and with a design partner that can translate your vision into something that attracts, convinces, and converts leads into clients.

■ CITATIONS

Sources:

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<https://www.consultwebs.com/blog/law-firm-website-design-design-for-conversion/>



SEO

Legal SEO that goes beyond the campaign



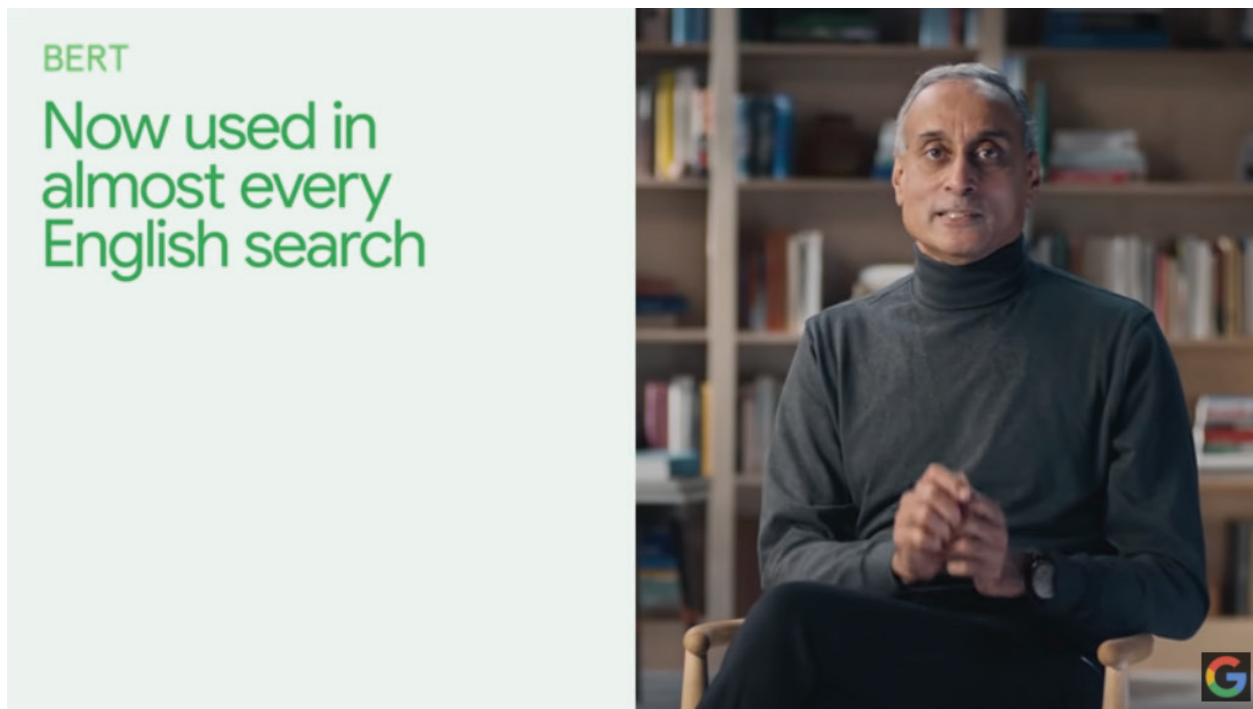


■ INTRO

Search Engine Optimization in 2021 will see an increased push to user-focused search, focused on quantity of searches, and quality of competition.

■ TREND/INSIGHT

We already know that page experience signals are here and they will become part of ranking factors in 2021. Along with that, the Google machine learning natural language processor BERT (launched at the end of 2019) has gone from impacting 1 in 10 queries to impacting almost every single English search.



Another change that rolled out affects 7% of search queries, and allows Google to better identify passages or sections of a page and determine if that passage or section is the best relevant result for a search query, as opposed to basing results on the entire page content.

This makes the relevance and quality of all content extremely important as law firm marketers move forward in 2021.

■ PREDICTION

All these updates and adjustments Google is rolling out, are aimed at a better user experience. We will see highly focused content, detailed answers, and related materials in search results from this. It will be harder to spam the results with low-quality content, as the algorithms continue to get better at identifying and handling that.





■ INCREMENTAL STEPS

We will need to continue to create great content and improve it by supplementing it with video, images, semantic markup, and more.

A “best-in-class” SEO strategy in 2021, will be focused on improving results for search, and built for user experience, filtering for quality. It is a win-win for all searchers. For marketers, it means fiercer competition is coming and the need for great content in all forms (articles, video, podcasts, images) will continue to grow so we can provide more linkable pathways to your law firm online.

■ CITATIONS

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<https://webmasters.googleblog.com/2020/11/timing-for-page-experience.html>

<https://searchon.withgoogle.com/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BERT_\(language_model\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BERT_(language_model))



CONTENT

Legal content that goes beyond the campaign



CONTENT



■ INTRO

In 2021, be deliberate with your content plan. Make sure your basic content foundations are solid, build out your supporting pages and location silos, and expect creative content strategies to catch potential clients in different parts of the sales funnel.

