

September 17, 2018

'High-engagement' Law Firm Websites

Next-generation law firm websites will maximize visitor engagement by automatically promoting the firm's most valuable content.

Authors:



Robert
Algeri,
Founder



Dion
Algeri,
Founder

Great Jakes Marketing Company
www.greatjakes.com
212.699.3684

Introduction

In the era of content marketing, law firm websites are increasingly similar to news websites like NYTimes.com and Bloomberg.com. Both types of website are chock full of smart, insightful writing. And both types are most effective when their visitors are highly engaged—consuming one page after another.

There is, however, one big difference. Unlike law firm sites, media properties like NYTimes.com and Bloomberg.com are designed to maximize engagement. These “high engagement” websites have teasers like “editors’ picks” and “related content” on nearly every page. They’ve made it virtually impossible to resist the temptation to click to another page.

In contrast, most law firm websites are not built for engagement. Despite having a great deal of content, most law firm websites are full of lonely pages and dead ends. Even sleek, modern, large-firm websites typically lack robust content-teasing tools that could engage visitors and keep them surfing the site.

The User-engagement Toolbox

At Great Jakes, we regarded the lack of engagement tools on law firm websites as a major deficiency—so we decided to build CMS (content management system) tools to address it. We call our content-teasing tools the “User-engagement Toolbox,” and they allow website editors to add a variety of widgets to underutilized areas of web pages (such as sidebars and footers), to tease content and highlight key messages in a way that keeps users engaged and informed.

A firm’s best content is often buried deep within its website. In most cases, visitors to a law firm website wouldn’t know that a new or valuable piece of content existed unless they were specifically directed there via email or social media.

About This Whitepaper

This whitepaper explains how leading news and professional firm websites (such as NYTimes.com and McKinsey.com) are built to maximize engagement—and how law firms can leverage similar techniques. It also describes the major features of our User-engagement Toolbox, a toolset built by Great Jakes to make law firm websites behave more like leading news sites.

More Information

This paper is just an overview and might not answer all of your questions. If you would like additional information, please contact Robert Algeri (ralgeri@greatjakes.com) to discuss and/or to see a demo.

