

SMALL PRACTICE SUPPORT PROGRAMME

SMALL PRACTICE MONTHLY BULLETIN – JANUARY: CREATING ENGAGING MARKETING CONTENT



This bulletin addresses recommendations 3 and 4 of the Crowe Market Study of Sole Practitioners and Smaller Legal Practices in Ireland. Recommendation 3 suggested that smaller practices develop marketing plans, while recommendation 4 advised practices to formally plan their client communications. Within these recommendations, an emphasis was placed on digital marketing mediums such as websites, email marketing, social media marketing and blog posts.

In order for marketing content to be successful, it needs to be engaging. In order to achieve this, you should aim to address issues and topics that both existing and potential clients are likely to have an interest in. It should offer them a better understanding of, an innovative solution to, a new angle on, or an expert's point of view on, the topic.

Successfully engaging existing and potential clients through your digital channels will help generate trust in your practice, your legal expertise and specialist skills. It will also create a connection to your firm's brand and approach to its clients and work. This will keep your practice front of mind and should assist with driving new business from those targeted clients.

KEY ELEMENTS OF ENGAGING MARKETING CONTENT

Before you begin creating and posting marketing content through your digital channels, it is important that you develop a plan. The planning process should consider the following elements:

- **Your target market:**
The first step in any marketing content plan is to understand who your target market is. A clear understanding of those that make up your core existing and target client base will allow you to tailor your marketing content to those individuals or businesses.

In turn, this will likely lead to better engagement with the content you create.

- **Content topics and formats:**
After establishing your target market, you should carry out research to identify a selection of topics that supports your areas of expertise. The topics should be current, relevant, beneficial and interesting to your target audience and you should also ensure that your practice is credibly positioned to comment on them.

Once the topic is identified, you must then consider the type of content you intend to create from that topic. Common types of content include opinion pieces, a summary of or layman's guide to a new law, question-and-answer pieces, case studies, etc. Varying the type and format of content you create is a good way of ensuring greater appeal and engagement with the content.

- **Frequency and scheduling:**
It is important to gain an understanding of the frequency that your target audience would like to hear from you. This will vary depending on the audience, the type of marketing content and the volume that will be published on each occasion. For some target markets this will be daily and for others it will be weekly, monthly or even quarterly. You can do this by testing different scheduling options to determine what is most successful for your practice. It is important to remember that what works for one practice may not work for others.

Once you determine the frequency, you can then develop a schedule of marketing content. The schedule must consider important occasions and events, weeks, days and times of day that might make the content more relevant or urgent for readers or when they might have more capacity to read your content.

For example, planning relevant content releases to line up with current events, such as the Budget, will help to ensure relevance. Posting on a particular day of the week, such as a Monday or Friday morning, might drive a higher readership.

- **Digital channel selection:**

Once you have established your marketing content, you must determine the most suitable digital marketing channels on which to post your content. This will vary depending on your target market, the content itself and your available resources to actively manage a variety of channels.

It is worth noting that on the majority of occasions, you will gain most benefit from posting the marketing content on all your digital channels, although it may need to be adapted in format or length to suit the channel in question.

- **The content itself:**

It is important to consider in advance the style and tone you are aiming for. With this in mind, it is important to identify who is best placed to write the content. This can be done within your practice or you could look to an external content writer. This will depend on various factors, including your available resources, the skillset within your team, and the level of expertise required to write the article. Your approach may also vary from one piece of content to the next.

- **Content titles, headlines and subject lines:**

After deciding on the target and topic of your content, you should then establish a suitable title for the piece. If your reader is not engaged by this, they may not continue to read further and the desired results will be difficult to achieve.

This component is often overlooked in favour of the body of the content but its importance should not be underestimated. You may find it easier to write the piece first, and then return to think of a suitable title afterwards. Either way, it should be a component that is carefully crafted and based on a solid understanding of your target market and what might draw them in.

- **Design and layout:**

Excellent formatting and layout is very important for your marketing content, as are strong visuals and branding. The choice of font and font size, the use

of numbering and bullet points, the accentuation of text through bold or underline, the choice of colours and images to be incorporated, amongst many other different things, may make it easier for readers to follow, read and engage with your content.

MEASURING SUCCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Before any campaign begins you should set objectives and determine your key performance indicators. These should be calculated based on size of your existing and potential client base and the market, any previous website and digital analytics available and the potential of the specific content that is posted.

There are a number of key metrics which are regularly used to measure the success of digital marketing content. These include:



- **Reach:** Reach refers to the number of people who have seen your post. It does not mean that they had any interaction with the post, but simply that it appeared on their screen. Creating content that people share will lead to your post having a greater reach.
- **Engagement:** Engagement refers to the number of people who had a reaction to your post. This interaction could be from them clicking on a link, to liking or commenting on the post, or sharing the post. The engagement percentage is a good indicator of how well written your headline/title/caption is, and whether or not it appealed to your readers.
- **Conversion rate:** This is the percentage of people who carried out an action based on your article. An example could be the number of people who went on to fill out an application form, called your office or made an enquiry to your practice.

It is important to set time aside to monitor the performance of your content against the objectives you set for it, and analyse the reasons behind any under- or over-performance. This allows you to understand key trends and the drivers of success. It will also assist you in improving engagement with your marketing content into the future.

IN CONCLUSION

Engaging existing and potential clients through your digital marketing channels can be achieved by:

- First, identifying your target market,
- Then, creating and effectively sharing relevant, relatable and useful information for that market.

Other factors to consider that play a role in how engaging the content will be include:

- The timing of the post,

- The layout and design of the content,
- The title choice, and
- The selection of digital marketing channel the content is posted on.

Good planning and setting out clear goals and success measures are crucial. As with many business activities, marketing content must be monitored measured and analysed consistently to best understand the key drivers of success and to hone and improve results over time.

This Bulletin is part of a series of Small Practice Business Bulletins delivered to you by Crowe as a follow on to the recommendations of the Crowe Market Study of Sole Practitioners and Smaller Legal Practices in Ireland. Crowe is a leading business advisory and accountancy firm in Ireland and is part of the Crowe Global network.
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