JTC Resource Bulletin

Marketing a Court Website: Helping the Public Find the Court Online

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Abstract

As courts implement more public-facing technologies via the web, court managers must become more savvy in their efforts to help the public find and utilize them. Search marketing, including search engine optimization and search engine marketing, is a powerful and cost-effective communication tool. Giving attention to search marketing can help courts improve the administration of justice and better serve their communities.

Document History and Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description
1.0	22 July 2018	JTC	Release document

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This document is a product of the Joint Technology Committee (JTC) established by the Conference of State Court Administrators (COSCA), the National Association for Court Management (NACM) and the National Center for State Courts (NCSC).

JTC Mission:
To improve the administration of justice through technology

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Introduction

Virtually every court today has some kind of web presence. Pointing court "customers" to the "front door" of the courthouse website isn't like the street signage requirements of decades past: it's all about search marketing. As courts implement more web-based public-facing technologies including electronic case filing, automated notifications, online dispute resolution,[1] and others, court managers need to better understand how and why to promote those technologies.

Since courts don't actively seek to increase the number of people who come to the courthouse, the idea that courts should work at increasing the number of people who come to their virtual doorstep may be foreign and uncomfortable, or dismissed as unnecessary. And yet, doing so is an essential component of a court's public service. Search marketing for courts is about using technology to make sure people find the court's website or app first when they need court information or services.

If your court organization has not yet delved into search marketing, you are not alone. Compared to the private sector, courts of all sizes are notably poor at search marketing. Even more technologically advanced courts are not (yet) doing much about digital outreach. One court manager articulated the issue this way:

> We rely on people coming to our web site right at the moment they need services. … We do have a monopoly after all…

Making sure people find a court's website when they need it, and even more essential, find and use it when they are not yet sure what they need, can help reduce costs for both courts and the public. Better still, a good court website, well-marketed, can enhance the public's experience with the courts and improve some outcomes. To employ search marketing tactics, however, courts will need to develop new skillsets, adjust some policies and procedures, and overcome the stagnation and low expectations that often accompany the "monopoly" mindset.

An effective digital marketing strategy considers five key elements:

Product	Court services and information available via website or app.
Price	Fees, if any, that users will pay to download and/or use the app or service. Court websites and apps should not generally require fees over and above those imposed for in-person transactions and may even offer reduced fees to encourage the use of online options.

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[1] See *Case Studies in ODR for Courts: A view from the front lines*.

Place	Where the product will be found (app store, URL), used (jurisdiction's geography as well as user's location), and installed or accessed (smart phone, tablet, personal computer).
People	Who will use the product: the general public, lawyers, individuals called to jury service, litigants, probationers, parents, senior citizens, partner agencies, etc.
Promotion	Reaching the right audience with a relevant message that will bring them to the court's website.

Good search marketing is not simply a "nice to have" capability for courts. Search engine optimization, social media marketing, and other digital marketing tools are being used very effectively by private sector organizations. When search results place the court's official digital presence well below for-profit entities or non-profit advocacy groups, consumers could be confused. In some areas, for example, private legal fee-based service providers are charging for access to forms that are available for free on the court's official website. Some courts struggle to ensure the public can readily distinguish between official court information and resources offered by law firms, advocacy organizations, or scammers. Courts must become more savvy in their efforts to inform and engage their cyber-users because failing to do so puts those users at risk of being misdirected to sites maliciously designed to mislead or prey on vulnerable populations.

Search Marketing

Instead of billboards, t-shirts, pass-along cards, and direct mail, search marketing serves up marketing messages digitally. Search engines have been called the "connecting force and directional guide to everyday life,[2]" and have become an essential tool for most of the world. As such, they are also an essential tool for marketing professionals. In 2018, Google holds the vast majority of worldwide market share for internet searches.[3] Indeed, the very words we use to describe doing an internet search reflect this dominance: to google, googles, googling.[4] When someone googles, the results displayed include natural results based on relevance (organic) and sponsored links (advertising) in the form of text, images, and videos.

Intentionally influencing search results for marketing purposes is a concept pioneered long before googling became a verb. Search marketing has matured, and the audience

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[2] Baker, Loren. "A Brief History of Search Engine Optimization - SEO 101." *Search Engine Journal.* December 26, 2017. Accessed June 26, 2018.

[3] Desjardins, Jeff. "How Google Retains More than 90% of Market Share." *Business Insider.* April 23, 2018. Accessed June 26, 2018.

[4] "Google | Definition of Google in English by Oxford Dictionaries." *Oxford Dictionaries | English*, Oxford Dictionaries. Web. Accessed 3 July 2018.

today is larger than ever: nearly 90% of all adults in America use the internet.[5] The internet adoption rate is over 97% for adults under the age of 50. Reflecting that shift, digital ad spending eclipsed TV ad spending in 2017.[6] While search marketing is powerful and cost effective, it is mostly unutilized by courts.

Search marketing is a continuum of efforts that begins with a focus on good content. Even so, good content alone may not bring users to that content. Awareness of basic search marketing principles can help court managers ensure their websites are both useful to people and easily indexed by search engines.

