

# How to Triple Client Acquisition Using Search Engine Marketing

**A Simple Three-Step Process for Law Firms**

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## Two Missing Ingredients of Successful Search Engine Marketing

For years, amateurs and professional search engine marketing agencies have been neglecting two critical components of a profitable program.

### 1) Your Clickability Factor™

How well your website converts visitors into leads

### 2) Your Consultation Process

your process for turning consultations into retained clients

Driving traffic to your website will make little or no difference to your bottom line unless that traffic can be turned into retained clients. That means having a site with a sales loop that converts visitors first to quality leads and then to retained—that is, paying—clients.

## Clickability before Findability

The power of Clickability cannot be understated. An example illustrates the point. For the purposes of this example, we are going to assume that your search engine marketing fees will equal \$1 for each person that visits your website.

### Law Firm Website A

Monthly Web Visitors From Search Marketing	1000
Monthly Marketing Cost (at \$1 per visitor)	\$1,000
Your Website's Clickability Factor (Visitors / Leads)	<b>1%</b>
Your Total Monthly Leads (1% of 1000 visitors)	10
Your Cost Per Lead (leads / total marketing cost)	\$100

### Law Firm Website B

Monthly Web Visitors From Search Marketing	1000
Monthly Marketing Cost (at \$1 per visitor)	\$1,000
Your Website's Clickability Factor (Visitors / Leads)	<b>3%</b>
Your Total Monthly Leads (1% of 1000 visitors)	30
Your Cost Per Lead (leads / total marketing cost)	\$33

### Profit Point

*Improve your Clickability Factor **BEFORE** you drive more traffic to your website.*

As you can see from the example, if you improve your website's Clickability Factor by a mere 2%, you will **triple your leads** without spending another dime on [law firm internet marketing](#). Not only do you receive more leads, your cost per lead is cut by 66%, from \$100 to \$33. The average commercial website converts at about 2 – 3% source: Call to Action. Higher rates are possible. We have created websites for law firms that generate leads from paid search advertising at a rate of 10%. What is your website's Clickability Factor?

**The Point:** Before you run off and spend time and resources driving more traffic to your website, make sure your website is employing the most effective Website Conversion Optimization techniques and converting visitors to leads at an acceptable rate.

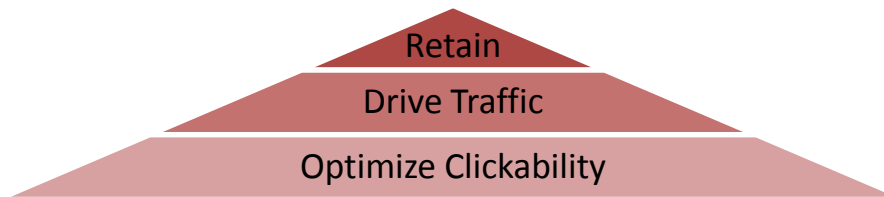
## Three Steps to More Clients

### Profit Point

*Successful search engine marketing requires three steps.*

Now that you know what you need to do to get more clients for your law firm, you need to know how to do it. By following these three steps, your firm will be on the way to a successful law firm internet marketing program:

1. Optimize your website's ability to convert visitors into leads.
2. Drive prospects to your website from the top search engines.
3. Create an offline consultation process that converts leads into retained clients.



### Profit Point

*Improve Clickability by making your website easy to use, relevant, engaging, and actionable.*

### Step 1: Improve Your Website's Ability to Convert Visitors into Leads

Clickability is basically a combination of **usability** and **persuasion**. Usability relates to the ease of use or "user-friendliness" of a website; persuasion relates to the use of relevant, engaging and actionable elements.

To improve your Clickability, the usability and persuasiveness of the following five website elements must be improved.

