



Legal Marketing Trends

2023 Legal Marketing Association (LMA)
Annual Conference Special Edition

The Trends.

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Introduction

Each year, we at fSquared Marketing compose a report on the Top Trends in Legal Marketing which is shared with the legal industry.

This year has been such a strange one coming off COVID, office returns (or not!), and a recession looming (or not!), that we wanted to curate a special edition.

This year's report was compiled during the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) annual conference. Some of the best thought leaders in our industry were kind enough to share their insights with us here.



For me the
trend is
authenticity.

ROY SEXTON | DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, CLARK HILL | PRESIDENT, LEGAL MARKETING ASSOCIATION

Authenticity to Achieve Brand Differentiation

For me the trend is authenticity. That was key to our “*Amplify*” theme for the Legal Marketing Association Annual Conference 2023 (#LMA23), and, without authenticity, you never achieve brand differentiation — for your firms, for your companies, for yourselves. In an industry that can tend toward the insular — rushing to be “first to be second” — truly successful organizations will embrace what sets them apart, not what makes them safely similar. I’ve been in legal over a decade, and I’ve observed that attorneys can be preoccupied with who they *aren’t* reaching (or worse, fear they are alienating) versus focusing on who they *are* attracting and *retaining*.

The only way I know how to build community — and client loyalty — is by looking critically at who you *really* are and what you do *really* well and, well, amplifying that. And in the process, amplifying the importance of others — namely clients — in your success.



Roy Sexton

Director of Marketing,
Clark Hill | President, Legal
Marketing Association

PR + AI = Will it Be a Happy Marriage?

The use of AI has become an important topic of debate among public relations in every industry, not just legal. At the end of April, the Public Relations Counsel released its guidelines on the use of generative AI by agencies and PR professionals, which only intensified the conversation. AI will be a useful tool in many areas, but after reading the guidelines, there are some perils and potential pitfalls.

Our industry loves exploring shiny new tools, and likes to rush to the party. But one critical area to keep in mind is being honest with clients and consumers when AI is being used to create a plan or work product. I am sure there will be some bad actors in our industry who will ignore these guidelines, but if the legal PR industry can collectively promise to be ethical and transparent about the use of AI for our work, we will continue to build a more ethical industry and establish trust with our clients.



Cheryl Bame

Principal, Bame Public
Relations

Readying Structure and Functions in Case of Recession

Due to the looming recession and the concerns over the value of each law firm department, I've seen more firms get involved in looking at the structure and functions of their marketing and business development departments.

They are aiming to ensure that they have the right roles and operations in place to serve the needs of the firm overall, and to serve the partners' incoming needs as they arise. In addition, they are questioning the processes by which work is getting done, in order to be better able to apply improved technology.



Deborah Farone

Founder,
Farone Advisors LLC

Using Video as a Content Strategy

Many trends are circulating in legal marketing this year. I was lucky to attend several sessions focused on some of these trends — from storytelling in our marketing efforts to how marketers can be part of the environmental, social, governance (ESG) movement that clients crave, and more. However, the significant trend I'm most focused on is the prevalence and use of video as a content strategy.

Short-form video, in particular, is a great way to develop compelling, entertaining, and exciting content that delivers new business, attracts top talent, and compellingly showcases law firms' reputation, authority, and credibility. Short-form video is particularly well-suited for lawyers looking to highlight their personality alongside their credentials. With short-form video content, prospective clients get a preview of what it might be like to work with a particular lawyer or practice group, before signing on the dotted line — which I see as a huge advantage and differentiator in the legal marketplace.



Jessica Aries

Digital Marketing
Strategist + Consultant,
By Aries



“Our industry
loves exploring
shiny new tools.”

CHERYL BAME | PRINCIPAL, BAME PUBLIC RELATIONS



We're seeing
marketing leaders
taking a step back to
look at their brand
with a critical eye.

LYNN FOLEY | CEO, FSQUARED MARKETING

That Personal Connection

Something I heard time and again at this year's LMA annual conference was the importance of that personal connection between attorneys and their clients/potential clients. Those seeking business relationships have a myriad of options around them – a handful of good if not great, attorneys and law firms to work with.

So, how do our attorneys stand out among the crowds? By connecting on a human-to-human level with our potential clients. Whether it's bumping up the "Outside of the office, I like to..." portion of a LinkedIn profile, or joining local boards or groups focused on their interests, there are several ways for our attorneys to connect with those who have like-minded lifestyles and passions.

This may be a longer play when it comes to business development, but when our potential clients can get to know, like, and trust our attorneys outside of the law, that can be the gamechanger when they do need to seek legal help.



Meghan Spradling

Marketing &
Communications Manager,
Miller Nash LLP

AI Taking Care of the First Draft

A current trend I'm seeing is using AI for client value and client service. I'm seeing lawyers leverage AI to help them get their work started, to do first drafts. Of course, you can never just fully count on it, so you need to double-check the work. But, by providing you a first draft, you're able to get your work done more efficiently, and quicker, which is a value you are able to offer your clients.



Helena Lawrence

Senior Manager, Client
Relationship Management,
Allen & Overy

Relationship Development Activity on the Rise

One trend that I'm seeing coming out of COVID that I'm sure a lot of people are seeing is that there's a huge increase in activity. And although I think a lot of the webinars, a lot of the digital aspects have taken off, this is really that first full year where people are kind of getting back to those in-person activities. And that is driving a lot of activity in our team as well. Of course, the fact that we are facing an economic downturn, we're seeing that there's a little bit of a slowdown in the markets. Although we're seeing that in Asia it's picking up, but in Canada at least there's a little bit of a slowdown in deal flow. Our partners are much more engaged, and engaging us in business development activities.

