

# *Google Analytics Benchmarking Data*

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# Conscious Solutions

*Conscious Solutions is the UK's largest digital marketing agency working with law firms on website design and build, digital marketing support, CRM and intranet solutions. Founded in 2003, Conscious provides services to over 200 law firms around the UK, ranging in size from sole practitioners to top 100 firms.*

*Our motto is it's not just about having a good looking website; it's about what you do with it once you've got it. It's for this reason that we work with law firms to improve their online marketing strategy, whether it's designing a new website, getting a mobile optimized site live, or improving search engine rankings.*

## Introduction

*As part of our ongoing digital marketing support for clients, our Account Management team offers a comprehensive overview of each client's Google Analytics data.*

*To be confident that our clients' websites continue to perform competitively, since 2010 we have conducted research into Google Analytics data, determining averages based on different key metrics and differentiating by the partner count of the firm.*

*The following results are based on 174 law firms' website statistics across the UK.*

## Method

*The following data has been compiled from Google Analytics data of our own clients and non-clients based on six key metrics:*

- Average visits
- Average Page Views
- Average Pages per Visit
- Average Bounce Rate (%)
- Average Time on Site
- Average New Visits

*The data ranged from law firms of all sizes across the UK; from Sole Practitioners to top 200 law firms.*

*The data was compiled based on a snapshot taken between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2013 which we've split into different averages based on the size of the law firm:*

- 1-5 Partner Firms
- 6-10
- 11-19 Partner Firms
- 20+ Partner Firms



# Results

The table below shows a summary of the six key Google Analytics metrics for all 204 firms.

Breakdown by Partner Size					
	1-5 Partners	6-10 Partners	11-19 Partners	20+ Partners	All firms
Av. Visits	1,058	2,175	2,864	13,546	2,570
Av. Page Views	2,875	6,848	9,170	37,324	7,377
Av. Pages per Visit	3	3	3	3	3
Av. Bounce Rate (%)	48%	47%	45%	46%	47%
Av. Time on Site (mm:ss)	00:01:44	00:01:54	00:01:58	00:02:12	00:01:50
Av. New Visits (%)	72%	69%	67%	66%	71%

## Key Findings

- According to our research, there was a correlation between law firms with more partners and a higher average number of site visits. As the **partners increased the average number of visits increased too**. Law firms between 1-5 partners in size experienced an average of 1,058 visits, this figure shot up for 20+ partner firms who received 11,586 visits.
- The average number of pages viewed per visit was consistent for law firms of all sizes, it appears that with law firm websites, 3 really is the magic number.
- Last year the data revealed that bounce rates\* decreased as the number of partners increased, however this year as in 2010 & 2011 **bounce rates appeared consistent throughout all law firms**.
- There was a slight correlation between the **average time spent on site with the partner size of the firm; however the sites which had the highest time on site averages appears to have the best content**. For sites that were visually striking with contemporary functionality and loaded with content, we saw visits lasting for up to 04:25; 141% times higher than the overall law firm average of 01:50. Firms with websites that are less visually engaging and lacking in content had average time on site figures of less than 1 minute.
- **Consistent with previous years; larger law firms have a lower percentage of new visitors each month**. Larger law firms are more likely to have people revisiting valuable content on their site, plus they may be investing more in SEO, PPC and email marketing to point visitors back to their website. Whereas 72% of 1-5 partner firms visitors were new, 20+ partner firms had only 66% of which were new visitors.



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*\*visitors to the site who looked at one page then 'bounced' away from the site somewhere else*

## Comparisons

Having conducted our Google Analytics Benchmarking survey for law firms since 2010 we have amassed a significant amount of data which can help us draw some inferences on the performances of law firm websites over time.

This section of the report will analyse the dataset to explore the trends over the last four years in the following metrics: Total page views, number of visitors , bounce rates and average time on site.

The analytical minds of Conscious will attempt to draw inferences on the reasons behind the trends with recommendations made to help your law firm website perform to its maximum capacity.