Search Marketing includes search engine optimization (SEO) that influences a website's visibility in a search engine's "organic" search results, and search engine marketing (SEM), which influences search engine results through paid search advertising (e.g., Google Ads).

Search Engine Optimization (Organic Search Results)

Search engine optimization (SEO) influences search results displayed according to relevance. The term SEO is actually a misnomer: your organization can't actually change (or optimize) the search *engine* but can and should maximize how your website shows up in search *results*. SEO is free and can be a valuable tool for courts as they seek to help the public find and utilize court resources.
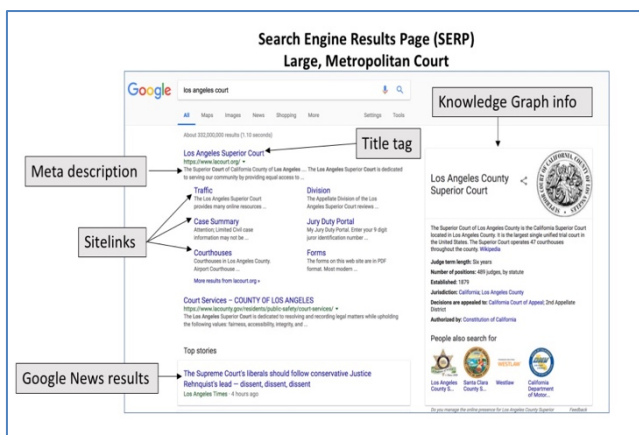

Figure 1 - Elements of the Search Engine Results Page

SEO encompasses webpage content that is visible to the site user as well as behind-the-scenes code that helps influence what is displayed in search results. While meta tags and page content are controlled by the court's content developer, other details – like Sitelinks and Knowledge Graphs – are controlled by Google. However, even those search results page elements are heavily influenced by content courts can and should control.

A few motivated, tech-savvy employees can likely handle many aspects of SEO if given time and sufficient authority to act. For larger scale web initiatives, it may be more cost effective to involve an outside marketing service. While some aspects of SEO can be delegated, court personnel should work closely with any

[5] Internet/Broadband Fact Sheet. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech., pewinternet.org, February 05, 2018. Accessed June 26, 2018.

[6] Kafka, Peter, and Rani Molla. "2017 Was the Year Digital Ad Spending Finally Beat TV - You Knew It Was Coming." *Recode*, Vox Media, Inc., December 4, 2017. Accessed June 26, 2018.

outside marketing service. Whether addressed through internal staff efforts or the assistance of a marketing service, SEO depends on good, clear, relevant content about court-related topics coupled with the strategic use of relevant keywords, meta tags, alt text, and other technical mechanisms.

Keywords

Words or phrases users type into a search bar are referred to as "keywords" or "key phrases." Some keywords are more important to users (and therefore to Google). One of the best ways to enhance a website's visibility is to ensure the page's content includes keywords and key phrases people are likely to use when they search for information.

One challenge with writing keyword-rich content is identifying relevant keywords to include. Legal terminology may be the comfortable default for court web content because the law requires precise language. Yet, to communicate effectively with the public, courts must use plain language. Writing page content for SEO is essentially writing effectively for your audience.
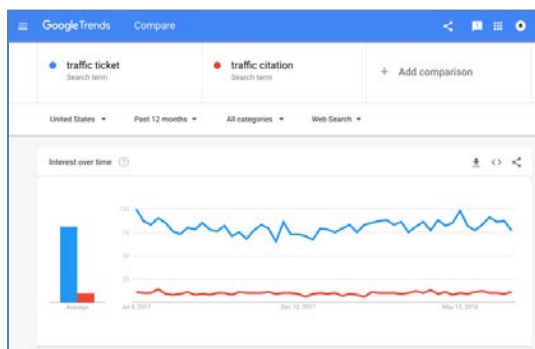

Figure 2 – Search Terms Comparison

Free tools including Google Trends quantify subtle (or significant) differences in the way people use search engines to find information. For instance, the term "traffic citation" may be more precise, but people are far more likely to search for "traffic ticket."[7] Court staff who work directly with the public will know the questions people are most likely to ask and the words they are mostly likely to use.

Spend time to understand both domain-specific (court services, questions from the public) as well as location-specific (your geographic location and jurisdiction) terms. Both are necessary to help people find you when they are looking for court services near them. Google places greater weight on localized searches.

Keyword placement

Website eye tracking research shows that people focus on the first line or two of text, and particularly on the first few words on those lines.[8] This known behavior should drive the placement of information on your page. Put important key

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[7] See trends.google.com.

[8] Pernice, K. *F-Shaped Pattern of Reading on the Web: Misunderstood, But Still Relevant (Even on Mobile)*. Nielson Norman Group. Web. November 12, 2017. Retrieved June 29, 2018.

phrases into headings on your pages. Make sure essential information is near the top.

