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FIRM MANAGEMENT

5 Tips on How to Market an Accounting Firm

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MARKETING



If your accounting firm maintains a website and sends email blasts to clients from time to time, you may think you're on top of your game when it comes to digital marketing. However, the truth is most firms are missing out on major opportunities to target and attract clients using tools that are right at their fingertips.

Today, a digital strategy is especially important. While estimates vary, studies have shown that more than 60% of a purchase decision (in our profession, landing a client) is made prior to a prospect calling your office. This means potential clients are primarily basing their decisions to work with you on your overall digital footprint. Needless to say, it's critical that your firm utilize the right tools to project a captivating online image.

With technology an integral part of our everyday life, we're all learning how to sift through loads of information quickly. For accounting firms who want to effectively engage with clients and prospects, getting to the top of the information heap can be a challenge. Couple that with shortened attention spans, and you'll quickly realize that marketing an accounting firm in the digital age is a whole new ball game.

To meet these challenges, consider these five tips on how to market an accounting firm online to boost your firm's web presence and build a loyal digital community in today's fast-paced landscape.

1. Update your website

According to [Adobe](#), 38% of people will stop engaging with a website if the content or layout is unattractive. So take an objective look at your firm's website to determine if updates are needed. Remember: Mobile devices now account for [nearly two of every three minutes spent online](#), so make sure the design of your website is also mobile friendly.

TIP: Utilize a clean, crisp design that focuses on the top three items needed on any accounting firm homepage: your contact information; a simple summary of what your firm is about; and clear, engaging options that tell visitors what they can do next (e.g., browse your services, learn about your firm's talent, read client testimonials, make an appointment, and so on).

2. Use social media effectively

While many firms have social media accounts on platforms like Twitter and LinkedIn, they often don't know how to effectively use them to market their firm. Social media is a place to build relationships and share information that positions your firm as an authority on matters that are important to clients and prospects. If you dive into the social media arena, it's vital that you embed it into your strategy, making sure to post content frequently and interact regularly with followers. It may also be helpful to take part in social media training sessions and develop a firm-wide social media policy.

TIP: Social media is all about dialogue; if you use your platforms to simply push information out, viewers will eventually tune out. They want give and take; think of it as a conversation, not a postcard. For the best results, post content your followers are likely to share or comment upon, thereby potentially extending your reach to their connections.

3. Get to the top of local search results

Want people to easily find your accounting firm in an online search? Search Engine Optimization (SEO) could be the answer. SEO is the process of maximizing the number of visitors to a particular website by ensuring that the site appears high on the list of results returned by a search engine. However, because it can be challenging to keep up-to-date with SEO standards and understand key performance indicators, some firms find it easier hand this work off to marketing

experts. If you do, make sure you hire an agency familiar with tax and accounting as they'll bring more knowledge of keywords and trends specific to the profession. Remember that the old newspaper concept “above the fold” also applies to web searches. The objective is to be as high on the list as possible so a page-down is not required.

TIP: Whether you handle SEO in-house or not, local search results are highly influenced by other online references to your business. Take control of your listings in [Google My Business](#), [YP](#), [Yelp](#) and similar sites, and ensure your business can be found online, via Google and beyond.

4. Maximize email marketing efforts

While most firms communicate with clients regularly via email, most are not fully capitalizing on this opportunity. Make the most of your email marketing efforts with seasonal updates and eye-catching content that focuses on business strategy and financial tips, not only accounting matters — and remember to communicate consistently.

TIP: As with your website, don't forget to design your emails to be mobile friendly. Avoid long, drawn-out sets of content; instead, provide “teasers” of content with hyperlinks back to your website. You want your readers to be invited to come visit your website for more engaging content. Don't try to do it all in the email; your website is where clients will engage you for services.

5. Start (and maintain) a regular blog

A blog is an opportunity for your accounting firm to become a “thought leader” and showcase the knowledge and insight of your partners and staff. By focusing on topics relevant to clients, you'll pull in readers and develop a reputation as a firm who's an authority on subjects that are top of mind for today's business owners and individuals. Even better, a blog provides regular content to support your social media and email marketing efforts, and can even help improve your site's presence in search results—if you host it on the same domain as your site.

TIP: If you decide to do a blog, understand consistency is key. Commit to a regular schedule and keep it. Successful blogs take time to develop a following; followings happen as people enjoy your content and know they can depend on you to deliver the goods on a consistent basis.

When we look at these tips holistically, an important common thread runs throughout — analytics. As you adjust your accounting firm's digital marketing strategy, create content and target prospects, make sure you are analyzing the data.

How many emails were opened? How well is your website and content showing up in search results? Who is commenting on your posts? Looking at this information in detail provides insight on what's working, what's not, and what needs to be adjusted. [Google Analytics](#) is a great free tool that's easy to add any website and will help you analyze what's working and what isn't.

It's also important to understand that embracing technology for marketing purposes is only half the battle. There are huge opportunities for accounting firms that utilize technology when it comes to client experience as well. From using the cloud to offering mobile services to providing online access via secure web portals, don't be afraid to immerse your firm in the latest technology and use it to enhance your client's overall experience. And don't be afraid to ask for help! Many times, a barrier to technology adoption is simply a matter of misinformed assumptions that it's hard and time-consuming; rather, the reality is that you can adapt to new technology a lot easier than you might assume, especially if you seek assistance. Software and digital services are becoming increasingly intuitive – you might surprise yourself at how quickly you can become proficient.

The bottom line is that remaining relevant in the accounting profession is a never-ending process. Updating online marketing strategies and building a loyal digital following is critical in reaching today's consumer. If you're open and agile enough to make technology a priority and work it into your marketing strategy, you'll realize a true competitive advantage and build a strong foundation for growth for years to come.

Jon Baron joined the Tax & Accounting business of Thomson Reuters in 1992. Prior to his current position as Managing Director of the Professional segment, Jon held the positions of President of Professional Software & Services, and Vice President of Development, where he was responsible for the design and development of all Professional products and services. Jon has three decades of technology development and management experience. Jon holds a BBA in Accounting from Siena College and an MBA from Boston University.

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