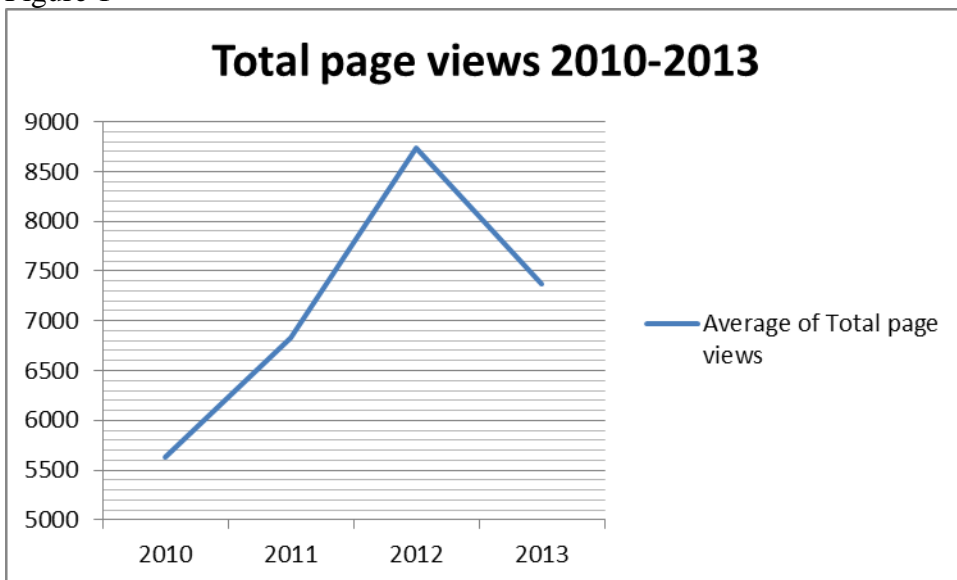
## Total page views: 2010-2013

So how have the total number of page views of law firm websites changed over the last four years?

Since we began collecting data in 2010 total page views of law firm's websites have increased from an average of 5631 per month to 7377 in 2013 – an increase of 31%.

This figure does not tell the whole story. Figure 1 plots the total page view figures from 2010-2013. As you can see from the graph, total page views increased significantly from the period of 2010-2012 – at a rate of 55%; however total page views for law firms actually decreased from 8739 in 2012 to 7377 in 2013 – a decrease of 16%. So what might explain this drop in page views?

Figure 1



## Better Navigation

Law firm websites are becoming easier to navigate and more user-friendly. Visitors are able to find the content that they are looking for because of an increased focus on functional website design.

## Increased investment in PPC

Law firms are investing more money in pay per click (PPC) advertising. Typically PPC campaigns are designed to drive targeted search engine traffic to specially designed landing pages. These landing pages normally contain very strong call-to-actions that inspire the visitor to take a specific action such as filling out a contact form, Email us, call today etc. Visitors that are directed to specific landing pages may have fulfilled the action which they required and thus the need to navigate to different pages of a website is reduced.

## Increased investment in SEO

Law firms are investing more money in Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), in order to achieve a higher position in the search engine results page (SERPS). By optimising individual pages of their websites to perform highly on targeted keywords; law firm websites may also be serving more relevant results to visitors.

Here's a fictitious example to illustrate this point:

- Daniel is looking to buy a home; he types 'conveyancing Solicitor Basingstoke' into the search engine.
- The SERPS shows a page for a solicitor's conveyancing service page.
- Daniel clicks on the page. The page contains all the information Daniel needs to get in contact with the firm and begin a dialogue.
- Daniel might navigate to other pages of the site to get a 'feel' for the firm, but then again he might not. He has the details he needs and is in a position to pick up the phone or send an email to the right person in the firm, all that having visited just one page of the site.

