# Content Guidebook

# The Purpose of This Guidebook

We understand that you may not have written content for your website before, but we want to assure you that the process is simple. Still, there are a few best practices that will take your site to the next level. In this guidebook, you will find:

1. A guide to writing your own profile page.
2. A guide to writing about your practice areas.
3. A guide to writing blogs.

Your account manager and content strategist will let you know if you need to complete any of these items during the initial production stage. Otherwise, these guides exist for your reference post-launch only. We do encourage all of our clients to blog regularly, and it never hurts to add additional staff member profiles and practice area pages to your site as your firm expands and grows.

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# Writing Your Own Profile

As a legal professional, your instinct may be to project yourself as professionally as possible at all times, but drawing in clients requires a more human approach. That's where your profile page comes in handy. On your profile page, you have the chance to show prospective clients that not only are you the knowledgeable resource they need; you're also the approachable person they can relate to and trust.

To create an effective profile page, you must always keep in mind those ultimate goals — showing your clients that you're approachable and reassuring them of your experience and professionalism.

## A Basic Outline

Here is a suggested outline to help you achieve both of those goals:

1. Start by drawing the reader in — try describing why you practice law or sharing an anecdote about what led to your eventual interest in your field.

2. Segway into how your interest grew or changed over time, where you went to law school, and any other information you'd like to include about how you first got your start in the legal field.

3. Highlight all relevant experience, awards, or credentials.

4. Mention what you like to do outside of the firm.

5. If possible, conclude by explaining how your hobbies and legal practice tie together.

    a. Example 1, tying in a seemingly unrelated hobby: "Whether it's the baseball field or the court of law, I am competitive and strategic by nature."
    b. Example 2, reiterating positive traits you've already mentioned: "I've found painting and reading poetry to be enjoyable ways to hone my verbal skills and ingenuity outside of the courtroom."

## Pro Tip #1

Somewhere around the middle of your page — where you feel a natural transition in your writing — break up the text with a quote that will help instill confidence in your abilities and intrigue the reader to learn more.

## Pro Tip #2

If you aren't the first person at your firm to have a profile page on your site, make sure you write your page from the same perspective as theirs. For instance, if their profile page is written in first person, write yours in first person, too.

# Examples

Not to worry — we have examples! Here are three attorney profile pages for reference. Although each profile is unique, each still manages to draw the reader in, convey the attorney as approachable, and aspire confidence in his or her professional ability.

http://plslawoffices.com/meet-me/
http://husemanstewart.com/meet-our-team/john-runde/
http://globerlaw.com/james-glober/

# Writing About Your Practice Areas

Practice area pages are important for a variety of reasons. Here are a few things they do for your site:

- Supply the necessary keywords (i.e. divorce, DUI, business formation, etc.) for your site to rank well in search results
- Portray you as a valuable resource by educating the reader and addressing his or her emotional concerns
- Explain why the reader should hire you to assist him or her with the topic at hand

## How to Write a Practice Area Page

It's easy! When writing a practice area page, simply follow the same general guidelines you learned in your English 101 class.

1. *Introduction* - Draw the reader in by appealing to his or her current emotional state.
2. *Body* - Provide three main points about the area at hand. These should be points that help the reader to get a basic understanding about what the practice area is and how it works.
3. *Conclusion* - Wrap up by explaining why the reader should hire an attorney and why you are a good choice.

## Other Guidelines

- **Aim for a total of 500 - 600 words.** This length gives you enough space to include many relevant keywords without the page becoming overwhelming to you or the reader.
- **Break up blocks of text with headings for easier consumption.** As a general rule, a 500 - 600 word page should have around two headings within the text.
- **Write from the same point of view that you speak.** Rather than writing in third person, it is more effective to refer to your firm using "we" or "I" (if you are a sole practitioner) and to engage your readers directly using "you."
- **Keep it simple.** Unless you are a business law attorney who works exclusively with sophisticated organizations and highly educated owners, your readers likely come from all walks of life. Therefore, it is important to use language that is readily understandable. Even if you do cater to an educated clientele, it is helpful to remember that readers are often busy, as well as stressed about the prospect of hiring an attorney. Thus, you want to make your content as engaging and easily digestible as possible, without talking down to your readers.

