



How could a blog boost your profile and win you work?



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Why blog?

Content marketing isn't just another fad. It is a proven way for law firms, accountancy practices and patent and trade mark attorneys to generate traffic, interest, enquiries and work.

And we're not talking about long in-depth articles here. We're talking about producing a steady flow of short, sharp blogs that tackle the particular issues you know your clients face.

We're talking about making sure the search engines know your specialisms so they can direct the people searching for your advice straight to your inbox.

However, having worked alongside the professional services since 2005, we know there are a number of factors that can thwart even the best intentioned lawyer, accountant, barrister or IP attorney from producing that all important steady flow of new content so in this special report we look at the practicalities of blogging including:

- Why you need to have a blog
- How long your posts should be
- How to find new ideas
- How to make sure the search engines are picking your blogs up
- How to use your blogs to fuel all the other marketing channels you're using (with very little additional effort!)
- What to do if you don't feel your blog is working as hard for you as you want it to

And of course if you have any questions or would like to read more about blogging (or any other aspect of marketing and business development) you can email us at info@tenandahalf.co.uk or visit us at tenandahalf.co.uk or blogsforlawyersandaccountants.com.



Part 1: Getting started

You're supposed to be a lawyer/accountant so why should you start blogging?

Let's start with the end in mind.

You trained hard to be a lawyer, an accountant or a patent or trade mark attorney so your objective isn't to produce a wonderful work of literature or to win the Knight International Prize for Journalism.

You just want the search engines to work a bit harder for you, to boost your online profile so you're more credible in your clients' eyes, have something you can use to remind clients, contacts and targets that you're still here and be able to reach a bigger audience of prospective clients.

And that, in a nutshell, is why you - as lawyer or an accountant - need to start blogging.

And please don't feel short-changed by the word count here. When it comes to content, one of Tenandahalf's golden rules is keep it short, stick to the point and don't over egg it which is exactly what I've done here!



Part 1: Getting started

6 reasons your law firm or accountancy practice definitely needs a blog

As a solicitor, an accountant or a patent or trade mark attorney you know an awful lot. You have a veritable treasure trove of advice in your head, information your clients can use to improve their commercial or personal position or sidestep obstacles that could potentially trip them up at some point.

And that's all fine while you're actually engaged in a live matter with a client. You'll be talking regularly - sometimes several times a day - and you can impart the right piece of information at the right time as their adviser.

But what happens between matters? And more pointedly, what happens if the person who could benefit from a particular piece of advice isn't a client at all?

This is where a blog becomes an invaluable component within your marketing strategy.

A blog allows you to pinpoint a specific issue and tell the reader what to do in those circumstances. And, once it's written, you can push it out via email, e-marketing, and social media to alert people to its existence before you put your feet up and allow the good people at Google to work their magic and find you a whole new international audience.

But if the benefits to your online profile alone don't persuade you just how productive starting a blog could be for your practice, here are 6 more reasons your law firm or accountancy practice needs a blog:

1. You'll boost your search engine rankings

Feeding regular content into your website shows Google your website is both a going concern and a source of useful info. And, if your feed is more regular and more relevant than your competitors', you'll soon create a competitive advantage over them, especially within local or sector-based searches.

2. You'll boost your credibility

Nowadays almost everyone qualifies what they've heard online. If you have been positioned as an expert in tax, retail or biochemistry the visitors to your site will want to see you not only understand but have an opinion on the latest trends and issues.

I also think prospective clients want to see the person they could well be about to ask for advice also has an opinion and the confidence to put that opinion out into the world.



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3. You'll strengthen your key relationships

The fact you are willing to share clear, practical and valuable tips via your blog will be appreciated. And who knows, if your timing is good (and you include an easy response mechanism) some clients may suddenly realise they need more help in that area which means you might get some new work.

Fresh blogs also give you the perfect excuse to email the link to the professional contacts your piece is relevant to which could lead to a referral or at least an invitation to catch up. And if they were to forward it to one or two or their clients, you might get a new lead.