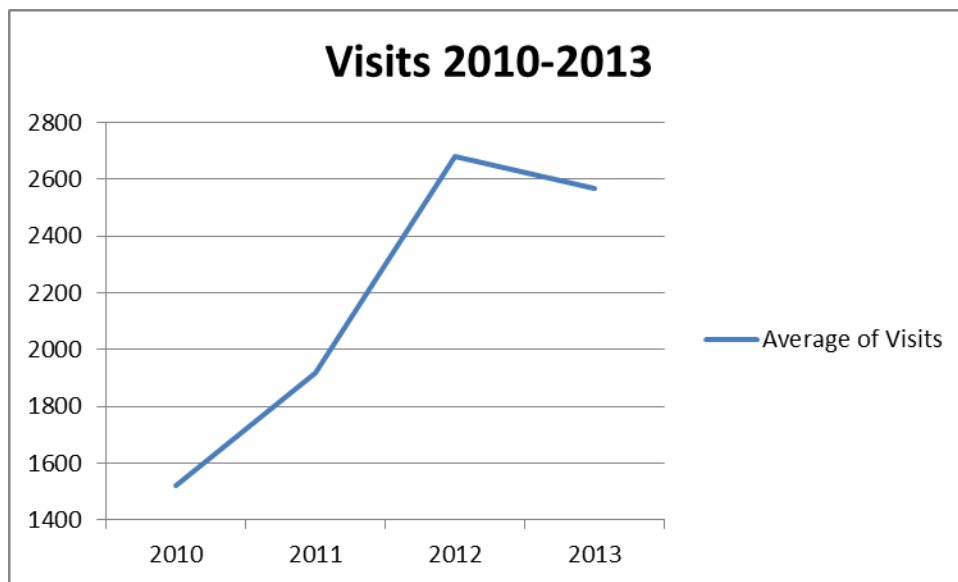
This is of course just an example, but it does illustrate the point that optimising certain pages to rank highly on the SERPS can have the effect of reducing page visits. Had Daniel been directed to the homepage of the law firm he would have certainly had to navigate to more than one page to find what he was looking for.

## Visitor numbers up...kind of

The number of visits to a website is often the first metric that clients are interested to hear about when our Account managers consult with clients on their websites performance. Visits are certainly a very important performance metric to keep track of because ultimately the more visits to a site means the more exposure for your law firm.

Law firm websites have enjoyed an average increase in website visits of 69% since 2010, there is no hiding from it, your firm's website and online presence is more important than ever. Online is a channel to reach your potential clients that cannot be ignored.

Figure 2



### Website visits down: a dip in the road or a reality check?

The real headline news from this year's survey is a 4% decrease in the average number of visits to law firm websites since 2012. Given the significant growth in website visits over the years we have conducted this benchmarking survey; the decrease in website visits of 4% from 2012 is certainly an anomaly we did next expect to see. Average website visits for the month of September fell from 2679 in 2012 to 2570 for the same period in 2013, so what could have caused with drop?

#### A lack of robustness in our data

One theory that could help to explain the drop in visitor numbers in 2013 is for us to question some of the robustness of our own data set.

Throughout the four years that we have conducted this report we have never set a tolerance for the percentage of each size law firm that we include in our report. Subsequently the average number of visits data may have been skewed in favour of larger firms.

Given that 1-5 partner firms account for around 85% of all legal practices in the UK, and 20+ law firms account for around 4% of all legal practices in the UK\* our Law firm benchmarking statistics may have over represented the statistics of larger firms, given that larger firms generally speaking attract more visitors, it is possible that average visitor numbers to law firm websites have been overestimated in our surveys.





In this year's report 1-5 partner firms represented 59% of the total data set and 20+ partner firms accounted for 9% of the data. When compared with last year's figures more of the smaller firms were represented and a smaller number of the largest 20+ partner firms appeared in the data set.

The huge spike in visitor numbers from 2011-2012 (an increase of 40%) also coincided with a significant increase in the number of 20+ partner firms included in the survey. However well designed and rigorous we believe our data collection to be, it is susceptible to a certain level of bias. Client data makes up the largest proportion of our data; this is because we have access to the data readily, as the number of larger clients we serve increases so too does the bias in our data.

\*Source: Admitted staff in private practice firms in 2010 by size of firm, Trends in the Solicitors Profession, Annual Statistical report 2010 The Law Society

## The impact of Alternative Business Structures

An alternative factor that might explain the slight drop in the average visits to law firm websites is the influence of external factors.

We're confident that the number of consumers using online channels to research, engage with and purchase legal services has not decreased; in fact we and many others believe that this number continues to grow.

One possible reason is the growing impact of ABS firms like Cooperative legal. These firms have deep pockets and are willing to aggressively market their services through online and offline channels. A very likely possibility is that the high growth in website visits enjoyed by legal firms recently is beginning to taper off. Firms like Co-op legal (who are not represented in this survey) have invested heavily in increasing their brand awareness, social media activity and all activities designed to drive traffic to their sites.

