

How to Maintain Google Rankings When Changing Your Firm Name

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Whether a law firm gains a new partner or feels the need to rebrand themselves, many practices from time to time choose to change their name and/or the domain of their website. While updating your website, marketing materials, and even the sign on your building can often be top of mind, some details for digital marketing can sometimes be missed or not considered.

A New Web Address

One of the important elements involved in this process that can often be overlooked is the SEO value that is associated with the first domain and the subsequent loss in ranking due to this change on Google and Bing! If addressed correctly your web pages should keep their standing in the search engine results and quite possibly even see a boost since search engines approve of updated content.

When done incorrectly, many legal websites see a drop off in traffic to their website due to their decrease in ranking and can often find themselves one or two pages further back in the results. The reason for this, without getting too technical, are backlinks. Over time, other websites have linked to your website and built authority around the original domain. This authority builds up in a similar way to a credit score. Google takes into account this and many other factors when determining how well you will perform in the results.

In changing out an old domain for a new one that is esthetically better suited to your firm, it thereby leaves behind the high "credit score" of the previous web address and thereby loses the authority and trust that has been built up around that old domain.

Keep the Old Domain

Since the old domain is usually discarded as unnecessary and allowed to expire, many people do not realize that the minor cost of keeping the old URL active and putting it to work can have tremendous amount of search engine optimization value. By redirecting the old domain to the new domain, in what is technically referred to as a 301 redirect, you pass the link equity on to the new domain. When Google crawls those referring websites again, it will see that the links are still established and your SEO value will be retained.

Changing the Name of Your Firm

Local SEO depends heavily upon the name of your firm. When people search for a lawyer, often times they are looking for a local attorney. Search engine algorithms take this into account and factor in maps and local listings. These local listings reaffirm the name, address, and phone number. By doing so, they have greater confidence in the contact information.

Often times when a firm rebrands or relocates, over the course of years, an established law practice can sometimes have multiple versions of names, addresses, and phone numbers littered throughout the internet. Since Google reads everything on the internet, it categorizes this information and factors this into its local SEO



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rankings.

Retaining Local SEO Value

When a law practice changes its name, a concerted effort should be made to update the name, not only on your online profiles like Twitter and Google My Business, but of the dozens or even hundreds of online directories and citation websites. Many of these sites are rarely heard of or read by the public, but Bing! and Google see them. EZLocal, Citysearch, and MerchantCircle are just a few out of the hundreds of online repositories of profiles that include names, numbers, addresses, and descriptions of websites.

When Google crawls these sites, it will compare the updated information to the Google My Business profile and retain the local rankings within its algorithm and web mapping service.

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