1. **Look and Feel**
2. **Navigation**
3. **Content**
4. **Lead Generation Forms**
5. **Technical Performance**

### Understand Your Visitors' Needs

### Profit Point

*Follow the golden rule of marketing: Know thy Client. Uncover your visitors pressing questions and answer them.*

Before you can make improvements in any of the above areas, you must thoroughly understand your clients. Grab a sheet of paper and make a list of the different types of people that are likely to visit your website. In a family law firm for example, you might include a man that is looking to get divorced but has no children or a women that is seeking an adjustment to child support. Answer the following questions about each person.

1. What circumstances have prompted this person to search for an attorney?
2. During the research phase of selecting an attorney, what questions or concerns, in priority order, does this person have about your legal services?
3. Beyond answering this person's questions, what important information about your firm and its services do we want to communicate to this person?
4. Why should this person select your firm instead of a competitor firm?

The people that you have identified in conjunction with the questions that you have answered comprise what are known as your “target personas.” Armed with this critical information, you can begin improving the five elements of your website by using the exercises below. Use your answers to the questions in each of the five sections as a guide for making appropriate adjustments to your website.

## How to Improve Look and Feel

Look and feel relates to the design, layout, images and color scheme that is used on your website. Answering the following questions will help ensure that your website is appealing to your target personas.

- What words capture the emotion and feelings that you want your website to evoke in your target personas?
- What colors evoke the desired emotions and feelings?
- Is your layout pleasing to the eye, or is it busy and disorganized?
- Which elements of your website are confusing or ambiguous?
- Does the design convey a sense of contemporary professionalism, or does it look dated and amateurish?

## How to Improve Navigation

Navigation relates to the buttons and hyperlinks that allow your visitors to click through your website. Improve your navigation by asking yourself the following questions.

- Is the navigation consistent from page to page, or does it change from section to section leaving people confused and frustrated?
- Are best practices for hyperlinks, like underlining and highlighting text, used to make it clear what is and what is not clickable?
- Are the words on the navigation buttons understandable and logical to your target personas, or are they loaded with legal jargon that only attorneys use?
- Are the words on all hyperlinks correlated with the information users will find when they click the link?

## How to Improve Content

Creating quality content is often given cursory consideration. Beyond having a website that “works” from a technical standpoint, when it comes to generating leads from a law firm website, providing valuable content that **answers peoples’ questions** and **clearly illustrates why you are the best choice for their needs** is far and away the single biggest factor in your success.

Use the following tips and questions to improve your website content, and persuade people to contact you.

### Profit Point

*Be helpful first; sell yourself second.*

- Your job is to answer people’s questions and provide them valuable information that helps them make the decision to engage your firm. All other information is secondary. Be helpful first; sell yourself second.
- Use the list of questions and concerns you generated for each target persona to create an outline of the content of your website.
- Make your website about them and less about you. Use the word “you” more than the words “we” or “our.”
- Use headers and sub headers throughout your text to make your content easy to scan and skim. Just like this white paper does.
- If you do not understand copywriting from a marketing and advertising standpoint, get a book on the subject or hire a copywriter. It’s that important.

## How to Improve Lead Generation Forms

Lead generation forms are an excellent way to solicit leads from your website.

### Profit Point

*Make it easy to take action.*

- Make it easy to take action. Insert calls to action like “Schedule a Free Consultation” in the upper right corner of the main body area of your website, throughout the text where appropriate, and on the bottom of every page.
- When someone clicks on a call to action link, take them to an email form that allows them to enter their information and ask a question.
- Ask for the minimum amount of personal information you need to simply respond to the inquiry. Generally, name and email are sufficient. Less info = more leads.
- Use short introductory text above the email form that lets your visitors know exactly what is going to happen and what benefit they will receive if they complete your email form.
- Reassure your visitors that you respect their privacy and will not share their information with any other organizations.
- Always provide feedback that they have successfully submitted the form and provide them with information about how and when they will be contacted.
- **Side Note:** Make sure your contact information is readily available throughout your website so that it is easy to call or contact you in multiple ways.