Similarly, to give your page title the best chance of being read and clicked on a search engine results page (SERP), position the most important key words as close as possible to the beginning of the title tag. For example, the word "adoption" should ideally lead the title tag of a court's adoption services page:

This: Adoption Services – Jefferson County Court

Not this: Jefferson County Court Adoption Services

The title tag of a page (which readers only see from the Google search result page, not after they've clicked onto the actual site) need not be identical to the page's main content headline. However, since both are important for the reader, keyword placement principles apply.

Meta tags

Content descriptors called meta tags are not visible to users but provide important information about the page to web browsers and search engines. Meta tags including title tag and description help categorize a web page's content.

| Title tag | **Descriptive title**, ideally shorter than 55 characters (including spaces), that shows up as the clickable blue link on the results page. Every page should have a unique, relevant title tag. Title tag key words help users find the right web page from the hundreds (or millions) of results presented. When users click on a search result, they are indicating the *title tag* was effective (whether or not the page actually provides the information they were seeking). |
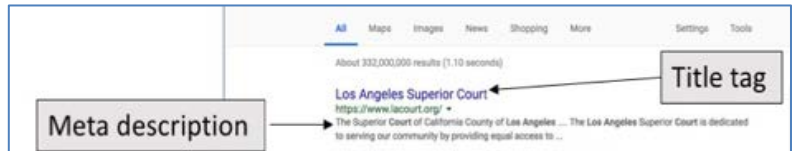
Figure 3 – Title Tag and Meta Description elements of SERP

| Meta description attribute | **Two-line summary** of the content of the page, displayed below the URL on the results page. A good meta description acts as both a catalog description and an advertisement, of sorts, for your site. If your page has no meta description, users may see a line randomly selected by Google, or "No information is available for this page." |

Alt text	**Image description** that impacts search engine optimization and is critical for accessibility to users with vision impairment or a slow internet connection. In the example below, Alt text "Chesterfield County Court Building" is displayed when the user's mouse passes over the image of the courthouse. Ideally, Alt text would be even more descriptive, including other details visible in the image (e.g., "Chesterfield County Virginia Circuit Court Building on a clear day with flags flying out front.") The words "image of" should not be included in Alt text. Use up to 125 characters (the limit displayed by most screen readers).

Figure 4 - Sample Alt Text

Sitelinks

Multiple links (typically six) that appear in two columns below the main URL are Sitelinks that "deep link" directly to popular subpages. A google algorithm determines which subpages, if any, are displayed. Sitelinks improve the

Figure 5 - Site links

likelihood that users will click through to your site simply because multiple links create a larger visual presence on the results page, pushing other search results lower.
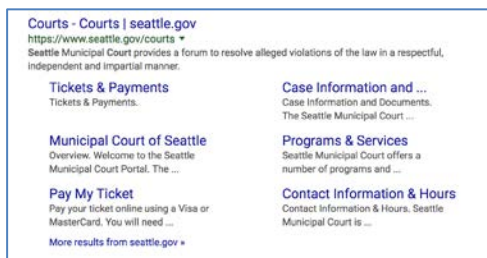
Sitelinks also help users land directly on relevant subpages, bypassing the main landing page. As a result, web content must be developed in a way that does not assume all users will first land on (and read) the Home page. Where counties have common names (e.g., Jefferson, Lincoln, Union, Columbia, etc.), it is particularly important to ensure the state name also appears prominently on subpages.

The quality of your website will influence both search results and sitelinks. An overly "busy" landing page, duplicate content, very little content, and complex navigation all negatively impact user experience, page rank, and the potential for sitelinks.

Knowledge Graph

Depending on the search criteria, search results may include a Knowledge Graph box. Displayed on the right side of the results page, a Knowledge Graph contains a summary of information drawn from a wide variety of resources including Wikipedia, CIA World Factbook, and Google profiles. Google optimizes Knowledge Graph results using meta description, title tag, keywords, and website content to ensure users see relevant information. For example, people searching for court information are not served up results on basketball court resurfacing.

At a minimum, courts should ensure their Google profile and Wikipedia article(s) are accurate and up-to-date. Enhancing profiles and articles with photos, court hours/locations, contact information,

Figure 6 - Knowledge graph

and links to court websites is simple, free, and will help people find court resources more easily. Edits should be made through a role-specific (e.g., countyclerk@yourcourt.state) rather than a person-specific (e.g., sallysmith@yourcourt.state) profile so that personnel changes do not impact the court's ability to refresh information.
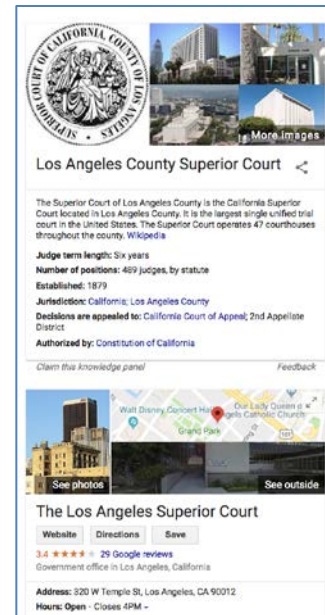
Clean URLs

Better for both users and search engines, meaningful (or "clean") URLs do not include script filenames or other implementation details. They are short, easy to remember, and easy to link to.

