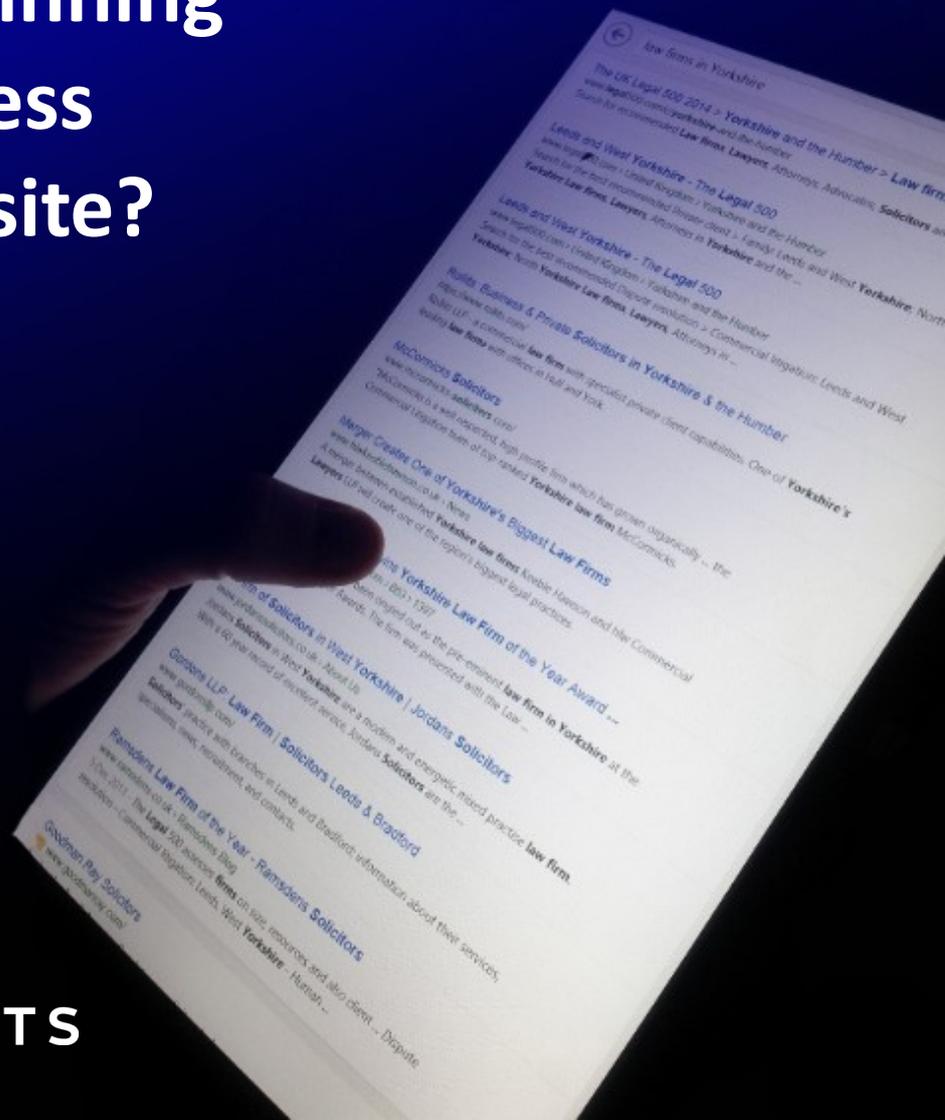


NORTHERN LIGHTS RESEARCH

—YORKSHIRE'S TOP 100 LEGAL FIRMS—

Which Yorkshire
law firms are winning
the most business
from their website?

By Ben Pindar



NORTHERN LIGHTS

Rated, researched, reviewed and ranked

How does your law firm win business? Word of mouth used to be the #1 winner for professional firms — and still matters considerably.

But increasingly, business people go straight to Google (or LinkedIn) to see who they know, especially when needing niche expertise.

Where you come on Google searches matters more than ever. Research shows that 80% of a buying decision is made before a new client contacts a business — and most of that is down to internet research. And 36% of clicks go to the top spot with 12% to the second position - with only 8% venturing beyond page one.



Winning deals online

In our own business, we once thought we would never get decent business from our website. How wrong we were. Our blog helps us to come top of niche searches — and recently helped us to win a string of crisis communications jobs and an internationally known global client. Any law firm would be proud of these!

You can win the same business — and without paying for traditional SEO. Social media can help you to:

- Research and target new business
- Build relationships - cutting through layers of bureaucracy and time and by-passing 'gatekeepers'
- Come top of Google searches

In this report we look at where Yorkshire law firms come for a variety of Google searches, including in growth sectors of manufacturing, tax and international trade. We highlight the winners — many of whom may surprise you. And we also look at who is using Twitter, LinkedIn, blogs and other tools.