■ TREND/INSIGHT

It's tempting to spend your content budget chasing trending topics. But before you follow the pack, make sure your content strategy as a whole sets you up to be a leader.



.....CONTENT

■ INCREMENTAL STEPS

Just starting out or picking up where you left off a while back? If your site is sparse or has content that was written years ago, you'll need a solid block of fresh content right out of the gate. Years ago, you may have been able to get by on just a few basic pages. Now, competitive law firm websites have a breadth of content that you'll need to catch up with. As a foundation, you need strong content covering your individual practice areas, as well as location-specific content for the geos you are targeting.

Have a good foundation ready but looking to grow? Once you have those foundational pages set up, work with your SEO team to build out your supporting pages and location silos. Look at your competitors' sites to see what content they have that you lack. Your main practice area pages can also provide an outline of subtopics that need to be built out more thoroughly.

Think you have covered all your bases? For firms that have built a strong foundation and already have a deep well of content, expect your SEO team to get creative. Potential clients have a lot of questions and a lot of answers at their fingertips. Your content should be popping up at every turn. Talk to your marketing team about the questions you get from clients, including their tangential concerns. You never know what related topics potential clients might be searching for before they type in "car accident lawyer." It's best to be there to help before they know they need you.

■ WRAP IT UP!

A good content strategy is flexible and changes over time. At Consultwebs, we work with law firms to develop content strategies that deliver results. Whether you are starting from scratch or looking for new ways to capture conversions, our team can help you exceed your goals and get more cases from the web.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Legal content that goes beyond the campaign





■ INTRO

The shelf life of popular trends can be short, the pace of change frenetic, but that doesn't mean marketing your law firm through social media has to match.

The successful legal marketer in 2021, will have a firm grasp on media habits of actual clients, a balanced budget between brand and sales goals, and the ability to measure the efficacy and ROI of social media.





■ TREND/INSIGHT

2020 showed us, remote buyer/seller interactions, digital marketing, and social media, are more important to building a business than ever before, especially service industries like legal.

According to a recent survey from American Bar Tech Report, 80% of respondents maintain a presence on social media, the highest since 2016. But...

"Of those who used social media for professional purposes this year, 31% report having gotten clients as a result, 44% say they did not, and 24% did not know."

Not only are law firms lacking a coherent social media strategy, but the survey indicates they do a poor job of evaluating and reviewing marketing performance, in general.

■ PREDICTION

Along with measuring marketing performance, law firms should strengthen two areas of their social media strategy; Signal and Supply chain.

■ STRENGTH ON SIGNAL

Social media works as a brand signal, meaning, content on social, aims to connect, and bring awareness to the firm. But, are you reaching the right audience?

You may want to start a TikTok channel, but good social media strategy is informed by research that proves where your potential clients are, not where you think they are.

Review your law firm's own client database, find out what online media / social channels clients engage with, and build content and awareness there.





■ **STRENGTH OF SUPPLY CHAIN**

Social media can directly generate leads, but only when supported by the right budget, and optimized ad campaigns.

Organic content is not enough anymore.

A balanced approach to social media which is cognizant of Brand Building and Demand Generation, strengthens the supply chain on both ends of the marketing spectrum.

■ **INCREMENTAL STEPS**

- Client Experience Survey - Where are you going to ask for clients, where will you build rapport with clients?
- Establish business goals for Brand Growth & Sales, and the measurements to track - clicks, calls, but also dwell time with content or other conversion-centered engagement metrics.
- Create a social media marketing campaign, focused on Brand Growth: community oriented, top of funnel, thinking about Consideration.
- Create ANOTHER social media marketing campaign, focused on Sales Activation: conversion oriented, bottom of the funnel, thinking about Converting.





- Plan out a 3 month window and budget, and measurements -

Common digital marketing goals and associated metrics

GOALS	COMMON METRICS
Brand Awareness	Website Traffic - Views - Downloads - Mentions - Referral Links
Engagement	Comments - Likes/Shares - Forwards - Inbound Links
Lead Generation	Form Fills - Newsletter Subscriptions - Conversion Rates
Sales	P & Ls - Intakes - Conversion Rates by Channel
Retention/Loyalty	Returning Visits - Open Rates on Email - Percentage of Client on Social
Up-Sell	Form Fills - Newsletter Subscriptions - Conversion Rates

- and take it, one step at a time!





■ OUTRO

Regardless of the latest platforms or algorithms to appear in 2021 and beyond, social media is a tool and tactic that must be connected to a law firm marketing strategy that understands 1) its clientbase and media habits, 2) the firm's long & short term goals, and 3) how to measure it all via commonly understood metrics.

■ CITATIONS

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<https://techcrunch.com/2020/08/24/covid-19-pandemic-accelerated-shift-to-e-commerce-by-5-years-new-report-says/>

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PPC

Online legal advertising that goes beyond the campaign





■ INTRO

Data is going away (or at least changing) and cookies are going away too. Traditional advertising fundamentals are going to be more important than ever.