> This: http://courtname.gov/name
>
> Not this: http://courtname.gov/content2.aspx?id=2907

Usability

A variety of usability factors influence search engine results, keyword rank, and search engine results page rank:

Page load time	A website or app should load within about 3 seconds. The longer a page takes to load, the higher the percentage of potential users who will give up in frustration and "bounce" off the site. A slow-loading website can decrease conversion rates[9] by nearly 75%.[10] Use PageSpeed Insights to identify and improve slow-loading pages.
Quality of site content	Users form opinions about a website in less than one second.[11] Aesthetics, design, and site copy can engage or annoy users, who will quickly bounce away from sites that are complex, wordy, or overly colorful. A good court website helps visitors quickly and successfully complete the task that brought them to the site. That may mean arranging user options in a different way than the court functions organizationally. For example, if 80% of a site's users are likely to be interested in information on either jury service or resolving a traffic citation, those two options should be featured prominently on an uncluttered main landing page. A poorly-designed website will frustrate users, ultimately fail to deliver the intended information or assistance, and result in a high bounce rate.
Relevance of links	Links to your website from justice partner and agency websites ("inlinks") positively influence page ranking. A court's website should also include relevant links to affiliated websites, partner agencies, and other resources ("outlinks"). Brief explanatory text should accompany links.
Update frequency	Outdated information on a site reduces the likelihood that even current content will be utilized. Updating content improves both user experience and Google page rankings. Old event announcements and links than no longer function ("dead links") signal outdated content and also reduce a site's usefulness, increasing bounce rates. Free utilities like brokenlinkcheck.com or deadlinkchecker.com are safe to use and effective.

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[9] Number of users that take a particular action on the site, e.g., download a form or pay a fine. See Paid Search Ads.

[10] The Impact of Load Time on User Behavior across Devices. *Decibel Insight*, 2016, www.decibelinsight.com.

[11] Careaga, Andrew. "Eye-Tracking Studies: First Impressions Form Quickly on the Web." *News and Events*, Missouri University of Science and Technology, University of Missouri System, 14 Feb. 2012. Accessed 19 July 2018.

Mobile responsiveness	A growing percentage of users access content via smart phones and other handheld devices; one in five American adults are "smart phone only" internet users.[12] In young and low-income populations, and in communities of color, the percentage is much higher. Content must be mobile responsive to serve these audiences particularly. Use Google's easy and free Mobile-Friendly Test[13] to see where your site can improve.

Search Engine Marketing (Paid Search Ads)

Good content and SEO practices may not be sufficient to ensure the court's official website or digital messaging reaches its intended audience. This can be a particular issue if the court is competing against web-savvy for-profit organizations.

In some situations, courts may look to paid advertising. For a price, courts can have text, picture,

Figure 7 - Top search results for divorce information

or video ads show up in paid search results. The top three search engines – Google, Yahoo, and Bing – offer paid search advertising. Since Google is the predominant search engine, Google is a good place to start with paid advertising.
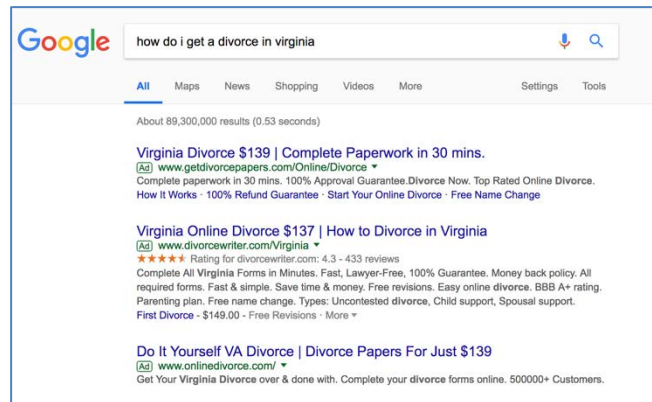
There are several metrics used to describe and price online advertising:

Impressions	Number of times the sponsored link is displayed. When one person sees the ad multiple times on the same device, each view counts as an impression.
Unique impressions	The number of unique individuals who see the ad on a single device, no matter how many times they view the ad. When one person sees the ad on multiple devices, each device counts as an impression.
Unique reach	The number of unique individuals who view the ad, taking into account people viewing the same ad across multiple devices.

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[12] Rainie, L., & Perrin, A. 10 facts about smartphones as the iPhone turns 10. *FacTank News in the Numbers*. Pew Research Center. 28 June 2017. Retrieved June 29, 2018.

[13] See https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly.