We plan to analyse further sectors — let us know if you would like your sector included or if you want to discuss our findings in more detail.

Ben Pindar
Communications Director
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A NEW

There are now more smartphones in the world than toothbrushes. Like it or not, our personal and business lives increasingly rely on technology and online tools.

New research by sales training organisation Huthwaite International found that people make 80% of their buying decision before contacting a product or service provider. And the internet and websites are significant in that decision-making process.

Think about your own recent buying decisions. How much did you use the internet — possibly without even thinking about it? Google is now like having a third hand — it's there and you use it, often all day.

Window to the world

While law firms have traditionally traded on reputation, now they must also work hard to build and maintain an online reputation. No longer will the biggest and shiniest office on the block pull in the clients.

Small players can now compete on the global stage thanks to the internet. Your website is your window to the world and is instrumental in making sure you are found and considered by potential customers.

Face to face relationships will still seal the deal, but Google will get you the meeting.

8%

Click on page two of
Google results

434
per cent

Increase in click-
throughs to
websites as a result
of blogs

DIGITAL DAWN



Statistics show that 92% of buyers never go beyond page one of Google. Your website has to be much more than a brochure.

Think about how much you spend on your website and ask yourself 'Why?'

Is it just a brochure or is it being used as a tool in your sales process?

Is it just the first point of contact for customers? If so, is it attracting people and is it encouraging them to then buy?

Building relationships

If you are not on page one of Google, you effectively don't exist online.

- Search engines are the number one driver of visitors to your website.
- Companies that blog see 434 per cent more click throughs to their website
- Leads that come from search engine results have a 14.6 per cent close rate, compared to the 1.7 per cent close rate seen from direct mail or print advertising.

Getting to the top of Google needn't be expensive. It's about having an engaging social media presence and sharing insights, experiences and advice through good quality online content.

It's about building and maintaining relationships online and developing trust.

80%

of buying decision is made online before contacting a business

14.6 per cent

Closing rate from search engine

Every law firm already does this in the real world and those practices need to be transferred into the digital sphere.

It's also not all about output. Social media is a powerful tool for identifying potential targets, starting conversations and building relationships.

Social media is ingrained in the next generation of graduates coming through and research shows firms who embrace online channels are far more attractive because they are seen as progressive and dynamic.

In an increasingly competitive market, a strong online brand is the one thing that will ensure you can stand out from the crowd and secure business.

It's no longer a teenage fad, the fastest growth area in social media is the 35-54 age bracket, and that heralds the arrival of the business community.

The firms that work to position themselves at the top of Google now will be in pole position for the next generation of business development.

Sources: Google, Hubspot, eConsultancy, MarketingSherpa, SlingshotSEO

What did the law firms say?

As part of the research, Northern Lights Communications Director Ben Pindar met with more than 30 law firms to gauge their appetite for social media. Here he shares some of their thoughts and advice.

This research began when an advisor told me a “silent giant” – a £30m turnover business with no real exposure to the major law firms – used Google to find a law firm that could help him plan for an exit.

Granted, this may be a rare case, but it got me thinking about how law firms in Yorkshire are evolving to make use of a wealth of new online tools to generate leads, promote their brand, demonstrate their expertise and, crucially, win new business in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

In the months that followed I’ve travelled hundreds of miles around the county, spent hours staring at acres of data and had comments ranging from “Google’s a load of rubbish” to “social media has transformed our business”.

The truth is that it’s a mixed bag out there. Many firms are only beginning to get to grips with social media and blogging while a few have stolen a march on the competition and are already winning new business through these online channels.

Perhaps most interesting was the number of firms who had either invested, or were investing, in a new website. Around 60 per cent of those I spoke to recognised their website had to be much more than just an online brochure and had to be a portal for clients to

engage with them and understand their people and their values.

Here, I aim to share these opinions – both good and bad – and deliver some of the advice I received from the law firms who very kindly gave up their time to take part in the research.

‘Social media is too time consuming and too scary’

The biggest obstacle I came across during the research was the lawyers themselves. Most said the fee earners were too busy to spend time on social media or write blogs and, in many instances, said they were afraid of giving away their IP or making public mistakes.

The perception of social media was also a major issue. Many firms said their lawyers simply saw it as a waste of time or something for teenagers.

Gemma Rutherford at Addleshaw Goddard said: “We see LinkedIn as a very important tool but we find it very difficult to get lawyers involved. They are scared of engaging with people publicly.

“We are working to change that mindset – we show them their clients and the people they want to target are on there and how LinkedIn can be used to approach them and engage with them.

“It’s about showing how it will help to

How do you compare?

