Social Media Toolkit
WordPress

WordPress (WP) **is the most popular blog engine and content management system (CMS) on the web today, powering by some estimates 20% of all websites as of 2014. WP is open source, meaning anyone can use it and modify it for free, with some restrictions. It has a vibrant community of users and developers, with free and paid plugins for just about any use case you can imagine. If you are looking at a law-related website, chances are good that WordPress is running it.**

How to Get Started

There are two ways to get started with WordPress: 1) the easy way and 2) the slightly harder way. Let's take them in order.

The Easy Way

WordPress.com will allow you to set up and host a website free of charge. Just sign up and you will have a working site in minutes with very little effort. You can select from a variety of themes and take advantage of strong community support for any questions you may have. Note, however, there are some important limitations.

1. **Your website url will be something like http://[your firm's name here].wordpress.com, which is less than ideal from a professional standpoint. The good news is that, as of this writing, you can use your own domain for your wordpress.com site for $13/year.**
2. **WordPress may also run some discreet ads on your free site. If you wish to avoid this, you can upgrade to a no-ads account for $30/year (as of this writing).**
3. **A WordPress.com account does not give you root access to the server. So, you will be out of luck if you want to install any separate web-based software on your site, such as case management or accounting software.**

The Slightly Harder Way

Although it may seem a bit daunting at first, setting up and maintaining your own web server is the best way to maintain control over your web presence. There are numerous providers who provide server space and one-click installs for WordPress. GoDaddy is well known in this area for providing one-stop shopping for site setup. A newer and cheaper alternative is Digital Ocean, which also provides one-click WordPress set up. You can set up a virtual server (which they call a "droplet") running WordPress for $5/month.

The advantage to this approach is that you have maximum flexibility. If you decide to change your blog engine from WordPress or to install additional software, you can do it. The downside is that you become responsible for the security of the server, installing software updates, and for maintaining regular backups of data. Most hosting providers will provide a backup service for a fee. If you have questions about the process, consult the hosting provider's support forum or a reliable third-party forum such as serverfault.com.

Best Practices for Managing Your Account

- As always, use a strong password.
- Only share your account information with trusted colleagues.
- Make sure that you regularly apply updates to your site. Because it is one of the most used platforms on the web, it is also one of the most frequently attacked by hackers. When you log on to your WordPress dashboard, you will be notified of available updates. Apply them.

Best Practices for Content

- Informational pages, such as Attorney Profiles, Types of Cases Handled, and Contact Information, should be brief and uncluttered. Users should be able to find the desired information with as little effort as possible.
- Blog posts should be updated on a regular basis. Stale or uninteresting content will rank poorly in search engines, reducing the likelihood that anyone will ever see your site.
- Make content personalized. Describe who you are as lawyer and a person. Bland conclusory statements such as "We are committed to providing high-quality legal services" do very little to motivate potential clients.
- Be wary of giving specific advice or establishing attorney-client relationships on the web. Your site should include a prominent disclaimer that the information provided should not be considered legal advice and that the user needs to consult with an attorney (ideally you) before proceeding further.
- Monitor user visits to your site using analytical tools such as Google Analytics. These will help you see which pages users are visiting and, more importantly, which one they are not visiting. You can then modify your site's content to fix any problems and make your site more engaging. Note that WordPress provides numerous plugins for Google Analytics, so installing this is easy.

Objectives

- Build a strong web presence
- Create an audience for your content
- Achieve high search engine (i.e., Google) ranking

Benefits

- Create a web presence inexpensively
- Easy to create and post up-to-date content
- Plugins allow for unlimited customization should your needs change

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Audience

- **Everyone with access to the web.**
- **Ideally targeted, however, to people seeking legal services in your jurisdiction.**

Associated Costs

- **WordPress.com - $0 - $30 per year**
- **Self-hosted - $5 - $300 per year, depending on provider.**

Risks

- **Few to none. Regularly check your WordPress install to ensure that you have not been hacked or spammed.**
- **Avoid giving specific legal advice to site visitors.**

Content Type/s

- **Blog Posts**
- **Static Pages with information about your practice**
- **Links to interesting content (videos, other blog posts, government sites, etc.)**

Posting Schedule

- **Regularly. Ideally once or twice a week.**