Viewable impressions	Number of times the ad appears at least 50% on screen for more than one second. To be viewable, the ad must be placed "above the fold," meaning that the user can see the ad without scrolling down. Pay-per-impressions (typically banner or display advertising) costs are calculated in cost-per-thousand viewable impressions (or vCPM).
Views	Number of times an individual views at least 30 seconds of a video.
Clicks	Number of times a user clicks on a sponsored link, image, or video and goes to the sponsored site. Advertisers pay per click (PPC) when someone clicks on the ad. Cost per click (CPC) is what advertisers ultimately pay to bring one user to the site.
Click through rate	Number of clicks divided by the number of impressions. A good ad will generate a click for approximately 5-10% of impressions.
Conversions	Number of users that take a particular action on the site, e.g., sign up for a newsletter, download a form, etc. Approximately 2% of clicks become conversions.

The cost of a Google ad varies. Advertisers bid on specific keywords or key phrases and customize ad content to respond to those words or phrases. The highest bidder won't always be the first result displayed. Ad position and cost per click vary depending on other bids for that position and the ad's quality score. Factors including the quality of the ad, relevance to the viewer, advertised website's landing page, and projected click through rate are considered in the quality score. Highly competitive keywords, poor quality landing pages, and low-quality ads increase the advertiser's cost.

Court marketing efforts may be "outgunned" by for-profit organizations looking to capitalize on consumer needs for legal information. To help level the field between for-profit and non-profit advertisers, Google provides millions of dollars each year in advertising grants to non-profits. Courts and other government organizations are not eligible to receive a Google Ad grant, but a 501(c)(3) partner organization hosting a court resource may qualify. Grants cover keyword-targeted campaigns (not picture or video ads) and are worth up to $10,000 of "in kind" advertising per month. Until June 2018, non-profits utilizing AdWords Grants were capped at a maximum bid of $2/click.[14] This inherently limited the

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[14] For more information, see https://www.google.com/grants/.

effectiveness of some campaigns where competing for-profit organizations had significantly larger budgets for both keywords and website optimization.

Grant-funded Google Ads must be effective: the minimum click-through rate is 5%. Accounts that don't meet that criteria for two months in a row will be cancelled. Courts may look to advertising agencies that work exclusively with non-profits to arrange, optimize, and manage the complexities of Google Ad grants. These companies can help create more effective ad campaigns, increasing their success and significantly reducing the effort required by court personnel to manage a Google grant.

When courts work with outside advertising agencies, court managers should ensure the court "owns" their paid search accounts and simply grants digital management access to the vendor. Some vendors may try to "own" the account, giving the court less flexibility to change vendors. An ad agency should be retained because it delivers good return on the investment, not because it has captured the court's digital accounts. As with other aspects of the court's digital presence, Google accounts should be managed using a role-specific and not person-specific email address.

Web Analytics

Web analytics show how people get to and use the court's website, helping website owners understand their audience and optimize efforts to reach that audience. User acquisition statistics give insight into who uses the site (geographic location, device, browser, traffic sources) and the effectiveness of both the website and the marketing messages used to promote it. Visitors may come to your site via several sources or channels:

Organic search	Uses standard keyword search to find information and clicks through to your site.
Referral	Clicks on a direct web link from another site, for example, public library, bar association, legal self-help center, domestic abuse shelter, etc. Analytics show which sites refer visitors to your website.
Direct	Enters the site name as the URL via a saved bookmark or by some other means that is not specifically identified. This "catch-all" category is difficult to interpret.
Paid search	Enters a search phrase and then clicks on a Google ad or other paid advertising.
Social media	Comes to the website via some form of social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, etc.).

Accessing your site's analytics data will require IT assistance to deploy tracking scripts on the website and/or gain access to reports. While there are a variety of free and subscription analytics tools available, the free level of Google Analytics is a good place to start.[15]

With information gleaned from web analytics, court managers can refine efforts and better reach target audiences. Analytics can also be a window into user behavior on the site: which pages do people access and for how long, which pages trigger what user actions (for example, downloading forms or information resources), are there pages that users never see?

User Involvement

The user community is key to marketing efforts. Websites or apps developed with user involvement are significantly more likely to meet user needs, which will ultimately improve the outcome of any efforts to promote a website/app. Involving users in the design and development also creates natural "evangelists" or "ambassadors" who then spread the word within their organizations or communities. Marketing strategy should be an additional user consideration very early in the product life cycle - long before a new website, online service, or app launches.

Traditional Marketing

Print, radio, and television advertising have been used effectively for many years and can play a role in promoting a website or app. Without upending traditional processes, courts might simply add a URL to any court messaging. More intentional outreach could include crafting an informational flyer about a new website or app to display and distribute at the courthouse, public library, homeless shelter, or other public location that serves a target population.

Public service announcements on local radio or television can be effective in reaching audiences that are not likely to be online. Ads or feature articles in community organization newsletters can target very specific audiences like domestic abuse victims or senior citizens. A flyer or business card with a URL and brief instructions could be inserted in jury service notification or parking ticket mailings.