88% of law firms use Twitter
76% have a LinkedIn page
35% use Google+
40% have an active blog
50% are using Facebook

increase traffic and generate leads – it then becomes a no-brainer.”

Irwin Mitchell’s Melanie Parker echoed that sentiment but said social media was rapidly growing as a valuable tool in the firm.

She adds: “Personal relationships are a massive source of lead generation and social media has an increasingly important role in that. We use it to maintain contact with clients and those we meet.

“There is a perception issue about how much work will come from search. We work to make it easy for partners and show how they can become thought leaders around key specialisms and in our target markets.”

The key to encouraging social media use is about demonstrating the value – not only to the fee earners, but also to clients. By showing that it can become a tool for generating leads and enhancing relationships with clients, lawyers quickly understand that it can become a time-saving tool rather than a burden.

When target clients are found on social media, you can quickly identify the issues they face and then share a blog you’ve written about how to overcome those issues. By giving them genuine insights, you help them address a problem while also starting to develop a trusted relationship.

Fi Khan at Nabarro says: “Social media allows us to demonstrate our credibility and showcase our expertise. It allows our fee earners to publish timely content and share their opinions with clients and targets.



For more insights, turn to Page 14

"We've helped to improve engagement by providing advice and training for the partners – we've shown them what's involved and, most importantly, how they should use it."

'Our new clients won't use Google to find us'

Many lawyers argued most corporate clients won't search on Google to find a legal expert – most will come through recommendations.

While this is true, most will still do some online research before making contact and social media and blogging are a crucial part of maintaining your brand.

Caroline Black at Walker Morris told me: "The big corporate will research, but won't search Google for a suitable law firm. However, we see it as a tool for positioning our brand in the market and demonstrating our expertise. It's all about positioning the firm and enabling people to understand our offer."

Tim Halstead at Shulmans agreed and adds: "We only get new business from Google searches in very specialist areas and I doubt that will change any time soon. However, we need to show our personality and expertise and that's why we've invested in our website and are looking at blog content using videos."

Research shows that 97 per cent of people now do online research before making any buying decision. Put simply, you have to carefully manage your online brand and social media and blogging plays an absolutely integral role in that. If a possible new client can't find you on Google – only 8 per cent ever click on page two – you could miss out on a lucrative deal.

'Social media and blogging won't win us any business'

Lupton Fawcett Denison Till have in-

vested heavily in social media, blogging and their overall online presence. Unsurprisingly, the firm topped our poll and by a considerable margin. Since the table was compiled, the firm has also announced record profits.

Managing partner Richard Marshall says: "Your online presence is now much more than a brochure – it's a device for creating a funnel of work."

"We use social media and blogs to create calls to action, make it easy for people to find out who we are, what we do and how to engage with us. Crucially, blogging has generated fee earning enquiries and is turning into work."

Another top performer was Clarion Solicitors and they too have worked hard to encourage partners and staff to write blogs and create active social media profiles.

Managing Partner Mark Burns said: "It has been hugely valuable and it's given us a real competitive edge in the market. It has generated leads and has been integral in winning new business."

A host of other firms said social media had been hugely important in allowing them to become thought leaders in key areas, while others described how they had used social media to break into new overseas markets and new sectors.

Social media isn't going to become the prime channel for generating new business, but it is a crucial tool in that mix. As such, it should be part of the overall business strategy and senior management should have a clear understanding of where it will add value and where it adds risk – don't be tempted to leave it to a junior member of the team.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of social media is its ability to break down barriers and create clear channels to the decision makers.



John Holden of Gordons says: "Winning business in the legal industry is about getting into the room and talking to people – social media breaks through the departmental barriers and gets you in the room you need to be."

While social media has been big news for almost a decade, the B2B market is still forming and developing and that means law firms can still seize on the opportunities it presents.

For law firms, social media is all about demonstrating your expertise, creating valuable and trusted relationships and positioning your brand. If you still don't see the value, don't just take my word for it.

In a recent piece of research by the McKinsey Global Institute they concluded: "The professional services industry has the greatest potential of any industry to see huge return-on-investment benefits from social media."

That's because professional services are all about relationships. To have any relationship in today's ever-changing world, you need to be social...

Many thanks to all of the following for taking the time to share their thoughts and insights...

The Needle Partnership
Rollitts
Pepperells
Lupton Fawcett Denison
Till

Shulmans
Irwin Mitchell
Addleshaw Goddard
Clarion Solicitors
Nabarro

Gordons
Pinsent Masons
DLA Piper
Hill Dickinson
Walker Morris

Schofield Sweeney
Williamsons
Mills & Reeve
Berwins
Gateley LLP

DWF
Legatus Law
Metis Law
Bond Dickinson
Ward Hadaway

REPUTATION MATTERS

Yorkshire is renowned as a centre of legal expertise and is home to some of the country's biggest law firms. However, size isn't everything and the inaugural *Northern Lights Research* has revealed that the traditional mid tier firms dominate the region online.