They're trying to rebuild their connections and there's all of the work that comes with that, right? Data analytics and AI: Using those tools to really dig into where our relationships are. Where do we start from? Data has become a really big factor that everybody is really going into, but even more so as they try to reinvigorate some of those relationships and engage with markets that are outside the pre-existing relationships. So our team has been very busy. I think it's been one of the busiest starts of the year in a very long time.



Hans Chang

Director, Business Development,
McMillan

Make the First Impression the Best Impression

With the ever-looming fear of recession and continued market instability, we're seeing marketing leaders taking a step back to look at their brand with a critical eye. They're looking at where their firm brand sits in the market, reflecting on whether it authentically represents them now, and how it positions them for the future.

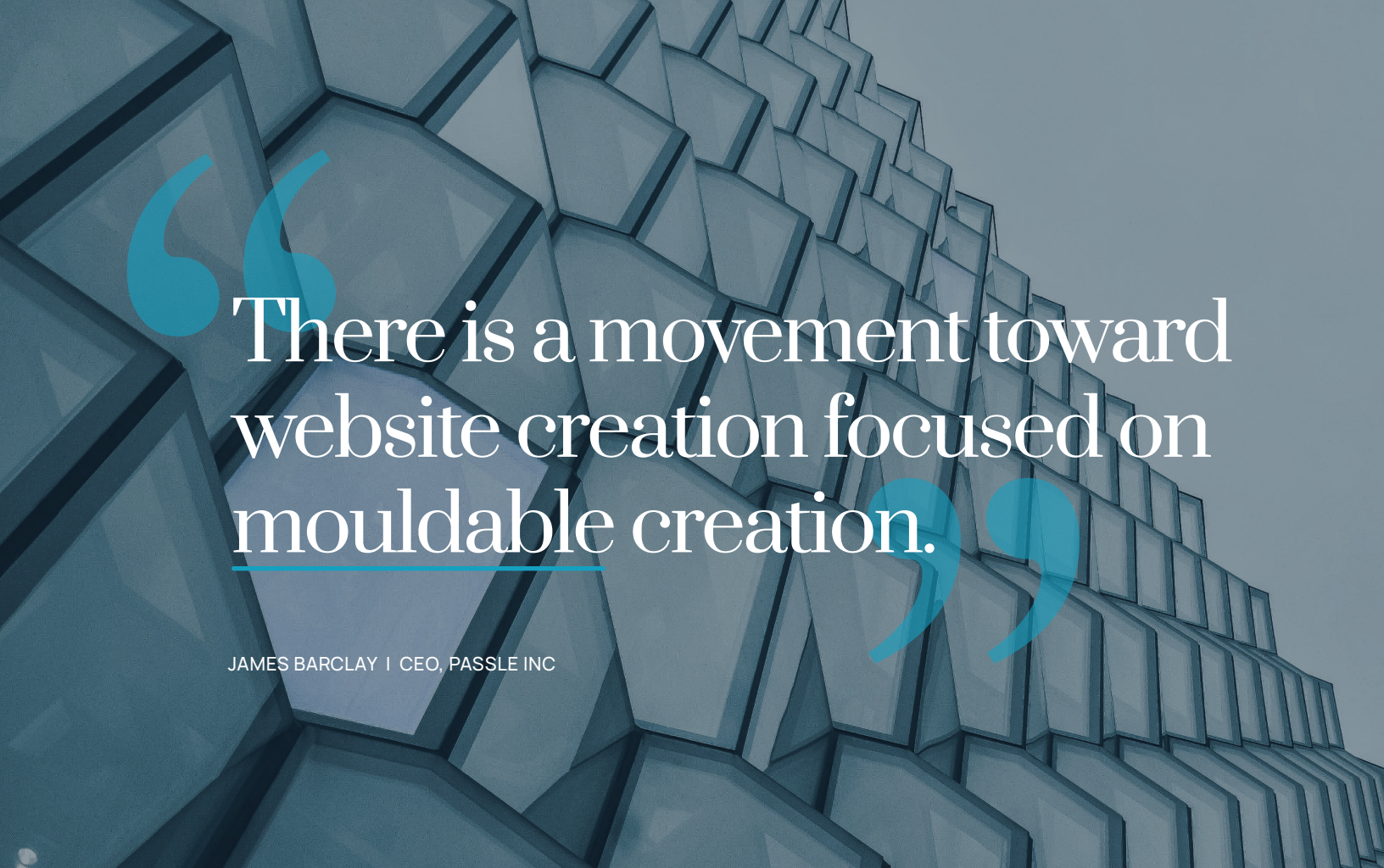
Some are realizing that their brands are not setting them up for success, and are looking to make changes now: So that when the hard times hit, their firms are best positioned to be seen as the right choice for the limited — and highly competitive — work that will be available.

So we're seeing rebrands and website redesigns that have a strong basis in strategic market positioning, and website redesigns that have the client at the forefront of the user experience.



Lynn Foley

CEO, fSquared Marketing



“There is a movement toward website creation focused on mouldable creation.”

JAMES BARCLAY | CEO, PASSLE INC

Composable Architecture is Future-Proofing Website Creation

To 'future-proof' website builds, law firms are moving away from a model of 'burn and build' where they literally replace their entire web presence every five to seven years. Instead, they are turning to providers of more flexible website solutions — called composable architecture. There is a movement toward website creation focused on mouldable creation — agile, composable websites.

By collecting specialized solutions from different vendors — often Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) providers — firms can create an ecosystem of platforms that will work together to fulfill all a firm's digital needs. As the composable architecture doesn't integrate systems directly with one another, it's easier to change platforms, replace providers and add new features. This makes a law firm's digital solution lower risk, more agile and maneuverable, and future-proofed.



James Barclay
CEO, Passle Inc

