

GENERAL COUNSEL: USING LAW FIRM WEB SITES

IN-DEPTH RESEARCH

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RECENT SURVEY REVEALS LAW FIRM WEB SITES PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN IN-HOUSE GENERAL COUNSELS' PURCHASING DECISIONS.

Hubbard One recently partnered with the Wicker Park Group to uncover intelligence about general in-house counsel Web usage and perceptions of law firm Web sites and online client tools. Wicker Park Group conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews with general counsel from established, industry-leading companies with well-known brands both nationally and internationally to better gauge the role a Web site plays in their buying decisions. The research project included discussion with 30 general counsel.

QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

How do you use the Web today for work?

Nearly all participants interviewed stated they make broad use of the Web at work, primarily for research, including competitive-intelligence information, industry information, legal research and information from legal and trade publications.

- Participants interviewed indicated that collectively they use the Web for research an average of 85 percent of the time versus other sources.
- Sixty percent state their use of the Internet has changed over the past year, and they make more use of Wikipedia and YouTube.
- Eighty percent of participants prefer Google over any other search engine.

Notable Quotes

- *"I use the Internet 100 percent of the time for my research and communication needs. Google and Yahoo are usually my first stops."* GENERAL COUNSEL
- *"We use the Web very broadly and daily. For example, we use it to leverage internal, Web-based systems to run our legal department, including e-billing systems. For legal research, we use Google and lots of other similar sites."* GENERAL COUNSEL
- *"I sometimes find papers written by law firms, but I start with Google and then end up linking to the law firm site. I never start with the law firm site when looking for information on a legal issue."* GENERAL COUNSEL

What role does a law firm Web site play in your selection process?

The strongest trend among the survey's findings is that law firm Web sites play a role in the process of evaluating and purchasing outside legal services. Many participants indicated that they do not seriously consider a firm if the firm's Web site is unimpressive or unhelpful. The group noted that if they have already hired a firm, they are most likely looking at the lawyer's biographies for contact information. However, the group expressed interest in videos of lawyers that would appear in lawyer bios, giving them a sense of a lawyer's demeanor and presence. In-house counsel also emphasized the importance of having an organized and easy-to-navigate website and expressed interest in being able to access a firm's knowledgebase from its Web site.



- One hundred percent of participants indicated that they always review a firm's Web site when evaluating and purchasing legal services.
- The majority indicated that the lawyer bio section is the most visited section on a firm's Web site – other important sections included publications, the office section and the practice area sections.
- The majority indicated that they read law firm alerts and forward alerts internally.
- Approximately 50 percent indicated it would be helpful if law firms offered video interviews with current clients describing similar engagements as part of a proposal.

Notable Quotes

- *"Candidly, a bad law firm Web site would be like showing up to a meeting with me in a crumpled suit."* CHIEF COUNSEL, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
- *"A prospective firm's Web site is my introduction to the firm. Of the firms I am considering, I look at each of their Web sites first and then narrow down the firms before calling them."* COUNSEL
- *"If I can't find the firm's site and easily navigate it, that's a problem."* EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL
- *"The information from a firm's Web site is usually a key factor in the selection process."* SENIOR COUNSEL AND MANAGING DIRECTOR
- *"A firm's site is always a starting point before the interview. They won't get the interview if the Web site doesn't have a bio that we're interested in."* INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGER
- *"Using a prospective firm's Web site is how I like to get background."* INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COUNSEL

Would you like for mid-size firms to have Web sites that are just as useful as large firm sites?

Overwhelmingly, general counsel felt strongly that all firms – regardless of size – were well-served to present a Web site that was a good representation of their firm.

Notable Quotes

- “Small and mid-sized firms need to have a quality site even more than large firms because the smaller firms have even less brand value on which they can sell me.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “For a mid-size firm to have a good Web site is an indication of sophistication – it shows me they can play with the big boys.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “For any size firm, large or small, the quality of their site can tell you how well-managed they are and whether they are on top of things.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “We don’t have a different standard – we’d expect the same kind of things. I would want it to be robust like a large firm site.” **DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE**
- “If they want to be competitive, they should make sure they have a great site.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**

What makes you dislike a law firm Web site?

The general counsel interviewed noted a few key areas for improvement on law firm Web sites that they use. These included more information on cases handled, improved content and easier navigation.

Notable Quotes

- “[There are] not enough details on matters or cases handled, rather than just filler or spin.” **CHIEF COUNSEL**
- “Too much of a good thing (i.e., too much content and no pictures or too many pictures and no substantial content).” **GENERAL LAWYER**
- “Attention to detail is important. If a firm has not spent time and effort representing itself, what can I expect in terms of attention to detail and quality? Some are hard to navigate; others are simply very light on content both with respect to lawyer profiles and also with respect to substantive articles.” **COUNSEL**
- “They all look like they took their marketing materials and handed it to Web guys and put it online. I could do a better job writing the content for a law firm Web site.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**

Is there any other way law firms could be helpful on the Web or using online communications?

The general counsel included as part of this survey noted a number of areas where the Web could be used for collaboration, improved communication and access to valuable information.