Digital printing services are more cost effective, convenient, and timely than their predecessors. Most offer ready-to-use templates to help amateurs produce quality materials. However, courts should usually involve a professional designer if the message will be widely distributed, and when the topic is sensitive or particularly important. There is no substitute for a quality marketing message and clear, well-written

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[15] To use Google Analytics, organizations must first sign up for receive a tracking code, and add that code to web pages that are to be tracked.

copy – whether that copy will be viewed digitally or in hardcopy form. Poorly crafted, unprofessional marketing materials will not be effective and can negatively impact the court's reputation.

Courts can also market digital resources through in-person presentations to target audiences including community agencies and justice partner organizations, or at large public events and gatherings. Trade show trinkets, handout cards, billboards, and transit advertising can be effective when employed strategically, and in combination, at gatherings where the app's target audience is likely to be found.

Summary

More and more court processes are being delivered via the web, and this trend is almost certain to accelerate dramatically in coming years. To glean the greatest value for court investments in public-facing technologies, courts must also embrace the mechanisms for helping the public find and use their websites.

Effective marketing has the broadest potential reach for the lowest relative cost. The public today is more likely to "congregate" online, which means that the court's most effective marketing tools today are digital. Giving attention to the quality of the court's website and search marketing will help the courts improve the administration of justice and better serve their communities.

Appendix A: Case Studies

Some courts are experimenting with digital marketing techniques. These case studies represent a small sample but provide insights that can be leveraged. The JTC expresses appreciation to these organizations for sharing their digital journeys.

ArizonaCourtHelp.org

The Arizona Commission on Access to Justice (ACAJ) was formed in 2014. Its charter was to identify innovative ways of promoting access to justice for individuals who cannot afford legal counsel, choose to represent themselves in civil cases, or live in an area where access to the courthouse is challenging. Geography is a particularly significant factor in Arizona: approximately 60% of Arizona's entire population live in the densely populated Phoenix metro area, with the rest scattered in rural and sometimes remote communities, miles from the nearest courthouse. A task force made up of government agencies, courts, non-profit legal service providers, and education stakeholders was appointed in 2015 to find ways to help.

After studying the issue, the task force recommended the creation of an online self-service help center. In January of 2017, AZCourtHelp.org launched. Hosted by the nonprofit Arizona Bar Foundation, the website provides anytime/anywhere access to legal forms, payment information, and help resources including video tutorials, webinars, and online chat. For users preparing for a court visit, the site provides hours, location, and virtual facility tours for all Arizona courts. Accessibility features address special needs including visual or hearing impairments and language barriers.
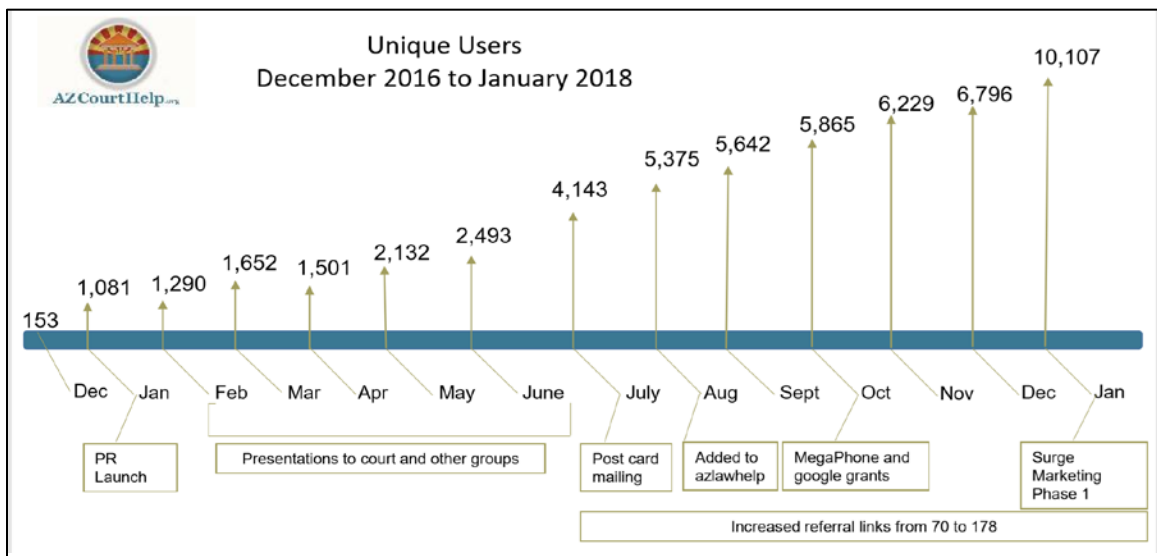

Figure 8 - AZCourtHelp Unique Users Stats and PR Timeline

In the first month, the site assisted more than 1,000 unique visitors. Nine months later, unique users in one month totaled over 5,800. More than 46,000 individuals were assisted in the first year of operation. A combination of traditional and digital marketing concentrated over a four-month period significantly increased the number of new users, which doubled between December 2017 and April 2018.