## How to Improve Technical Performance

Your website’s technical performance is closely related to its overall usability. Talk with your website designer about the following items:

### Profit Point

*Make sure your website loads within 8 seconds.*

- Does the website load quickly—8 seconds or less?
- Get rid of annoying flash intros. People want to get to your content, not watch an animation of your logo.
- Make sure pictures look professional and are the right size and resolution for high performance.
- Thoroughly check all links and email forms on your website to make sure they are working correctly. Nothing persuades a visitor to leave your website quicker than broken links and forms.

## The Bottom Line about Clickability

Clickability is an ongoing process of improvement. If you keep the following points in mind, you will always be moving your website in the right direction.

### Profit Point

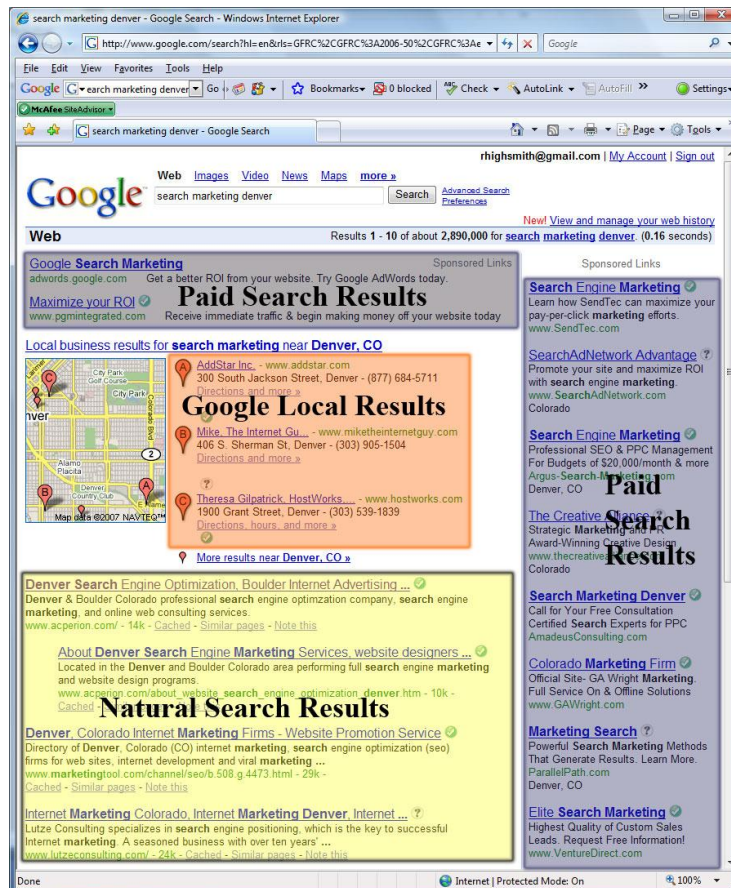
*Do what is best for the user.*

- What is best for my target personas?
- What do my target persons think? If they think it is confusing, it is confusing. If they think the colors are wrong, they are wrong. This is about your visitors, not you or anyone else in your firm.
- If you don't know the answers to the first two questions, ask your target personas directly in surveys or in casual conversation with current clients.

## Step 2: Drive Traffic to Your Website from the Top Search Engines

As mentioned earlier, the two main ways to drive traffic to your website are through natural SEO and paid search advertising (often called pay per click). The diagram below illustrates the difference between these two techniques.

Our goal in this paper is to provide a high level overview of these two techniques and give you some pointers to start your program off on the right foot.



## Find the Right Keywords

Keyword research is the process of identifying the keywords and phrases that your potential clients are using to search for your legal services.

For example, if you owned a law firm in Denver, Colorado that specialized in divorce and child custody cases, you would want your website to show up on the first page of Google for terms like “Denver divorce attorney” or “Colorado child custody lawyer.”

The goal of keyword research is to develop a list of keywords that are relevant to the legal services you offer and have a high level of search volume. Using our Denver family law example, if there were significantly more searches for phrases using the word “divorce” as opposed to the phrase “child custody,” you would likely want to focus your search marketing efforts on divorce related phrases and develop website content that offers more information about that area of law.

The best scenario is to have a keyword list that receives a significant amount of searches across a large range of keywords or a smaller list with very high search volume and relatively low competition.