Notable Quotes

- “I like the idea of shared, secure workspaces online, but in practice they get too complicated with security issues, firewalls and other stuff like that. If they could figure out how to do e-rooms right, and make them very simple and easy to use, that would be really useful to me.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “Take the mystery out of everything. For example, have on the site downloadable documents that they know we’ll need, starting with their standard engagement letter. Increase efficiency. Allow for more interactive collaboration. For example, build shared case files and correspondence files online. Cut out duplicity. For example, we update a patent tracking document and they

update a patent tracking document, but really we should be working off of one online document that we both update without keeping separate documents.”

GENERAL COUNSEL

- “They should make more substance available to us online. I would love it if they would make certain basic memos available free online. And then, they could have those Amazon-style ratings systems for each memo. That would be awesome! Also, if they could find a way to execute on extranets, to make those useable and simple, that would be great.” **GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “I want short, concise updates on new law.” **EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “I want competitive intelligence on my industry.” **CHIEF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COUNSEL**
- “I like alerts formatted with a simple list of headlines at the top that you breeze through quickly and click on if you want more information.” **ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL**
- “One thing, maybe, is for law firm CLE seminars; it’s hard to find them on the sites – it would be helpful to have a central repository to see CLE programs. We’re just buried, and anything to save us time would help.” **COUNSEL**
- “One thing that I think would be interesting is that if a law firm has bases of clients that are not competitive, get the clients together ... allow them to network about the issues they are facing ... perhaps a social networking platform like LinkedIn ... they should offer up their Rolodex ... I would actually go to the firm or the firm’s online site to meet other clients and have a once a-month group ... you’d trust the people because you’re all represented by the same firm.” **VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF COUNSEL, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**
- “Provide helpful links to current case law [citations], better-quality articles by subject matter experts.” **SENIOR LAWYER**

TREND OVERVIEWS

- The strongest trend identified was that law firm Web sites play a role in the process of evaluating and purchasing outside legal services.
- Many participants indicated that they do not seriously consider a firm, or may have a bad impression of a firm, if the firm’s Web site is hard to navigate or otherwise underwhelming.
- Twenty of the 30 participants expressed interest in video interviews, which would appear in the lawyer bios. Several participants explained that this would be helpful in evaluating a lawyer’s demeanor, presence or style, particularly for litigation matters.
- The section of a law firm Web site that matters most to in-house counsel by a wide margin is the lawyer bios section. And if the in-house lawyer has already hired a firm and is looking at its site, he or she is most often trying to find lawyer contact information.
- Almost all participants read law firm alerts, most forward this content internally to other in-house lawyers or business people, and most do not typically forward this content outside their organizations.
- Almost all participants were familiar with social networking sites, but almost none see any business benefit to using them (at least when considering well-known social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook).
- Most participants indicated that they would be interested in being able to access more substantive tools and knowledge on law firm sites.

OVERVIEW OF GENERAL COUNSEL INCLUDED IN RESEARCH

• COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Leading credit card issuer and electronic payment services company with one of the most recognized brands in U.S. financial services

• SENIOR LAWYER

Company snapshot: Worldwide leader in software, services and solutions

• INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COUNSEL

Company snapshot: One of North America's leading financial institutions and Canada's foremost international bank

• CHIEF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Worldwide leader in the manufacturing of high-quality, high-fidelity audio and electronic products for automotive, consumer and professional use

• VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF COUNSEL, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Company snapshot: Consumer packaged-good company with leading household brands around the globe

• ASSISTANT GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Leading investment company whose products and services include permanent and term life insurance, disability income insurance, long-term care insurance, annuities, trust services, mutual funds and advisory services

• INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGER

Company snapshot: Largest rental car company in North America

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Leading national provider of installed home furnishings and home improvements

• SENIOR COUNSEL AND MANAGING DIRECTOR

Company snapshot: World's largest international air carrier based in the United States

• CHIEF PATENT COUNSEL

Company snapshot: World's leading manufacturer and marketer of major home appliances

• CHIEF COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Leader in the design, development, systems integration, production and support of advanced military aircraft

• GENERAL LAWYER

Company snapshot: Operator of one of the largest railway networks in North America and one of the largest transport companies in the world

• COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Fortune 50 global provider of technology systems and services

• CORPORATE COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Texas-based provider of anesthesia and pain-related medicine to hospitals

• BUSINESS LAW DIRECTOR

Company snapshot: One of the world's largest manufacturers of semiconductors

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Leading international provider of energy trading and risk management software solutions

• CHIEF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COUNSEL

Company snapshot: One of the world's largest manufacturers of semiconductors

• DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Company snapshot: World's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services to the healthcare industry

• COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Fortune 50 company and largest insurer of cars and homes in the United States

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: The world's largest manufacturer of photomasks, which are used in the semiconductor industry

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Global leader in the design and marketing of premium-quality footwear, apparel and accessories

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Global leader in the discovery, development, manufacturing and commercialization of innovative therapies

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: World's largest office products company

• COUNSEL

Company snapshot: A U.S.-based integrated healthcare system

• GENERAL COUNSEL AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Company snapshot: Ireland-headquartered software provider of distributed, standards-based solutions to IT organizations

• DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Fortune 500 provider of software and systems for information management and storage

• COUNSEL AND THE SENIOR COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Fortune 100 company and the largest processor and marketer in the world of chicken, beef and pork

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Second-largest movie theater chain in North America

• GENERAL COUNSEL

Company snapshot: Leading global designer and manufacturer of sensors and controls in each of the key applications in which it competes

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