■ TREND/INSIGHT

Google Ads is limiting/halting access to information such as search term reports*. Whether it's by design to push users into automating more portions of their campaigns (and thereby relying on Google's tools and algorithms to manage ads), or in response to privacy concerns, the days of robust datasets and user tracking are coming to an end.

Note for clarification, according to Google, "A search term is the exact word or set of words a customer enters when searching on Google.com or one of our Search Network sites. A keyword is the word or set of words that Google advertisers create for a given ad group to target your ads to customers." <https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/2472708>

PREDICTION

3rd party Cookies will begin to get phased out, and user data will continue the trend of being restricted/removed.

Google is already working to block 3rd party trackers in Chrome and is touting “more transparency and control” in this blog post by VP of Ads Privacy and Safety: <https://blog.google/products/ads-commerce/improving-user-privacy-in-digital-advertising>

FROM GOOGLE'S OWN PLAYBOOK:

This forward thinking group of marketers has:

- Redefined what it means to have strong, direct relationships with their users. They recognize the growing importance of first-party data, making sure they have solutions in place to collect it responsibly from customers, as well as clear privacy policies that offer people transparency and control.
- Found ways to reach their audiences and measure results when signals are limited.

<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/future-of-marketing/privacy-and-trust/marketing-privacy-playbook/>

I don't think the writing on the wall could be any clearer. You will not be able to track and segment your advertising the way you can now.

■ INCREMENTAL STEPS

The importance of solid copywriting and conversion optimization techniques to work alongside the targeting available, is going to be key to successful legal SEM campaigns.

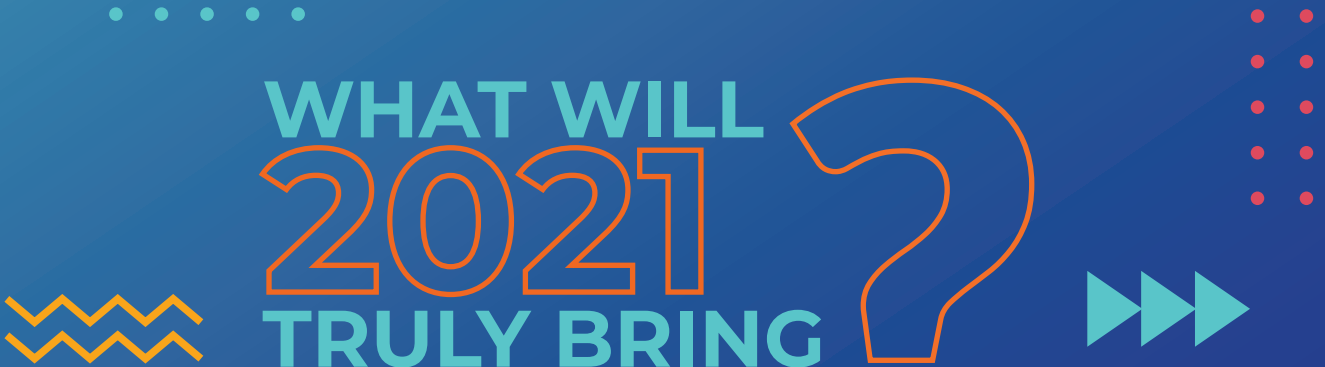
Set benchmarks and run A/B tests to continually discover and refine what works best.

Reviewing patterns of search behavior, rather than individual search terms - may have to split into bigger buckets such as branded vs non-branded.

■ OUTRO

Have a deep understanding of your audience. Not just the typical demographics things like age, gender, income, but fill those personas out as best you can, because the big guys (Google) aren't going to make it easy for you anymore.

Start doing your own research and compiling your own data. Use the information you collect to create compelling ads that speak to your audience using the language and affinities that they share, and put them in places where your potential clients will be. Set benchmarks, A/B test to determine effectiveness.



WHAT WILL 2021 TRULY BRING TO LEGAL MARKETING

The trends and predictions covered here can guide your legal marketing campaigns, when strategically applied, in piecemeal or broad fashion, to your business development problems in 2021. Let's briefly cover what we learned...

We discovered that high converting law firm websites in 2021 will be focused first on accessibility, experience, and load times. Success in legal web design will be dependent on the balance between design & performance.

A "best-in-class" SEO strategy in 2021, will be focused on improving results for search, and built for user experience, filtering for quality.

With the loss of tracking and the concept of cookies crumbling before our eyes, the importance of solid copyrighting and conversion optimization techniques to work alongside the targeting available, will be key to successful legal SEM campaigns next year.

Content efforts and budgets in 2021 should be balanced between creating expertise & value online, and curating offline experiences that legal marketers can build their book of business with.

And regardless of the latest social media platform, smart legal marketers in 2021 will be planning their marketing campaigns from an audience-first perspective, going where their most valuable clients are, not just the vanity clicks.

We hope you can use these insights to help grow your law firm in the new year. If you have questions, comments, or would like to schedule a website audit, contact us [here](#).

For more information, visit www.consultwebs.com, subscribe to our newsletter, follow us on social, or listen to our podcast LAWsome www.thelawsomepodcast.com.