You can conduct keyword research and build your lists for free using the [Overture Keyword Selector Tool](#). More advanced keyword tools are available for a fee. Also, once you set up your pay per click accounts on Google, Yahoo, and MSN (discussed below), you will have access to their free keyword research tools.

## Natural Search Engine Optimization

SEO is a set of processes and techniques that make your website more popular in the eyes of the major search engines. The ultimate goal is to rank number one on Google, Yahoo, MSN, AOL, and Ask for the keywords and phrases most relevant to your law firm’s service offerings.

Google and most other search engines send web spiders (programs that scour the internet reading website content) out to read your website code. As the spiders scour the internet and read your code, their systems are performing complex mathematical equations to determine website ranks on search result pages based on, among other elements, content relevancy and popularity. There are several techniques that can enhance relevancy and popularity. The next section provides some basic tips you can use to improve your natural search engine rankings.

### How to Achieve First Page Natural Search Rankings

1. Look at each page of your website and identify 2 – 3 keywords. Use those keywords in the text as frequently as possible while keeping the flow of the content as “natural” as possible.

2. Beyond your main navigation, link your website pages together with text hyperlinks. Use the keywords you want to rank for in the hyperlinks.
3. Insert your target keywords into the meta title, meta description, and meta keyword areas of each page of your website code.
4. Find other **relevant** websites that are willing to link to your website. In our family law example, you may want to find informational websites about marriage counseling or mediation to link to your website. Ask them to use a keyword in the hyperlink rather than the name of your firm or “click here.” Do not link back to these websites. Reciprocal links cancel each other out and will not improve your rankings. Offer money or some other incentive for them to create and maintain the link on their website.
5. Submit your website to [popular directories](#).
6. Update your website with fresh, keyword rich content at least once each month (more is better).

The search engine algorithms are in a constant state of flux, and the weight assigned to various elements is a mystery. [Clixo’s law firm marketing consultants](#) are constantly tweaking their techniques to keep up with the latest trends in search engine optimization.

## Paid Search Advertising

Paid search advertising, often called Pay Per Click (PPC), is also designed to have your website rank on the first page of the major search engines and drive traffic to your website. Unlike natural search results, you pay a fee (often between \$.10 - \$3) every time someone clicks on your advertisement and visits your website.

You have probably seen PPC ads on Google or Yahoo. They are the little ads across the top and down the right side of the search results page (See illustration above). You may have also seen these ads on general interest websites that have dedicated space on their pages for these ads in exchange for a percentage of the click fees. When ads appear on websites other than Google or Yahoo themselves, they are called content ads.

### Profit Point

*To maximize results, use both natural and paid search marketing techniques.*

While some consumers never click on PPC advertisements, many do. If you have ever wondered how Google makes all their money, it is from the click fees from these ads. But Google and the other search engines are not the only ones benefiting. PPC advertising, when done correctly, can increase your leads and direct sales with an impressive return on investment. In almost every case, your law firm internet marketing program should employ **both** natural search engine optimization and pay per click advertising.

### How to Launch Paid Search Advertising Campaigns

Detailed instructions on launching and managing paid search campaigns are beyond the scope of this discussion. However, here are a few important tips for setting up your accounts.

1. Group keywords into logical categories--by practice area, for example.
2. Use the keyword under which you are advertising in your ad copy.
3. Send visitors to the page on your website that is directly related to the

keyword you are advertising under rather than your home page. For instance, visitors who are searching for a divorce attorney should go directly to the divorce law practice area description. Those who are searching under more general terms like “Denver Attorney,” for example, can be sent to your home page.

4. Try making an offer in your advertising copy to make your advertisement more appealing. You might offer a free consultation or a copy of a relevant article. Let the answers you gave when describing your target persona be your guide.
5. Be sure to turn “on” the conversion tracking feature and use website statistics to learn which keywords produce the most leads at the lowest cost (see the next paragraph for a description of tracking). Adjust your budgets and website content to focus on the best performing keywords.