Lupton Fawcett Denison Till, Clarion, Irwin Mitchell and Taylor & Emmet all scoop the top four positions in the league and only Squire Patton Boggs and Eversheds from tier one make it into the top ten.

The leader, Lupton Fawcett Denison Till, dominates the rankings with a 70-point lead and its multiple Yorkshire locations coupled with an active blog and strong social media presence ensure it performed strongly across almost all measures.

The firm provides regular updates, shares insights and experiences and uses social media to maintain contact with existing and potential clients.

The result of this is a high profile



on Google. Their attitude to online content is perhaps summed up best, by the firm itself which says on its blog: "We like nothing more than informing and entertaining our current and potential clients, and our blog is the ideal way to do so."

Sharing insights

By sharing their experiences and insights through quality content, Lupton Fawcett Denison Till ensure that people are engaging with them, commenting on blogs and social media updates and sharing links across platforms.

It's this quality content and inter-

actions that have fuelled their rise up the Google rankings.

Some of the big surprises include major firms like Addleshaw Goddard and DWF both ranking in the bottom ten, while new firms like Metis Law, Pharos Legal and Legatus Law all muscle their way into the top 100.

However, perhaps the biggest surprise to emerge from the research was a Twitter profile for one of the firms, which reads:

"Revolutionary law firm. We are the future of law! Let all other lawyers bow down before us! Meanwhile let's all enjoy a nice cup of tea."

It's a unique approach. However, the key question, as always, is will it win them business?

In the following pages you can view the league in full and also see breakdowns for each key sector our corporate and commercial legal firms operate in.



NORTHERN LIGHTS RESEARCH



Twitter



LinkedIn



Google+



Blog



Facebook

YORKSHIRE'S TOP 100 LEGAL FIRMS

The rankings are based on each individual firm's performance on Google in relation to a number of key indicators. We've also indicated if a firm has an active social media account with a ✓, while ⓘ shows a firm has an account, but it isn't active.

Rank	Law Firm	Search points					
1	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	602	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Clarion	532	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Irwin Mitchell	530	✓	✓	✓		✓
4	Taylor & Emmet	426	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Squire Patton Boggs	423	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	McCormicks	400		ⓘ			
7	Wake Smith	390	✓	✓			
8	Eversheds	371	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	HLW Keeble Hawson	359	✓	✓	ⓘ		
10	Rollits	346	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
11	Nabarro	345	✓	✓	ⓘ		
12	Bond Dickinson	342	✓	✓	ⓘ		
13	Gordons	334	✓	✓			
14	Langleys Solicitors	319	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
15	Ward Hadaway	317	✓	✓			
16	Walkers Commercial	306		✓			
17	Blacks Solicitors	303	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
18	Stewarts Law	299	✓		ⓘ		
19	Gosschalks	298	✓		✓	✓	✓
20	Pinsent Masons	295	✓	✓	✓		✓

Rank	Law Firm	Search points					
21	Metis Law	284	✓	✓	ⓘ		
22	DLA Piper	272	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Simpson Millar	271	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	Ison Harrison	269	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Andrew Jackson	267	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
26	SJP Law	267		✓	ⓘ		
27	Pepperells	246	✓	✓	✓		✓
28	Winston Solicitors	243	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	Slater & Gordon	238	✓	✓	✓		✓
30	Ironmonger Curtis	227	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	
31	Ford & Warren	220	✓	✓	✓		
32	Bridge McFarland	207	✓	✓	✓		
33	Devine Law	205					✓
34	Wilkin Chapman	198	ⓘ	✓	ⓘ		
35	Howells	193	✓			✓	✓
36	Wrigleys Solicitors	184	✓	✓	✓		
37	Hill Dickinson	173	✓	✓	✓		✓
38	The Needle Partnership	173	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	✓
39	Walker Morris	166	✓	✓	✓	✓	
40	RLB Law	164	✓	✓	ⓘ		
41	Chadwick Lawrence	147	✓		✓	✓	
42	Hamers	144			ⓘ		✓
43	Hudson Law	143	✓	✓	✓		
44	Burstalls	128					
45	Kennedys	128	✓	✓			✓
46	Levi Solicitors	125	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	✓
47	Hethertons	120	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
48	Lewis Francis Blackburn Bray	119			ⓘ		✓
49	Milners	117	✓	✓			
50	Austin Kemp	113				✓	
51	Myton Law	113	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	
52	Sach Law	111			ⓘ		
53	Graham and Rosen	102	✓	ⓘ	ⓘ		✓
54	Myer Wolff	101	✓	ⓘ	✓	✓	✓
55	Ingrams	100	✓	✓			✓
56	Harrowells	99	✓	✓	ⓘ		
57	Capsticks	99	✓	✓	ⓘ		
58	3volution LLP	97	✓	ⓘ	ⓘ	✓	✓
59	Pharos Legal	96	✓	✓	✓	✓	
60	Crombie Wilkinson	93	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓

