



## Web Works

Greg Siskind, of Memphis-based Siskind & Susser, is a power-user. His Web tools include everything from a listserv to Internet-based voice and video conferencing. His web site Visalaw.com is packed with information, and gets about three million hits per month.

Siskind's advice:

- *Find a niche.* Weigh whether your site has lost its focus. "If I was starting this today," says Siskind, "rather than trying from scratch to develop a broad immigration law Web site, I'd pick an area within my practice."
- *Identify your target market.* Decide whether you're aiming to attract new business, develop business from existing clients, or if you want to take a less obvious route (such as developing a Web resource that can be used by the media or court officials).
- *Start out modestly.* Begin with the basics: attorney biographies and a few links. You can retool later. Be sure the site reflects the image of the firm and doesn't look like it's been designed by a high school kid.
- *Try it out.* To judge the site's effectiveness, play the role of the person you'd like to visit your site. Weighing whether you should create an animated homepage for the site? Think of it in those terms and you'll probably decide against it.

to call. It means being proactive: helping clients audit their needs; suggesting actions; and providing information about the full range of services your firm can offer.

The passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, with their laundry lists of regulations, can present a great excuse to pick up the phone and build new business. Caldwell, Leslie, Newcombe & Pettit, a 14-attorney litigation shop in Los Angeles, saw the passage of Sarbanes-Oxley as an opportunity to approach existing clients and offer the firm's services to conduct internal investigations to assure compliance and hunt for potential hot spots.

Something as simple as a client survey — or requesting formal feedback — can also open the door to new business.

The Chicago litigation firm of Butler Rubin Saltarelli & Boyd holds bi-annual meetings with its major clients, reports chief operating officer Audrey Rubin, a member of *SFB* Editorial Advisory Board. The 30-attorney firm sends its COO and a partner (but not the billing partner) to meet with the client. This provides an easy way to broaden the client's ties with the firm. It can also enhance credibility.

What client would not welcome the chance to discuss performance by its legal team?

The meeting helps the partner identify what's working, and defuse any problems before they fester. And it affords the chance to gently probe, to assess how the firm's performance compares with other firms that the client may be using. The sessions can be used to solicit feedback on everything from billing procedures to

responsiveness.

"We learn more about the client's needs and style," says Rubin. "It just builds the relationship and frequently we get more work."

Another way to strengthen relationships with existing clients: Bring them with you to an industry conference or seminar. Rutherford & Christie, a 12-lawyer firm with offices in Atlanta and New York City, has a substantial insurance defense litigation practice. This April, firm lawyers will attend the Georgia Self-Insurers Association annual conference, and the firm will pay for a few clients to join them at the three-day seminar. Clients appreciate the opportunity to stay on top of new developments, and conference attendees are likely to

have similar concerns.

"It's a good way to cultivate client relationships," says Atlanta partner Vince Toreno.

"And a satisfied client is the best marketing there is."

---

*Meetings with clients  
to get feedback can  
strengthen ties and  
generate more work.*

---

## Referrals

Knowing where your business is coming from can be important for two reasons. First, if someone is sending business your way, it's good business practice to thank them. Second, your firm should reciprocate referrals whenever possible.

Take a look at Charleston, S.C.'s Richardson, Patrick, Westbrook & Brickman. The firm is one of the split-offs of Ness, Motley, Loadholdt, Richardson & Poole, which had a highly publicized break-up in 2002, and is known for its expertise in asbestos and tobacco litigation.

The 28-lawyer firm makes it a priority to strengthen its relationships with other law firms and experts. This spring, it plans to host 300 attorneys, experts and their spouses at its first