4. You'll mark yourself out from your competitors

Although blogging has been around for years, many professional service firms still don't blog regularly enough. If your blog is constantly updated and you are sticking to the golden rules (keep it short, stick to one topic, offer tips the reader can use to help them/their business), you'll build up a following and that following will make sure you stay ahead of your competitors in your clients, contacts and targets' eyes.

Tone of voice is also an important factor here. A lot of the firms who are producing regular content are still wedded to highly technical, jargon strangled and - dare I say it - pretty dry pieces. If you can be more conversational, more down to earth and more easy to understand, you become a much more attractive option than your competitors (and that goes for the prospective clients that find you via the search engines as much as it does for your existing clients).

5. You'll have a wealth of content you can re-purpose for all sorts of other marketing initiatives

A back catalogue of good, practical content can be repackaged for your e-newsletter, for seminars or presentations. You can also beef it up for PR pieces or as ideas you can take to the editors of the trade press to start a conversation about the possibility of writing for these titles at some point in the near future.

6. You'll be a better solicitor/accountant/attorney

For some professionals having an opportunity to think about the latest developments in their practice area or chosen markets is a great opportunity to get their thoughts in order and down on paper which can make it easier to convey the same information to clients in person or by email.

And for more junior fee earners, being tasked with coming up with content can be a real-world training exercise. It's useful for them to match the theory to the practical application which again will make them better advisers in the long-run.



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How long should my blog posts be?

Given the sheer volume of information on the internet (so much of which will be being pumped out by other law firms, patent and trade mark attorneys and accountancy practices!) you need to convey your message in as few words as possible.

My advice is always to choose the one thing you want to get across and then follow this simple 4-step process –

1. Highlight the issue
2. Offer a solution
3. Invite the reader to contact you for more information
4. Get it up!

This allows you to keep things short and to the point and will help your blog gain a positive reputation as a place to go and learn quickly which is still the most potent way to increase your repeat readership.

However, if you want a stricter guideline to work to, here are some of the tips I've been given during my career:

"Stick to 300 words or just over because a woman's attention span is 225 words and a man's is 185!"

"Imagine one page on a smart phone."

"You need to be able to read what you write between 2 tube stops."



Part 1: Getting started

4 tips to help maximise your blog's readership

While the much (over) used maxim 'content is king' is undoubtedly true, you can never forget just how much stuff there is being published online and promoted via social media every single day.

Yet still too many lawyers, accountants, barristers and IP attorneys are still missing the point. They produce hugely involved 12-1500 articles no one reads then decry the fact content marketing doesn't work so they're not going to do any more.

In our experience (both in terms of our own business and helping clients grow theirs) it definitely does but only if you bear the following 4 rules in mind:

1. Keep it short

Be kind to the reader, they are as pushed for time as you. The golden rules are 'one page on a smart phone' and 'can I read between tube/bus stops?' Any longer just isn't worth it unless it's a commission for a trade publication whose readers are committed to its content.

2. Keep it practical

Highlight problems and offer solutions, don't get too involved in the detail (after all don't you want the reader to contact you to get more detail?) and keep your tone light and conversational rather than choking each point with jargon and terminology that's peculiar to your profession.

3. Mix up the formats

Different people react to different things at different times so try to mix in FAQs and top tips alongside other types of content with your (SHORT!) blogs. Also try to use using images or graphical representation of facts in and amongst the words.

4. Follow the news

Try to piggy-back on big stories to boost your 'findability'. If you're writing about something people are searching on out of personal interest, your likelihood of being found by a new but interested audience will immediately increase. Many family and employment lawyers are particularly good at this and have perfected the act of picking up on a major story and giving it a family or employment law spin.



Part 1: Getting started

Successful content is as easy as C, P, D

The majority of lawyers, accountants, IP attorneys and barristers are now producing a consistent flow of content. The only trouble is not enough of them are seeing a level of return that reflects the time and effort they are investing.