Rank	Law Firm	Search points					
61	Sandersons	91	✓	✓			✓
62	Henry Hyams	89	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	✓
63	Cartwright King	88	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
64	Emsleys	84	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	✓
65	Schofield Sweeney	83	✓	✓	✓	✓	
66	SM Commercial	82	✓	✓		✓	
67	BRM Law	74	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Grahame Stowe Bateson	68	✓	ⓘ	ⓘ	✓	
69	Excello	67	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Shulmans	63	✓	ⓘ			
71	Last Cawthra Feather	61	✓	✓	✓	✓	
72	Watson Burton	60	✓	✓	✓		
73	Williamsons	56	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Morrish	56	✓	ⓘ	ⓘ	✓	✓
75	Mills & Reeve	55	✓	✓	ⓘ	✓	
76	Guest Walker & Co	52	✓	ⓘ	ⓘ	✓	
77	Favells	50	✓		ⓘ		
78	Bury & Walkers	48		✓	ⓘ		
79	Berwins	45	✓	✓	✓		✓
80	Woskow Brown	43	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
81	Foys	38					
82	Genus Law	38	✓	✓	✓		✓
83	DAC Beachcroft	37	✓	✓			✓
84	Thompsons	36	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
85	Bell & Buxton	35	✓	ⓘ		✓	✓
86	Jane Brooks Law	34	✓	✓	ⓘ		✓
87	Freeman Fisher	32	✓	✓		✓	
88	Richardson Law	30	✓				
89	Gateley	24	✓	✓		✓	
90	DWF	24	✓	✓			✓
91	Wilson Solicitors	20	✓	ⓘ	✓		✓
92	Addleshaw Goddard	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
93	Raworths	12	✓	ⓘ	✓		
94	Freeths	11	✓	✓	✓	✓	
95	Jordans Solicitors	10	✓	✓		✓	✓
96	Legatus Law	8	✓	✓	ⓘ		
97	Ramsdens	7	✓	✓		✓	✓
98	Armitage Sykes	7	✓	✓	ⓘ		
99	Hempsons	5	✓	✓	ⓘ		
100	Barber Titleys	3	✓	✓	ⓘ		

REGIONAL RANKINGS



Leeds City Region

leeds city region
intelligence driving growth

	Law Firm	Search Points
1	Squire Patton Boggs	113
2	Blacks Solicitors	110
3	Walker Morris	103
4	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	101
5	Metis Law	100
6	Ison Harrison	93
7	Bond Dickinson	92
8	HLW Keeble Hawson	88
9	Simpson Millar	86
10	Irwin Mitchell	85
11	McCormicks	84
12	DLA Piper	78
13	Winston Solicitors	78
14	Austin Kemp	75
15	RLB Law	72



Sheffield City Region

	Law Firm	Search Points
1	Irwin Mitchell	113
2	Nabarro	112
3	HLW Keeble Hawson	108
4	Taylor & Emmet	108
5	Slater & Gordon	107
6	Wake Smith	106
7	DLA Piper	103
8	Hill Dickinson	95
9	Lewis Francis Blackburn Bray	85
10	Howells	79
11	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	52
12	Ironmonger Curtis	51
13	Simpson Millar	47
14	Wrigleys Solicitors	45
15	Woskow Brown	43



Hull & Humber

	Law Firm	Search Points
1	Gosschalks	116
2	Rollits	114
3	Pepperells	111
4	Devine Law	107
5	SJP Law	106
6	Bridge McFarland	105
7	Hudson Law	100
8	Ingrams	100
9	Burstalls	94
10	Sandersons	91
11	Wilkin Chapman	89
12	Graham and Rosen	86
13	Myton Law	74
14	Andrew Jackson	56
15	Hamers	49



York & North Yorkshire

	Law Firm	Search Points
1	Walkers Commercial	118
2	Rollits	114
3	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	114
4	Langleys Solicitors	114
5	McCormicks	104
6	Hethertons	100
7	Crombie Wilkinson	93
8	Andrew Jackson	77
9	Sach Law	54
10	Guest Walker & Co	52
11	Harrowells	49
12	Blacks Solicitors	34
13	Bond Dickinson	33
14	Newtons Solicitors	21
15	Coles Solicitors	5

SECTOR RANKINGS

Yorkshire is recognised as the UK's largest centre of professional expertise outside London and has a wealth of world-leading legal firms as a result.

