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FIRM MANAGEMENT

Eight Must-Have Items on Your Website Home Page

Here's a quick checklist to make sure your website's homepage is working hard for you. These eight items should be on your home page for best results:

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1. Logo

Yes, this one's obvious. Your logo (and it can simply be a text logo) should appear in the top left corner of all pages of your website. It should also clearly display your company's name.

Be sure it reflects your firm's culture and values. If it's old or outdated, your site will give the impression your firm is old or outdated. If it's fuzzy or made by an amateur, your firm will look cheap.

2. Tagline

If your company name doesn't describe what you offer – if you could be mistaken for a law firm — then a tagline can clear up any ambiguity. Make sure your visitor

knows what you do in the first few seconds; otherwise they won't stick around to research your site.

I also like to add a geo tagline to sites I am hired to build. This helps the reader understand where you are based. Something like "Serving small businesses in the DFW Metroplex" will suffice. If you are located in the Northeast, I know this is a bit harder to do. You can list your county or the states you serve. If you serve clients nationally, I still recommend a geo line like this: "Serving clients in Atlanta, GA and throughout the U.S."

3. Opt-in

If visitors like what they see, but aren't ready to call you, don't lose them forever. Offer a free report and add them to your email list by providing an opt-in form that's linked to your list management system.

4. Contact info

This might be another no-brainer, but make sure your visitor doesn't have to search far. If you want calls, post your phone number in large font at the top right corner of your home page (and all pages). Repeat it again in the footer and on a contact page that has your main phone, email, and office address at the top of the page. Too many sites list only a contact form on the contact page and that's a mistake.

If you are solo, work from home, and don't want to list your home address, get a P.O. box so that your firm doesn't look like a fly-by-night operation.

5. Headline

Your headline on your home page might be the most important component of your site. Often it takes the form of text against graphics in a slider photo on current websites. For best results, make sure it's worded to include a main benefit that your clients will receive by working with you. An example is "Tax Return Preparation Services that Help You Keep More of What You Make."

6. Credibility builders

Credibility builders are items such as awards and certifications you've received, photos of your staff, photos of you at conferences, testimonials, client logins, and privacy policy links, to name a few. The most important of these should be on your home page, and the rest of these should be on your bio and staff pages. These are

things that distinguish you from other firms; they will help to de-commoditize your firm.

7. Copy

The copy that you add to your home page should describe the types of problems your firm can solve for their clients and show your expertise. Include credibility builders described above to show you're the best solution.

8. Calls to action

Calls to action help you gently nudge the visitor to the action you want them to take. Do you want them to call you? Make your phone number prominent. Do you want them to schedule a free consult with you? Include a scheduling button that links to automated scheduling software. Do you want them to sign up for your newsletter? Add an opt-in box.

How did your homepage fare against our eight-item checklist? If you have six or more, congratulate yourself. If you have four or fewer, it might be time to take steps to make your homepage more effective.

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