To put it bluntly the size of the internet pie is getting bigger, but some of the newer guests to the dinner table are taking an increasingly large share. Of course without the actual figures it's hard for us to make this assumption with 100% confidence, but it is increasingly becoming a factor that is hard to ignore.

## Bounce rates continue to increase

Bounce rates are probably the one metric which confuse clients the most when analysing their website statistics, so here is a definition of bounce rates straight from the horse's mouth (In case you hadn't guessed the horse in this instance is Google):

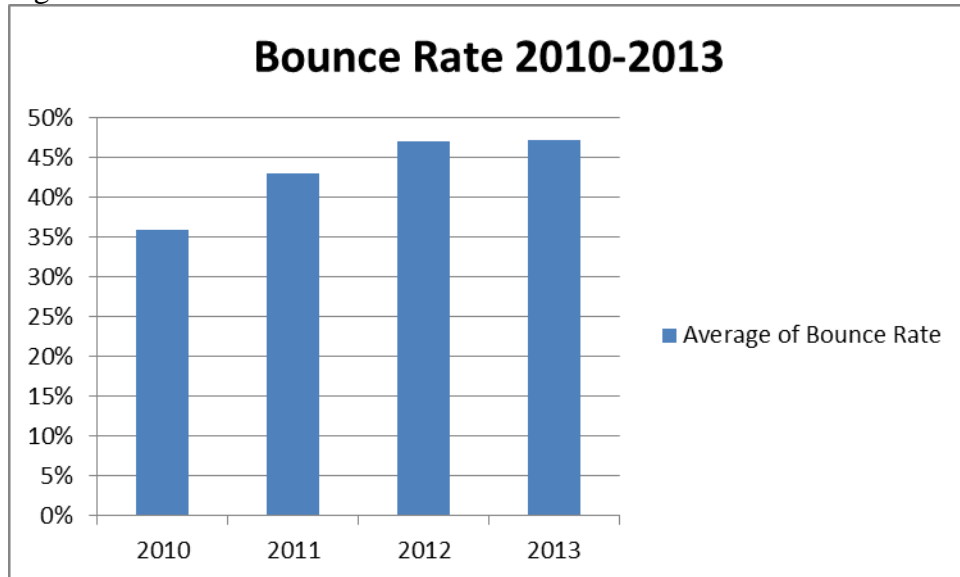
"Bounce rate is the percentage of visits in which users view only a single page of your site."

Despite an increase in the focus of website design to increase usability and functionality of websites the figures from our benchmarking surveys show a general increase in the bounce rate of law firm's websites.

Since 2010 bounce rates have gone from 36% to 47%, so which factors could help to explain this increase?



Figure 3



### Increase in ‘Good bounces’

Believe it or not, not all bounces are bad! Some bounces can be attributed to user behaviours; once understood these behaviours can be interpreted as ‘good bounces’.

Let’s work through a common visitor behaviour which leads to a bounce: a visitor finds his/her way to a page on your site, after viewing a single page they find exactly the information they need from that one page, the visitor has no interest in visiting other pages and consequently leaves the website – resulting in a bounce.

How you interpret this information depends largely on the context of the page visited. If like many law firms today you have attracted the visitor to a targeted landing page through a PPC advert then it is more than likely you would deem the bounce to be a good bounce; the user completed the action which you had designed the page and advert for –mission accomplished.

Other user behaviours can actually be a sign that a law firm’s website is producing content that is valued by its visitors. If a user bookmarks a page on your site, visits it and leaves, then that is considered as a bounce.

### The mobile bounce

Have you ever visited a website on your mobile phone only to be confronted by an inexplicably poorly designed site? Few things in life are a source of more frustration!

The percentage of visits to law firms websites from mobile and tablet devices is growing; more than ever visitors are demanding a mobile friendly browsing experience, websites that are poorly optimised are soon dismissed by mobile and tablet visitors; this is probably one of the factors driving increasing bounce rates.

### The “SEO bounce”

Another factor which could be a contributing factor to increasing bounce rates in law firm websites is an increase in the amount of focus paid to SEO by law firms. There is an array of tools and knowledge available on the internet which can help us better understand SEO and





search engine marketing. One possibility is that with enhanced knowledge of SEO practices, Law firm marketers are better able to manipulate search engines by optimising pages with keywords which do not necessarily truly reflect the pages content. It is not a practice we condone, this type of behaviour is penalised by search engines and if visitors are not matched with results which really reflect their search than high bounce rates are likely.