If we were to ask why they're not seeing their desired returns, the answer is probably:

- The content is too long
- The content is too complicated
- The content is too technical
- The content is a bit vague and not specific to a particular audience
- The content doesn't include any form of response mechanism

Number 5 is the easiest to address.

Just add a line at the bottom (preferably in bold) telling the reader that if they'd like to discuss the point/s raised in this [blog/article/update] they can contact [the name of the author] on [hyperlink the phone number and email address].

Points 2-4 can be rectified by adopting Tenandahalf's CPD model.

CPD stands for nothing more complicated than clear, practical direction. If your content marketing is going to be successful, you need to ditch overly long technical articles explaining the minutiae of law, accountancy or science and concentrate on solving your readers' problems.

C: Be clear on the point you want to make then stick to addressing that point and that point alone and keep the language you use clear of jargon, acronyms and management-speak.



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P: Make sure you provide practical solutions to the problems you address. Tell people exactly what to do when they face certain circumstances and, where you can, what steps they can take to avoid those circumstances in the first place.

This is where tailoring your pieces to a specific audience (by sector or by geography) will pay off; using the right points of reference will make your piece more relevant to the reader and start the all important process of marking you out as the accountant, solicitor, patent attorney or barrister that is best for them... and don't worry about cutting yourself off from your other target markets, you can easily reskin the piece to suit any audience!

D: While direction is of course about telling your readers what to do, it's also about directing them back to you as the expert. That comes back to making sure you spell out what to do next and make it as easy as possible for readers to get in touch with you.

And if you follow the CPD model, you will immediately resolve point 1 ...

... and – better still - as you'll only be tackling one question, your posts will be shorter.



Part 1: Getting started

6 proven ways to get ideas for your next blog

We are often told that while some of our client's fee earners are willing to write, what stops them from doing so is that they don't know where to get their ideas from.

We're told "nothing much happens in my area" or "what I do is a bit dry so people won't want to read about it" but the truth is just as your clients have a need for what you do, there will also be many other people in very similar circumstances seeking out information on exactly the same subjects.

To help unclog any residual writers' block, here are 6 different ways you can find some new ideas for your next blog:

1. A recent client question

This is one of our favourites. Think back about a particularly tricky question a client (or if you really want to live up to the 'frequently' part of FAQ, 2 clients!) has asked you recently, write down the question (that's now your title), then answer it in two paragraphs.

Because you'll already know the answer there's no research to do which means it'll be quick to write ... and because you'll be answering it in two paragraphs, it'll be quick to write! Better still, as people now search using questions, if you get your title right, it'll play better in the search engines which will generate more enquiries.

2. The news

What is happening in the news that has relevance to your practice area? Some of this will be obvious. If there's been a major change to tax legislation that will affect us all, that's a perfect topic for the tax specialists at an accountancy firm. Or if there has been an outbreak of Japanese knotweed, that could be a good topic for a commercial property solicitor as it could affect large scale developments.

However, you also need to think more laterally. Residential conveyancing is an area a lot of solicitors struggle with in terms of finding ideas for new content but if they were to pick up on news stories like the first house sold for bitcoin or sought out the latest governmental report on current housing trends, there's plenty to work with.



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The reason for using what's in the news is simply that if it's in the news, it's in the public eye which means people will be searching online for more information. If you are using these terms and 'appropriating' these headlines, there is a far greater chance they will stumble on your piece too.

3. Celebs

This follows straight on from the previous point but instead of using the news headlines, use the showbiz and sports pages. Has there been a headline-grabbing celebrity divorce? Has a well-known comedian been outed for tax avoidance? Has a footballer been bitten at work? Has Grand Designs showcased a particularly eye-catching residential property? Is there a TV show that's drawing a huge audience that tackles issues that could be related to your practice?

All of these can be used to anchor a blog and again, as they're in the public eye, your use of the relevant key words will boost your search engine visibility.