The key growth sectors for Yorkshire are manufacturing, international trade, commercial property and mergers and acquisitions.

As you'd expect, competition for business in these areas is fierce.

But, how are businesses in these sectors finding the expert advice and guidance they need?

Google will play a key role in helping firms identify who they want to build relationships with and in this section we look at how firms are performing under a range of key disciplines.

Does Google rank you as the top name in manufacturing or are you recognised as the leader in mergers and acquisitions? Find out here...



Employment

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Milners	59
2	Langleys Solicitors	58
3	Morrish	56
4	Winston Solicitors	53
5	Taylor & Emmet	52
6	Grahame Stowe Bateson	52
7	Chadwick Lawrence	51
8	Simpson Millar	49
9	Clarion	47
10	Eversheds	46
11	Stewarts Law	45
12	Howells	44
13	Irwin Mitchell	43
14	Slater & Gordon	42
15	Wake Smith	41

Finance

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Clarion	59
2	Squire Patton Boggs	58
3	Eversheds	57
4	Hamers	56
5	Simpson Millar	55
6	Ford & Warren	54
7	Irwin Mitchell	53
8	Ward Hadaway	52
9	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	50
10	Gordons	47
11	Nabarro	46
12	Taylor & Emmet	44
13	Gosschalks	42
14	The Needle Partnership	41
15	Pinsent Masons	38

SECTOR RANKINGS

Mergers & Acquisitions

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Squire Patton Boggs	59
2	Clarion	58
3	Metis Law	56
4	Eversheds	55
5	Schofield Sweeney	50
6	Irwin Mitchell	49
7	Bond Dickinson	45
8	Taylor & Emmet	44
9	BRM Law	43
10	3volution LLP	42
11	Last Cawthra Feather	40
12	Gosschalks	39
13	Gordons	36
14	Capsticks	35
15	Wilkin Chapman	33

Intellectual Property

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Clarion	59
2	Walkers Commercial	58
3	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	57
4	Eversheds	49
5	Andrew Jackson	46
6	Berwins	45
7	Wake Smith	43
8	Ison Harrison	41
9	Chadwick Lawrence	40
10	Ironmonger Curtis	37
11	3volution LLP	27
12	Pinsent Masons	26
13	McCormicks	25
14	HLW Keeble Hawson	23
15	Devine Law	22

Commercial Property

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Walkers Commercial	59
2	Blacks Solicitors	58
3	Sach Law	57
4	Winston Solicitors	56
5	HLW Keeble Hawson	55
6	Gordons	52
7	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	51
8	Rollits	50
9	Pepperells	49
10	SM Commercial	48
11	Irwin Mitchell	46
12	Squire Patton Boggs	45
13	Taylor & Emmet	44
14	Hudson Law	43
15	Ironmonger Curtis	42

Insolvency

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Clarion	59
2	Chadwick Lawrence	56
3	McCormicks	55
4	Wake Smith	54
5	Taylor & Emmet	53
6	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	52
7	HLW Keeble Hawson	48
8	Squire Patton Boggs	45
9	Metis Law	44
10	Devine Law	43
11	Excello	42
12	Irwin Mitchell	41
13	Ison Harrison	36
14	Ford & Warren	35
15	Richardson Law	30

SECTOR RANKINGS

Tax

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Wrigleys Solicitors	59
2	Irwin Mitchell	57
3	Squire Patton Boggs	56
4	Cartwright King	55
5	SJP Law	54
6	Wake Smith	53
7	Stewarts Law	52
8	Ward Hadaway	49
9	RLB Law	48
10	Pinsent Masons	47
11	McCormicks	46
12	Wilkin Chapman	37
13	Taylor & Emmet	34
14	Bond Dickinson	31
15	Gordons	30

International Trade

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Eversheds	59
2	SJP Law	57
3	The Needle Partnership	55
4	Nabarro	53
5	Ward Hadaway	50
6	Walker Morris	48
7	Andrew Jackson	47
8	Clarion	45
9	Kennedys	42
10	Pinsent Masons	41
11	Myton Law	39
12	Lupton Fawcett Denison Till	35
13	Bury & Walkers	33
14	Hill Dickinson	29
15	Stewarts Law	21

Manufacturing

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Clarion	59
2	Bond Dickinson	57
3	Gordons	56
4	DLA Piper	55
5	Nabarro	54
6	Pinsent Masons	53
7	Metis Law	52
8	Hill Dickinson	49
9	Ward Hadaway	48
10	Stewarts Law	47
11	Capsticks	46
12	Rollits	29
13	Andrew Jackson	18
14	Squire Patton Boggs	6
15	Walker Morris	3

Litigation

	Law Firm	Search points
1	Levi Solicitors	58
2	Clarion	57
3	Winston Solicitors	56
4	Langleys Solicitors	55
5	Wake Smith	54
6	Henry Hyams	53
7	Ironmonger Curtis	50
8	Stewarts Law	48
9	Taylor & Emmet	47
10	McCormicks	45
11	Kennedys	44
12	Irwin Mitchell	43
13	Slater & Gordon	41
14	Milners	36
15	Ison Harrison	35

How do I get to the top of Google?