## Social media

One of the most powerful aspects of social media is the ability to share and generate content to a large and growing audience. Law firms are beginning to leverage the power of social media and many firms are producing great content which they are sharing with their social networks.

So what is the connection between social media and higher bounce rates? Let's examine this briefly.

When a law firm posts a blog or valuable piece of content through its various social media channels; this content will inevitably attract the interests of those not actively seeking a firm's legal service. Once the visitor has clicked the link from your Facebook post, tweet etc. they consume your content and leave – a bounce.

Perhaps then there is a correlation between the uptake in social media by law firms and an increase in bounce rate in law firm's sites? It would be stretching the truth to say that any relationship between the two variables is based on facts; in fact it would be an outright lie, but a cursory glance at the data shows a number of law firms we know to have a strong social media presence which also display high bounce rates...food for thought.

## Average time on site

How long a visitor stays on your website has long been considered a key indication of how successful that a site is in attracting relevant visitors, the logic here is the longer someone spends on the site the more interested they are in what you have to offer. Average time on site is also considered an important metric in measuring engagement of visitors.

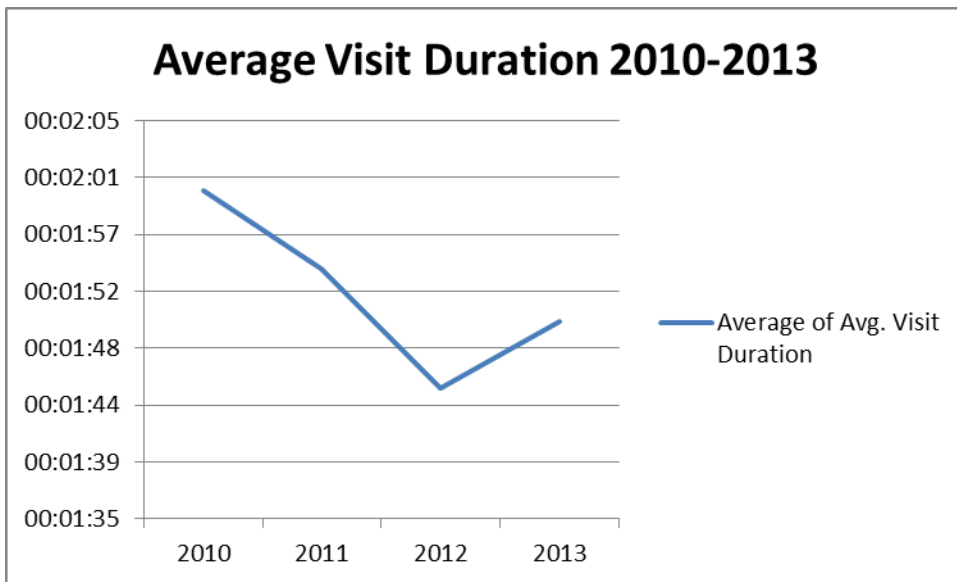
So Just how long does the average visitor spend on a law firms website? Well according to our data 1 minute and 50 seconds. Figure 4 tells a story about the average duration of visits but that picture goes against our conventional wisdom – average visit duration has decreased -8.3% since 2010.

Law firms are investing more resources than ever in their websites and online presence. The level and quality of content being produced by law firms is better than ever and yet it appears that visitors are actually spending even less time browsing your well-crafted website and reading your insightful blogs.

So are all these efforts going to waste? Well we don't think so. We have come up with a couple of reasons why you shouldn't always take the data provided by Google Analytics at face value.



Figure 4



### Time on site is badly measured

Google Analytic is an excellent tool for measuring website performance; however the way in which the time on site metric is measured is flawed. Google measures the time you spend on a site by the time between the interactions you make on that site. Every time you visit a new page or trigger an event, Google time-stamps that action. Time on site is simply the difference between your first time-stamped action (i.e. when you first arrive) and your final time-stamped action.

So The problem is that Google has no way of telling when you leave a site so measuring the difference between your first and final interaction with a site is always going to be an underestimation of what the real time on site is.