4. Everyday life

Has anything happened to you that you could relate to your practice? Have you heard any stories from family or friends that are vaguely relevant to what you do for clients? And remember, if they happened a while ago or require a bit of exaggeration to make them more interesting, that's fine. You're writing anonymously so no one will question or even recognise the source material!

5. Your last technical update

As a solicitor, accountant or patent or trade mark attorney you have to go through CPD. Is there anything in the last update that your clients, contacts and targets could benefit from?

You may need to dumb down the source material a bit as your blog is meant for an audience outside your profession but, by using Tenandahalf's CAR structure, you can easily extract the main point, provide the **Context**, tell your reader how it will **Affect** them and the action they'll need to take to get the **Result** they want.

6. Search engine searching

When you search on any of the key words associated with your practice Google now handily gives you a list of all of the main questions being asked about those topics. All of these can easily be turned into a blog or an FAQ and because you know this is exactly what people are searching, the finished piece stands the best possible chance of reaching the maximum number of readers.



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How can I make my blogs stand out from my competitors?

When it comes to blogging the good news for solicitors, accountants and patent attorneys, the benchmark isn't that high.

Far too many professionals still take the path of least resistance; technical updates, case commentary and appraisals of recent legislative changes are the standard so to stand out, all you really need to do is to cut the theory and concentrate on application.

People know your blog will provide them with something they can actually use in their working or personal lives (and that the advice you're giving is easy to read and easy to understand), they'll keep coming back and they'll be more likely to share the links with their colleagues and contacts.

At this point I'm usually told "that's all very well but how do you make something practical?" and my answer will usually be based on the following 4 tips:

1. Use anonymous case studies

Any point you make will hit home harder if you tell it as a story. People like stories. They're easier to relate to than a technical piece and they help to put what you're trying to say into a real life context readers can relate to/sympathise with.

2. Use the news

If you can use something in the public eye to elucidate a point then it will catch your readers' eye. If it's something completely unrelated (e.g. a football result or a recent TV show), that's even better! You should actually want your readers to think "now why the devil would a tax accountants/property litigator be writing about that?"

3. Use bullet points

If your title tells people that you're going to give them 4, 7 or 11 tips (never 5 or 10!) on a particular topic, that tells them they're going to be punchy and to the point which in turn means reading them won't be a slog.

4. Use a question

Using a question as your title is an easy but effective way to draw a reader in. If they see it and think "that's the type of question I could well ask myself", they'll click.



Part 2: Making your blog work

For lawyers and accountants ‘blog and pray’ is not an option!

While it would be nice to think you’ll build an audience just because you publish strong, informative content, unfortunately it doesn’t work like that. If you are going to build up an audience that will generate new enquiries and new opportunities, you need to utilise a range of traffic generators including:

1. Organic search traffic

Google will always be a major source of new readers so make sure your blog is tagged up and fully optimised to maximise the likelihood that anyone searching for what you’re writing about actually finds you.

2. Direct traffic

Make sure you are directing the people you know to your blog. Include a link to your blog in your email footers, publicise it on the home page (or relevant practice, department or sector pages) on your website and even be prepared to email a link personally to those clients and contacts you think should be interested in that particular topic.

3. Referral traffic

While it’s hard for lawyers and accountants to swap links with other firms, when it comes to clients or other general interest sites, there are some potential referral options you can consider.

If you sponsor a trade body, make sure an exchange of links and their promise to promote your blog ‘live’ is included in your agreement. Or, if you are providing private client services for a particular area, ask local news sites if they’d like to link your content into their feed as added value for their readers.

4. E-newsletters

Make sure all of your e-marketing includes full details of and links to your blog and, if possible, examples of recent headlines.

5. Social media

Put a process in place to ensure every new blog is promoted across all your social media channels ... and not just once! People could easily miss your update if they’re not scrolling at that exact time so try posting it (with slightly different wording) at different times of the day over the 3 days after publication.