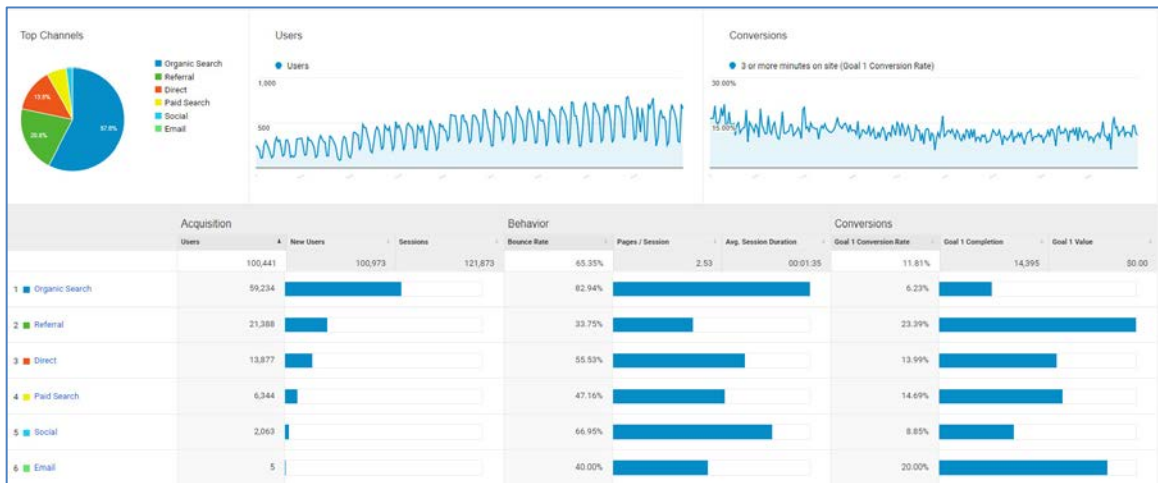Google Analytics demonstrate the source of site referrals.

Figure 9 – User Acquisition Stats

SEO	The largest percent of users each month were acquired through organic search results.
Referral	Some stakeholders have added a direct link to AzCourtHelp.org from their websites.
Direct	Organizations that have public foot traffic or that serve individuals with urgent legal needs including clerks of court, domestic violence shelters, and libraries used traditional marketing tools (postcards, business cards, and posters) which likely increased awareness of the site. Other traditional marketing activities that may have increased direct acquisition include outreach presentations.
Paid Search	General and topic-specific Google ads both increased traffic, but acquisition was far greater when ads focused on specific topics (divorce in March and legal forms in April).

Social	Increases can be linked directly to Facebook ads, which were more effective when topic-specific. "Likes" create ongoing impressions in user Facebook feeds. Facebook ads are reaching a unique audience effectively: social media new user acquisition levels reverted to prior month levels in February when there were no Facebook ads.

The task force experimented with Facebook picture-only and video advertising, and Google AdWords. Along with staff time and mileage for in-person presentations, the cost to the court for the four-month campaign was approximately $4,600 for traditional marketing, including a postcard mailing in both English and Spanish, and business cards that are available at clerk's counters. Google ad grant marketing assistance costs were approximately $1,300, and the court spent another $1,000 on Facebook ads.

Farmers Branch (Texas) Online Case Review

In city of Farmers Branch, traffic tickets, code enforcement violations, and outstanding warrants can now be resolved using Online Case Review. The resource was launched gradually, in a sort of soft launch/beta where the court administrator sent individual text messages inviting a small number of users to the online court. This measured approach allowed the city to work through sample "live" cases as they fine-tuned the new processes required to support ODR.

During the soft launch, court administrator Kevin Barrett produced a short YouTube video to help explain the new website. Farmers Branch has an established Facebook presence through the Farmers Branch City Hall, which they leveraged to share the video. A local news agency got wind of the project and interviewed the court administrator, providing free publicity to a much wider Dallas metro audience.

Since the product's formal launch, court staff now direct callers to the Online Case Review website. Staff and court patrons alike are enthusiastic about the new tool, which is reducing foot traffic into the courthouse. Nearly 1,000 cases have been resolved since January of 2018[16]. More than 70% accessed the website using a mobile device.
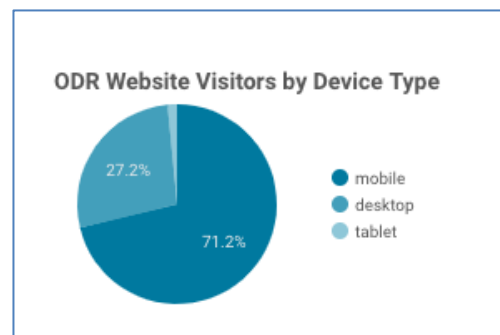

Figure 10 – Website visitors by Device Type

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[16] Cases resolved between January 8, 2018 and August 17, 2018.

The court administrator leverages free and low-cost marketing tools including a Google Business profile to promote the Court's website, ensuring profile information is up-to-date with the website URL, court hours of operation, and other information. With no budget for a promotional video, he utilized readily-accessible tools including a smart phone, iPad, and PC to create one.