If you want to appear at the top of Google searches, you don't need to rely on your web and IT teams to get you there. Even the least techy of people can do lots themselves.

But you need to start thinking like a search engine to make it work.

First of all, you need to understand how Google works. Three things that Google really likes are really good 'content' that is useful and written to be helpful – tips, insights, discussions

Keywords – the words and phrases that people are searching for, which could be 'Top manufacturing law firm'.

Sharing – Google rates 'stuff' on the internet that gets shared a lot, on Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, LinkedIn. That sends Google a message that people are rating the blog or comment on Twitter

Of course, this is slightly simplified, but it will do to help you get started.

So what do you do? Here we cover the things that most business people can easily do.

Identify the keywords for your business

What do your customers search for on the internet? Really listen to your customers and think like your customers. Every time a client asks you to explain something, or a customer says 'I've never quite understood', there is an oppor-



tunity to write something to help them and put it on the internet. That could be on your website, but even better write blogs to help them with those words in them.

Google has Keyword Planner to help you check what are the best words and phrases for your business.

You can also start typing phrases into Google and see what the predictor starts suggesting – it's a great source of ideas.

Include keywords on lots of sites

Think where you have got information about you or your business on the internet.

Of course, your website, but you would be surprised at where else there are opportunities. Your LinkedIn profile – have you used the keywords in your title and in the summary?

Your Twitter profile – is it fun or

strategic? Could you include keywords that people search on?

Other social media accounts – Facebook, Pinterest, Google+ and more. Are you in any directories? Check the wording.

Post content with keywords

When you post comments on Twitter, LinkedIn or Google+, think about how to include keywords – but it's really important to do this in a natural way. Don't force it.

All of these things will help you to be found for your services, on issues facing your potential clients, and when people search for types of companies.

It does work. We have had really great new business from our online content.

If you get it right, it will be a virtuous circle – you write to be helpful and not surprisingly these are the issues facing your potential new clients, who find you and want to do business with you. ■

Too old to tackle social media?

Is social media turning professional services firms upside down?'. The debate is – or should be – relevant to businesses in every sector, but a comment at a recent dinner left me deeply disturbed. There was tacit agreement that “of course partners aged over 50 are never going to understand or ‘do’ social media”.

I am convinced we have got to get managing partners, ceos and management teams to understand and manage social media.

Just as management teams initially dismissed websites as ridiculous, but now no business would be without one, so management teams have got to understand the risks and opportunities of social media. Age cannot be a barrier.



Facebook for recruitment is now established

Starting with the easy stuff, social media for recruitment is well established.

Partners knew their teenage children were on something called Facebook and though few really understood it, they were easily persuaded that this was relevant for graduate recruitment.

There is still not a social media ‘market’ for professional services

One of the challenges in the B2B market is that it is not yet fully formed. It is difficult therefore to demonstrate the full power of social media.

Taking the website example, very few directors could have seen the way the internet would become more important than a phone.

Four years ago, a friend of mine told her board about the arrival of Kindles and the opportunity for their particular business – but all she got was a lot of guffaws about how no-one would read a book on a computer. More fool them.

Blogs with insights and tips will become a normal part of websites –

the topical and most relevant content to your clients. Commenting on blogs and guest blogging will become a part of the networking process

As business leaders progress to using LinkedIn as a business tool, they will start searching for the expertise they need through it.

Google will only increase in importance and power – and finally, you will wake up to the need for engaging social media if you want your firm to be a player!

Very little is being done in strategic new business targeting

The biggest opportunity to use social media for professional firms and corporates is using it to win new business.

I have held numerous workshops on how to win business through social media and am constantly amazed that rarely does anyone know about advanced searches and how they can be used to identify and target potential customers.

The risks of social media are neither understood nor managed

My big concern is while boards laugh about the irrelevance of social media, they are not managing its risks. And there are plenty.

Social media policies are now a necessity, but it’s no good having a policy unless senior management understands and manages social media. ■

Managing what web says about you

Managing your reputation online is a critical part of maintaining your company brand. Today, everyone uses Google to do their research in advance. Luckily, page two effectively doesn't exist – only 8 per cent of visitors click through to page two – and that means that if everything good about you appears on page one, you don't have to worry.

However, if there are any negative comments on Page One, you have to work hard to remove them.