And extend that process so that all of your fee earners know what’s been published and when so they can like and re-share the links to boost their visibility.



Part 2: Making your blog work

Why isn't my blog working?

In most cases it isn't difficult to persuade the lawyers and accountants we work with to blog. They can see the benefit, they can see the positive effect it'll have on their profile and, just as crucially, they can see the marketing capital their competitors are banking from blogging!

However, once a blog is up and running one of the questions we are asked is why we think it isn't working and, in our experience, the answer almost always boils down to three things:

1. It's all about me

If your blog is all about you, it's not going to be overly attractive to your readers.

The truth is endless press releases promoting partners and services just aren't interesting. A fleeting mention of an award you've won, a new office you've opened or the appointment of a new tax or litigation partner to bolster your team is fine for your news page but it isn't suitable material for a blog.

If your blog is going to build a readership there has to be a reason to read it (and keep coming back to it). This means it needs to give good, straightforward, practical advice your readers can use to improve their or their business' position.

Instead of starting with what you can do, think about your clients' pain. What keeps them awake at night? What mistakes do they keep making? What is stopping them from getting to where they want to get to?

Once you have the answers to these questions you can use your blog to provide the solutions.

2. You're not asking for help

While you spend your days at the coal face and undoubtedly know your stuff, shooting blindly at what you *think* people are searching for isn't a brilliant blogging strategy. But the good news is there are loads of ways to give you a steer as to what you should be writing about.

Tools like Google's key word finder, Buzzsumo.com and answerthepublic.com will show you exactly what people are searching for while looking for more information on the areas you advise on.

If you can work back from those lists and use these search terms as the angle or even titles for your blogs, you will immediately make your blog more relevant, more useful and easier to find.



Part 2: Making your blog work

3. You're not squeezing the lemon!

If you've worked with Tenandahalf you'll already know how fond we are of squeezing the lemon so you get the maximum impact from everything you do.

If you're unfamiliar with the term it simply means that instead of shelving your blogs, articles, presentations and seminars once they've been published/delivered you repackage them to use across all of your marketing channels.

For example:

- If you've posted a blog why not turn it into a short video or an infographic?
- If you've written an article why not turn it into a series of blogs?
- If you've recently delivered a seminar or a speech, why not turn the key points into a series of blogs?
- If you've got a presentation or an article to hand, why not turn it into a podcast or take the key points from a podcast you've recorded and turn those into a series of blogs?
- If you've written an article why not strip its key points out and turn them into a 'top tips' or turn each into an FAQ style post for social media?
- If you've got a big catalogue in your blog, go back in time and refresh and update old posts so you can re-use them.
- If you can pare a few of the points you've made into a short sentence, turn them into an image combining your sentence, the author and your logo and use that as a social media post.

And of course, it's essential that you squeeze the lemon out of every link to every blog you post. Don't just post the link once, send it out at different times every day for a week on your firm's Twitter and LinkedIn (obviously changing the accompanying copy) because people look at their timelines at different times of day so will probably miss your link if you only send it out once.

Then set up a group email to tell all of your colleagues you've just posted so they can like and share it; the more people who react, the higher your post will be pushed up the rankings.

If it's possible I'd also flag the link on your home page or if that's not practical, on your news page.



Part 2: Making your blog work

10% ways to recycle your blogs so they have the maximum impact

In the last chapter we looked at ‘squeezing the lemon’ and in this one we’re going to share another 10% suggestions to help you get every last drop out of the blogs, articles, FAQs and top tips your solicitors, accountants, patent and trade mark attorneys and barristers are writing.

1. Updates

Revisit your back catalogue from time to time and see what needs to be updated so that it reflects any legislative or political changes. Alternatively, if you wrote a piece for one industry sector, why not just update the points of reference and terminology so it’s relevant to the other sectors you’re marketing to?

2. Newsletters

Combine all of the content you produced over the last three months into a new quarterly e-newsletter. To make this even more relevant (and, therefore, more valuable for the reader) you can divide your content (and audience) by practice area or industry type.