When courts implement a customizable off-the-shelf (COTS) product, they may garner improved SEO through the COTS vendor. In the case of Farmers Branch, Texas, their vendor Matterhorn by Court Innovations is not only providing ODR functionality, they are also working behind the scenes to help ensure users find their site. Matterhorn also provides a dashboard summarizing Google Analytics data that would be particularly useful to the court.

Florida Courts Help

The Florida Courts Help app launched in December of 2017 at a meeting of Florida's Commission on Access to Civil Justice. In the days following the launch, news outlets broadcast stories about the app and included a link to the app on their websites. Newspapers around the state carried stories.

A coordinated campaign by PIO Paul Flemming at the Office of State Court Administrator (OSCA) simultaneously pushed out information through the court's official social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. As part of that campaign, he sent a launch "kit" with an introductory presentation, suggested promotional language, and ready-to-use images and videos to legal aid organizations, the Florida Bar and Florida Bar Foundation, and all trial courts and court clerks around the state.

The Florida Bar, with over 100,000 members and a significant social media presence, is a valuable supporter. Not surprisingly, the Bar's extensive presence and willingness to partner with organic as well as sponsored social media messages has been key. The Bar also helped develop and produce printed materials and promotional items to aid presentations to regional and statewide partners including the Florida Library Association. Printed materials are available in courthouses and partner agency facilities around the state.

The Council of Business Partners within the Access Commission and the Young Lawyers Division of the Florida Bar are both engaged in helping improve, update, and market Florida Courts Help through formalized feedback, marketing assistance, and content development. OSCA envisions this as both important to the app's content, as well as an important mechanism for ongoing social media promotion.

Court clerks are independent constitutional officers in Florida. Their voluntary help and cooperation grew out of a direct appeal from the executive director of the state's association of court clerks and comptrollers. Some court clerks are embracing and promoting the app. With the help of Google Analytics, the PIO tracks referrals: top referrers include court clerks in Pinellas, Hillsborough, Charlotte, and Brevard Counties.

OSCA staff members have incorporated social media icons and a "Get the app" graphic into their email signatures. The PIO continues ongoing outreach to state agencies, advocacy groups, and entities that might be an ally or find the content useful.

Since the launch more than five months ago, the app has been downloaded and installed nearly 3,300 times; more than 17,700 unique users have accessed the site. Usage is ramping up: in a recent week, more than 1,000 unique visitors accessed self-help resources through the app. The app was the topic of a session at the 2018 annual conference of the National Association for Court Management, where it was also named one of the top Court Technology Solutions for the year. Images and details of the award were then featured on the Florida Courts Facebook and Twitter feeds.

As with most courts, budget limitations leave little funding for advertising or promoting new court resources. OSCA promoted the app within existing OSCA and Access Commission budgets, relying heavily on free social media and traditional media coverage. Cost to develop the app was less than $4,500, and the total cost for marketing materials, including display equipment, was approximately $4,000.

Appendix B: Taking Action

Ready to do something about search marketing in your court? Use the following possible actions as a checklist to inform discussion.

Suggested Court Actions	Action Level
☐ Discuss how you want the public to find and experience your court online.	Basic
☐ Google your court using terms the public is likely to use ("fight my parking ticket" not "General District Court [your location]"). Evaluate search results.	Basic
☐ Ensure the court's Google profile is accurate, up-to-date, and associated with a role-specific (not personal) email address. Include photos.	Basic
☐ Ensure the court's Wikipedia article(s) are accurate, up-to-date, and associated with a role-specific (not personal) email account. Include photos.	Basic
☐ Check your site for broken links (brokenlinkcheck.com or deadlinkchecker.com).	Basic
☐ Find out if your site is mobile friendly (Mobile-Friendly Test).	Basic
☐ Note keyword placement on page content and in URLs: important key words should be in the upper left of the page and at the beginning of the title tag.	Basic
☐ Ensure images on your site have descriptive Alt text.	Basic
☐ Review URLs. Work with IT to ensure they do not include scripts, filenames, or other implementation details.	Intermediate
☐ Review search results to evaluate title tag and meta description attributes.	Intermediate
☐ Review sitelinks (if any).	Intermediate
☐ Review the content of your court's Knowledge Graph; address deficiencies.	Intermediate
☐ Establish a user group (community, facilitated by court personnel) to evaluate web content/usability and identify domain and location keywords and phrases.	Intermediate
☐ Compare the public's use of potential search terms (Google Trends).	Intermediate
☐ Evaluate and improve page load times (PageSpeed Insights).	Intermediate
☐ Review Inlinks and Outlinks to your websites; identify possible improvements.	Intermediate
☐ Engage a UX expert to help enhance the quality of site content and navigation.	Advanced
☐ Examine web analytics (using internal or external IT assistance) to better understand how people get to and use the court's website.	Advanced
☐ Investigate the costs and benefits of purchasing print and/or digital ads.	Advanced
☐ Investigate grant funding and/or partner relationships to support advertising.	Advanced