## Examples

Although each of the two examples below is unique, they both achieve the same main objectives.

Estate Planning: http://jamesduberglaw.com/practice-areas/estate-planning/
Contract Disputes: http://www.mfrancelaw.com/practice-areas/contract-disputes/

# Blogging Best Practices

## The Purpose of Blogging

Blogging has been around for quite a while now, but a lot of us — bloggers included — don't fully understand what blogging is or how it can be useful.

Put simply, a blog is a portal for information. It allows a writer to post their ideas, insights, opinions, or whatever else they may want to share. In turn, it allows anyone who visits their blog to read what they've posted.

**"What does this have to do with me?" you ask.**

Fair question. In layman's terms, blogging is one of the simplest ways to get more traffic to your website. Even better, a well-executed blog can achieve these 3 incredibly beneficial objectives:

1. Educate readers about your field, your services, your products, etc.
   - This establishes your authority and shows readers that you are a knowledgeable, trustworthy source to turn to for all their [insert your specialty here] needs
2. Pique reader interest (with relevant, engaging content) and draw them back to your site
   - From there, it's up to your site to direct their attention to the appropriate action, whether it be contacting you, buying your product, or whatever else your site sets out to do
3. Catch the attention of Google and other search engines
   - By continuously putting fresh, useful content in your blog, you in turn show search engines that your site is staying relevant and up-to-date. After all, Google doesn't want to give high rankings to old, outdated sites

Years of research have shown that the above goals are well within reach to those who blog. Now for the real question:

**"How do I do it?"**

The best way to master the art of blogging is to jump in with both feet. Once you get more comfortable with the practice, the habit will become easier.

To get you started, we've put together a list of blogging best practices. Use them to build the right habits for the sake of your readers, your website, and your business.

## Word Count

- Ideally, you want your posts to be in the 800-1300 word range
  - Try to never go shorter than 500 words or longer than 1500
- Since some of your topics may be more extensive than others, it's perfectly okay for word count to vary within the above range from one post to the next

## Word Choice

- Try to write in a natural, conversational manner

- Use keywords (words you think readers will know, understand, and search for when they go to read about the topic of your post) — but don't jam-pack your article full of them; a natural flow is more important than keyword stuffing
- Try to use actionable phrases (phrases that define a clear action), especially on "how to"-style articles
  - Say "Take that First Step," not "Taking that First Step"
  - Say "Consult with an Expert," not "How to Book a Consultation"

# Titles

- Try to make your post titles interesting (for readers) and relevant (for Google and readers)
- For added interest, make use of words that invoke an emotional response
  - E.g. "Family," "Hurt," "Loss," "Fight," "Protect," etc.
- Feel free to apply these same concepts to headings and subheadings

# Formatting

- Keep paragraphs relatively short — 5 lines (lines, not sentences!) max is a good rule of thumb
- Use headings and subheadings to guide readers through distinct shifts in subject matter, tone, direction, etc.
- When applicable, use bulleted and/or numbered lists
  - This break up text for readers and increase the document's usability

# Style

- Be yourself in your writing, but don't forget that as far as the reader is concerned, this article is all about them. As you write, look at the post from the reader's perspective — what do *they* get out of reading it?
  - Education on a specific topic?
  - Answers to a question or curiosity?
  - Updates on a recent event?
  - Etc.

# Sources

- Whenever possible, link to external sources (and statistics, if applicable) to add credibility to your post
  - Choose sources that are relevant, trustworthy, and authoritative
- Try to link to at least three external sources per post
- Use anchor text (built-in hyperlinks, like the one below) to link to your sources
  - Learn [how and when to use anchor text](#)
- Whenever you incorporate sources, include a source list at the end of the post
  - You can literally just list the URLs in a bulleted list; no formal citation necessary!

# Frequency

- There is no set rule on how often you should blog, but err on the side of excess — if you can blog twice a month, that's a lot better than not blogging at all. If you can blog once or twice a week, more power to you!

# Examples

http://www.christiancurtisllc.com/blog/
https://criminal-defense-law-nyc.com/blog/
http://www.centraltexaslegal.com/blog/

**Note:** Check out the video page on the last site listed above. The music videos used to be on their blog, but we moved them to their own page because they were causing such a sensation. They are a good example of how you can use personality and creativity to your advantage on your blog.