### Bounce rates skew your averages!

Currently Google is unable to measure the time spent on a site for bounced visits because Google doesn't timestamp when you leave a site. This means that all visitors that visit just one page of your site and leave are recorded as having a visit duration of zero seconds!

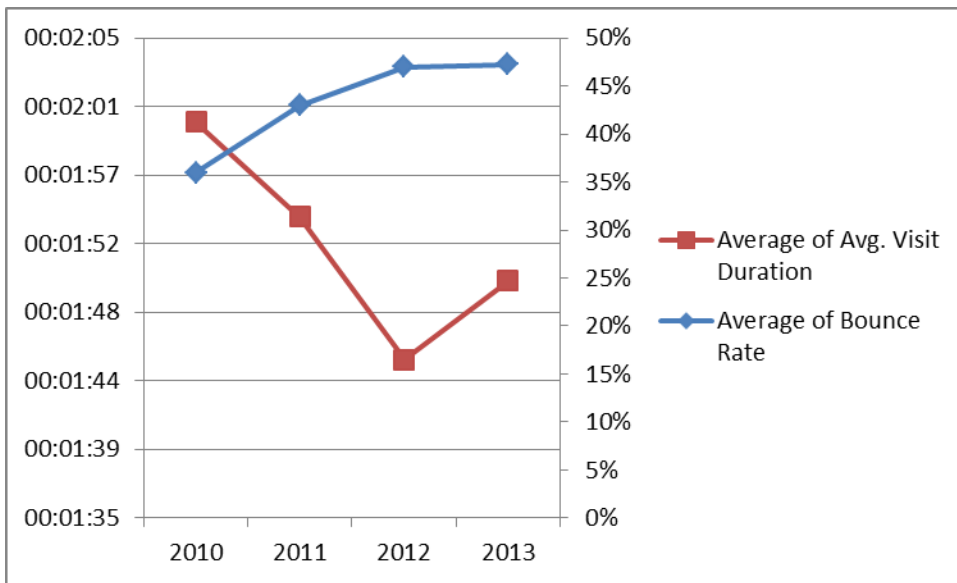
If you have a bounce rate of 50% for example, then according to Google, 50% of people spend zero time on your site. Google then calculates the average time on site including all these bounced visits – skewing your average.

Armed with the knowledge that bounce rates negatively skew average time on site figures we begin to see cause for lower average time on site figures - Since 2010 bounce rates risen from 36% to 47% in the same time average time on site has decreased by -8.3%. Figure 5 shows a negative correlation between bounce rates and average visit duration.

There are many factors which might come in to play to explain the reduction in time on site and we are unable to say with 100% confidence whether a causal relationship exists between increasing bounce rates and decreasing time on site, but there is certainly a strong case in the data.



Figure 5



## Recommendations

### Increase visits to your site

- *Invest in SEO to increase organic traffic to your website.*
- *Invest in PPC to drive traffic to your site by targeting keywords that are less competitive. Going toe to toe with giants like Slater & Gordon and Co-operative legal on competitive keywords will run up a large bill. Instead target geography based keywords and longer tail search terms; it's all about smart bidding!*

### Limit the number of 'Bad bounces'

- *We're now seeing 25% of traffic to websites from mobile devices, consider a mobile optimised site to capture these visitors and reduce the number of mobile visitors that bounce.*
- *Optimise pages so that they correlate better with the search terms that bring users to your site.*
- *Change PPC ads or keywords to better reflect page content.*

### Work to increase average time on site

- *Ramp up your social media activity to point more users to valuable content on your site.*
- *Remember some of the pages which visitors spend the longest viewing do not appear in analytics! Set up Google Analytics to measure scroll depth to get a better idea how engaging your content is.*
- *Alongside engaging content, consider the use of video to increase the average time on websites.*



## Other Resources

- [\*38 Common Mistakes Law Firms Still make with their Website \(and how to avoid them\)\*](#)
- [\*34 Mistakes Law Firms make Managing their PPC Campaigns\*](#)
- [\*50 Secrets for Law Firms to Make More Fees via LinkedIn\*](#)
- [\*31 Tips to Help Law Firms Avoid a Truly Awful Mobile Site\*](#)
- [\*51 Killer Tactics for an Effective Social Media Strategy for Law Firms\*](#)