To view complete tutorials and create your accounts, visit one or more of the following links:

- [www.adwords.google.com](http://www.adwords.google.com)
- [www.searchmarketing.yahoo.com](http://www.searchmarketing.yahoo.com)
- [MSN Adcenter](http://MSN Adcenter)

### Squeeze Out Every Last Lead with Website Analytics

Most website hosting programs offer basic website statistics. Many of these programs show you the number of unique visits to your website, the pages they viewed, and other useful statistics. At Clixo, we employ advanced analytics software, which is fancy name for “better statistics.”

Advanced analytics, when hooked up to your website, provide valuable information about the individuals visiting your website like

- What keywords they used to find your website.
- Which keywords are converting into leads?
- How long they are spending on your website.
- The most popular click path from your home page to your lead generation form.
- The pages that give them trouble and cause them to exit your website.

As you can imagine, looking at this type of data provides valuable opportunities to improve the effectiveness of your search engine marketing campaigns as well as your website’s Clickability.

### Step 3: Turn Consultations into Clients

While technically not part of search engine marketing, the sales process you use to convert website leads into paying clients is just as important as Steps 1 and 2. The same logic we applied to improving your website’s Clickability applies to your offline sales process.

If you can improve the rate at which you convert leads into consultations and consultations into retained clients, you are going to get a bigger return on investment without spending any more time or money. If you don't already know the numbers, completing the following calculations will help:

1. Divide the number of leads you receive in a given time period by the number of consultations you schedule. This will give you your lead to consultation ratio.  
*25 leads in a month / 5 consultations = a lead-to-consultation ratio of 20%.*
2. Divide the number of retained clients you achieve in a given time period by the number of consultations you conducted during that time period. This will give you your consultation-to-client ratio.

Just like your website's Clickability factor, your goal is to implement new techniques and processes that improve your performance on the above calculations.

### How to Improve Your Lead-to-Consultation Ratio

Now that you have optimized your website's Clickability and you are driving more traffic to your website from the search engines, you will be receiving more leads each month. Here are a few tips to improve your ability to turn leads into consultations.

#### Profit Point

*Responding to website inquiries the same day is powerful.*

1. **Keep your promises.** Many website inquiries are never answered because lawyers are too busy to follow up and no one in the firm is assigned the responsibility of monitoring the site on a regular basis and answering requests. If your website says you will respond to inquiries within a certain period of time (typically 24 hours), be sure you respond before that deadline. Respond within a few hours you will win major points from your prospect.
2. **Make the initial contact valuable for the prospect.** Make it your goal to answer the person's question(s) and provide value during the initial call or email. By "giving away" some of your expertise, you communicate that you are an expert and you care about their needs.
3. **Just like on your website, have a call to action.** Whether you are responding via email or by phone, ask to schedule a consultation and tell them how they can do that. Sounds simple, but being diligent about calls to action will improve your conversion ratio.
4. **Have a process in place for follow up.** For example, you can create email templates in Outlook that have the answers to frequently asked questions and solid calls to action. When leads come in, open the appropriate template, customize the message, and send it out.
5. **Bonus Tip:** Don't leave unqualified prospects hanging. If a lead is clearly not a fit for your firm, point them in the right direction by providing website addresses or phone numbers for resources that can help them. This gesture creates goodwill and can generate referrals down the road.

## How to Improve Your Consultation-to-Client Ratio

It's showtime. You have made it all the way to the last step of the sales process. It is time to close the deal. How you run and close your consultations is critical. Here are a few tips to start you thinking in the right direction.

1. **Create a "moment map."** Literally jot down every moment and what currently happens during your consultation process. What happens when the prospect walks into the lobby? What happens while they are waiting for the consultation to start? Are they brought into a conference room to wait for you or are they brought to your office? After you have all of the moments mapped out, ask yourself how you can improve the **experience** at each moment. Your goal is to exceed their expectations.
2. As we have said all along, providing valuable information and making the interaction valuable to the prospect is the best way to engender trust, confidence, and goodwill that will help persuade the person that you are the right attorney for them.
3. Have a strong closing procedure. Have a retainer agreement ready before you walk into the meeting and ask for their business. Basic, but powerful.
4. With most legal issues, waiting is bad. Remind them of the consequences in a non-threatening way.