And if quarterly looks like too much of a commitment, try an annual. Every Christmas Tenandahalf pick one piece of content from each of the preceding 12 months and package it up as our Christmas Annual and it’s grown into one of the best received marketing pieces we produce.

3. Slideshare presentations

If you are writing regularly for the trade or local press, why not bring the PDFs of your recent articles together into a slideshare presentation. It will give you a nice looking electronic file to share with your relevant clients and contacts. Better still, as it’s ‘readable’ if you publish it on your website or via LinkedIn, it will also positively influence the search engines which could even create some new enquiries.

The big watch out though is that these may contravene copyright so you need to make sure the publications involved not only know what you’re planning to do but have given you their express permission to use their materials. Many will see the value as it puts their name and their work in front of a relevant audience but some won’t so always ask.

4. PDF downloads

Bring your articles and blogs together as a branded PDF and offer as a free download via your website and social media. Again, to make it as relevant as possible it’s probably best to produce these PDFs by sector or practice area.



Part 2: Making your blog work

5. Infographics

Many people now prefer to watch something for a minute or so to reading a traditional article so why not use one of the free infographic platforms online to produce short videos. We use Lumen5 and it really couldn't be easier ... or cheaper!

6. Webinars

If you have a confident speaker in your team, ask them to re-present your articles as short webinars. Again there are loads of free webinar and screen recording platforms online so all you need is half an hour and a decent head-set but you'll be left with a video link you can use to reconnect with existing clients and contacts and maybe even start some new conversations.

7. YouTube

If you are going to turn blogs into webinars or infographics, make sure you are republishing these links on your own YouTube channel. Millions of people search YouTube for very specific information every day so it's definitely worth spending the few seconds it takes to go through their exceptionally easy upload process. And just as some people prefer to listen rather than read, others prefer pictures to words.

8. Flowcharts

If any of your blogs focus on a process, why not turn them into a flowchart with a few well-chosen graphics to make it more attractive to the eye?

9. Guest posts for referrers

The majority of your key referrers will also have active content marketing plans. If you send them your blogs and ask if they want to publish them as 'guest posts' (and, of course, reciprocate by offering them the same opportunity on your blog/in your newsletter), you will reach a brand new audience.

10. Link back to old content

When you're publishing new content online, link it back to old articles where you can. Not only are back links something the search engines look for, providing such easy access to more information is also a good way to keep people on your site for longer.

10%. Showcase your most popular posts

It may require a bit of a tweak to your website but having a sidebar or header on your home page that highlights your new blogs does increase your readership as people can easily miss a new post. Or if making that change to your website isn't viable, have a wrap up on LinkedIn and/or Twitter every Friday that summarises that week's new content in a series of short updates and/or tweets.



Part 2: Making your blog work

What do I need to do to make sure my blogs are picked up by the search engines?

While most content management systems don't allow you to optimise your blog posts in the same way as your main website pages, you still need them to be recognised. So that they are, you need to incorporate the key words relating to your topics and, more importantly, keyword terms.

Keyword terms are the phrases/questions people are most likely to type into Google while they're looking for information on certain subjects. This means if you guess right you will organically appear closer to the top of the results which in turn should maximise the potential of new enquiries.

There are a number of websites and apps that will identify the key terms and current search trends for you and it's sometimes a good idea - especially if you're struggling for inspiration - to do this type of search to get some ideas to work back from.

Alternatively, think about the last tricky question a client asked you and use the question as your heading and your answer as your blog. The FAQ format is quick, to the point and very easy to write (and read).

Better still, as your heading is likely to be what people are using to search for their answer, it will again push your blog up the search engine results.

However, don't just lazily pepper your blogs with key terms! It'll be totally unreadable and Google will rain heavy penalties down upon you and force you down the rankings.



How can we help you with your blog?

If you'd like to discuss your blog or any other aspect of your marketing or business development
please email info@tenandahalf.co.uk