Tackling online reputation management

Today, one bad experience turns into a negative online review and your brand is irreparably damaged. If left unaddressed, the reviews and negative publicity quickly grows and your revenues will plummet.

Look closely at what you are doing, be honest, identify the flaws and any online postings that have negative connotations and address them first.

How do I respond to negative comments online?

Perhaps the most common question I get asked around this issue is "How do I remove bad reviews/negative comments from Google?".

The short answer to this question is you shouldn't remove negative comments. Rather than shy away from this sort of publicity, you should embrace it. These reviews

are valuable insights into the way the public perceives you and your business and every one can help you to improve your offer.

If you receive a complaint, you should act on it. If it's a review, take appropriate steps and then respond, outlining how you have fixed the issue. If it's a social media complaint, take the conversation offline and then make sure you post publicly about how the issue has been resolved.



Image courtesy of hyena reality / FreeDigitalPhotos.net

How do I safeguard my online brand?

The first step is to set up a few free alerts – Google Alerts, Twilert, etc – for your name or brand to keep tabs on anything being posted. That way you can quickly respond to any complaints or comments and minimise the impact.

Secondly, is to keep posts profes-

sional. It's always important to inject some personality, but remember you are speaking to a wide audience, not just your best friend or a few close colleagues.

It's also worth having clear social media guidelines for staff about what they can and cannot say on social media.

What can I do to improve my online brand?

Restoring your reputation online can be a long and arduous process. The key is having a clear strategy for taking ownership of your own search engine results page and developing good quality content to populate it. By developing Wikipedia entries, your own website and a blog and by being social and joining professional organisations and interacting with them, you will soon start to control what appears on page one.

Most importantly, develop a Google+ profile and business page and share all of your content through the platform as these will dominate the listings.

Remember, just because the results are good today, that doesn't mean they will be tomorrow. Topical events, social media trends and Google's constant battle to update its search engine and outwit those trying to dupe it, will have an impact on your online reputation and what appears on page one. So, constantly monitor your brand and keep posting quality content to maintain your profile. ■

Reputation, reputation, reputation

In an age of 24 hour news and social media, everything you do is under scrutiny and corporate reputation is more precarious than ever.

The Freedom of Information Act has forced public sector organisations to be transparent – and social media is forcing the private sector to do the same.

Evidence of misdemeanours can be captured on mobile phones and shared instantly and disgruntled employee/customer opinions have moved from the pub to blogs, discussion forums and Facebook campaigns.

Here are the three key ingredients for protecting your reputation by effectively planning for and managing crises

Improve internal communications

There is no longer a clear distinction between external and internal affairs – how you are on the inside is what will be reflected externally.

Good crisis planning is about being a good business, not just saying you are.

Excellent internal communications and employee engagement is core to being transparent and resilient.

Every employee is now your spokesperson for your organisation. They need to be properly trained, consulted, engaged and be given guidelines on using social media.

It is also now more critical than



ever, that your organisation has an outstanding communicator on the board – or who operates at board level and is respected by them and the rest of the organisation.

Monitor your online reputation

Whether you are using social media to interact with your customers or not, it is likely that someone will be talking about you online.

If you are not there, you are likely to be missing out on opportunities to improve and grow your business.

Some online conversations can help you identify and capitalise on potential customers.

Other online conversations pose potential crises – but if you are aware of them, the crisis can be quashed or at least minimised.

However, don't rely on this as your main form of customer service – it's no good if people can't reach you on the phone, but see that you're responding immediately to tweets.

Create your own online content

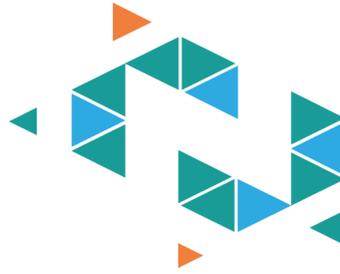
In the face of a crisis, a BBC interview with your chief executive is still the best way to get your acknowledgement, apology and response out to the masses. But, depending on the scale and type of the crisis, this is not always necessary.

It may be that those affected are limited to a particularly online community, in which case their opinions will take precedence over the facts.

By creating your own multimedia content online that is useful and gives readers the opportunity to comment you can lead the debate.

This might be a video explaining what to do to address the problem that can be embedded and shared on blogs and forums.

There is no such thing as post-crisis planning – only fire fighting. So don't wait until something goes wrong to do something about it. Make sure you have a crisis communications plan in place, that it is up to date – and includes the impact of social media in its risks and scenarios. ■



NORTHERN LIGHTS

Northern Lights is a multi-award winning communications consultancy and a leading digital and social media specialist, which operates in the UK and the UAE.

We have a strong 25-year track record Northern Lights of helping corporates, public sector organisations and SME's to create strategies and deliver communications that achieve success.

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- Crisis Communications
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