## Where to Go from Here

SEM is a wonderful way to generate more leads from your website. Some of our customers have literally doubled and tripled the number of retained clients they receive each month by implementing the law firm marketing ideas expressed in this paper.

Take the leap and get started. If you use appropriate analytics and tracking procedures, the data you receive in the first few months of your program will highlight the areas you need to improve and the principles and tips discussed in this paper can serve as your road map to systematically make those improvements.

### BONUS FEATURE:

## How to Hire a Search Engine Marketing Agency

At this point you probably have a better understanding of how search engine marketing can benefit your law firm and you are excited to get started. If you don't have an in-house law firm marketing department that can assist with your SEM program, you probably will want to hire an outside agency. Here is a quick guide to help you select the right agency for your firm.

### 1. What is the agency's core competency?

Many web design firms have added search engine marketing as a service offering. However, web design and search engine marketing are two very different, albeit interrelated, areas of law firm internet marketing. Search marketing specialists often offer a higher level of skill and expertise.

### 2. Do they have experience in the legal industry?

A search engine marketer that has experience in the legal industry is going to have a greater understanding of the unique challenges facing law firms. *Matt's Shameless Plug:* I am an attorney who has run highly successful search engine marketing programs for law firms. Contact me: [matt@clixosearch.com](mailto:matt@clixosearch.com)

### 3. What services do they actually offer?

There are basically four types of search engine marketing agencies.

- a. The top agencies manage thousands of keywords and spend literally millions of dollars each month on paid search advertising for Fortune 1000 companies. Unless your budget is huge, they won't even talk to you.
- b. On the other end of the scale are companies that are basically sales organizations. They don't know much about strategy, and they don't care much about anything other than closing the deal. They make offers like "Pay us \$99 a month and we will get you ranked on the first page of Google for 10 keywords." What they are really saying is they will turn on 10 search words in pay per click and never return your phone calls. Stay away from them.
- c. The next category includes firms that focus on only one aspect of the game. They generally offer either only paid search campaigns or only natural search engine optimization. These agencies are more appropriate for large, niche programs that require very specialized techniques.
- d. The fourth type of agency takes a more holistic approach and combines true expertise and a strategic approach to search engine marketing. These firms, which tend to focus on small to midsize companies looking to grow their businesses, generally are your best bet.

### 4. What do they know about Clickability?

Very few search engine marketing agencies employ marketing and advertising experts. They are mostly focused on driving traffic and don't concern themselves or don't have the skills to help you improve your website's Clickability. Ask to see examples of their work in this area.

### 5. What is their fee structure?

A popular technique is to charge you a monthly fee based on the percentage of money you spend on paid search advertising. Avoid this if you can. Spending more money on paid search, in most cases, requires no more work on the agencies part. They literally just turn up the budget and go back to not paying attention to you. Find a company that is looking for a long-term relationship and won't penalize you for increasing your monthly advertising budget.

### 6. Do you have to sign a long-term contract?

Good results can often take up to six months, and optimal results can take a year or more. Many agencies require a six-month or one-year contract. In most cases, you should not to sign anything longer than six months. Ideally, you should find an agency that encourages you to give the program six months to produce results, but allows you to cancel your agreement with thirty days written notice.

## How to Reach Us

For more information about Clixo's lawyer search engine marketing services, you can visit us on the web at [www.clixosearch.com](http://www.clixosearch.com) or call (303) 632-8722.

## The Last Word

Thank you for your interest in this paper. We welcome your comments and questions and encourage you to send us feedback about what you thought about the information provided in this white paper.

We offer qualifying law firms a free assessment of their website which provides feedback about your Clickability and Findability. [Find out if you qualify.](#)

#### Profit Point

*Don't pay fees based on a percentage of your pay per click budget.*