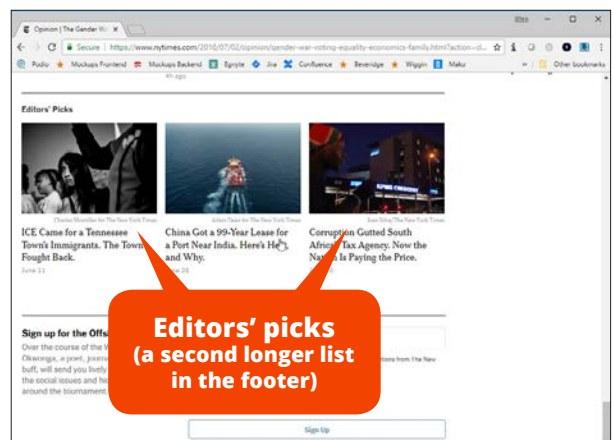
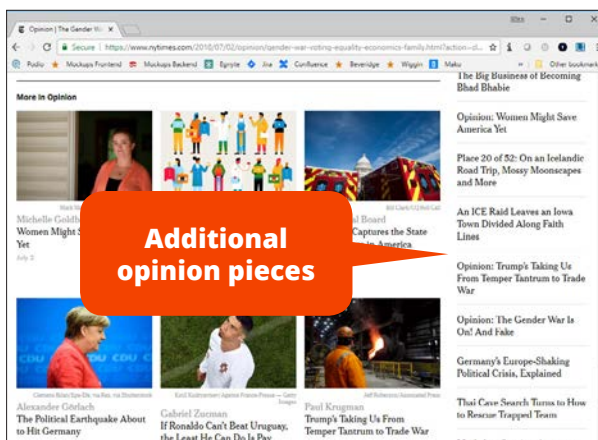
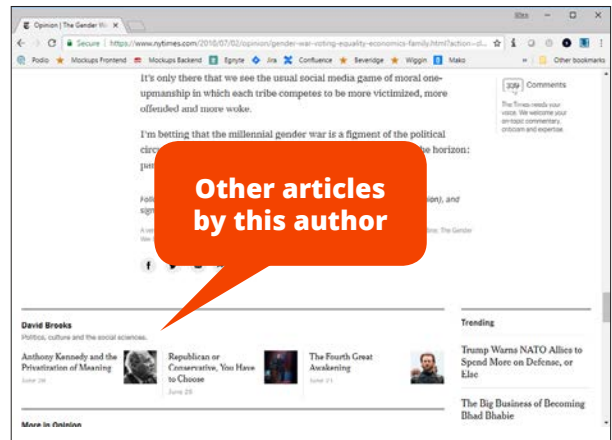
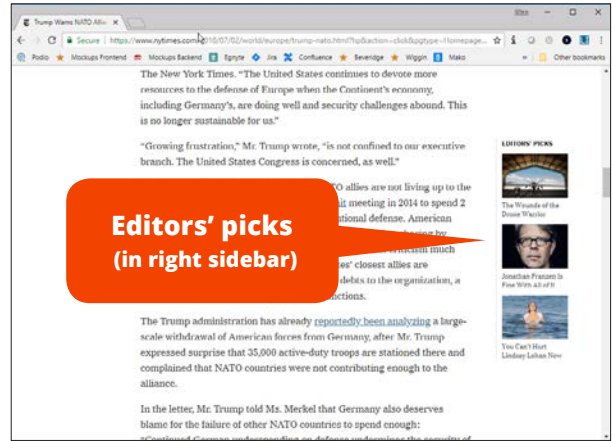
Part 1: High-engagement Websites

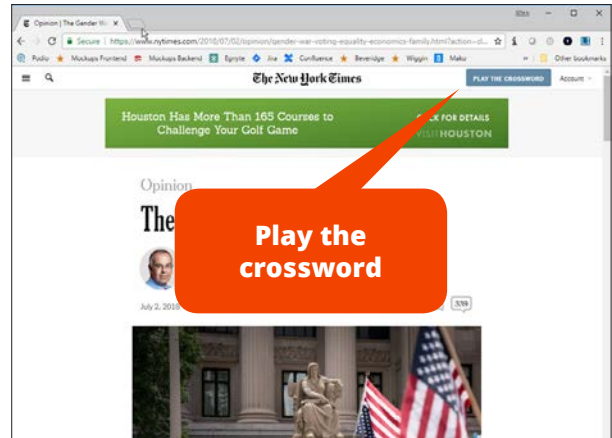
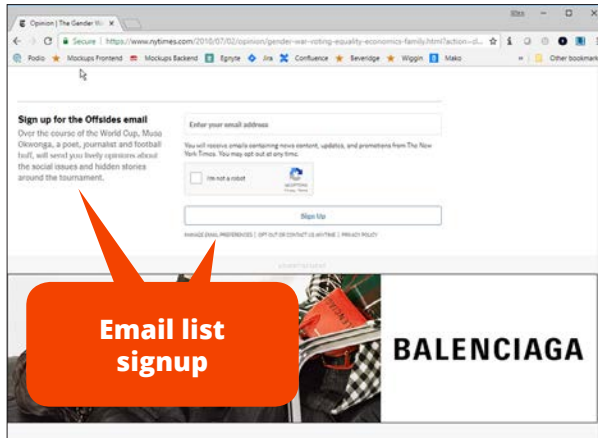
Overview

A website can be described as “high-engagement” if it is purposefully designed to keep people engaged and surfing additional pages. Most content-focused, advertising-driven websites (e.g., Vox.com and TheAtlantic.com) are great examples of high-engagement sites. Sites like these make money selling advertising impressions. Therefore, the more pages they get users to view, the more money they make.

As a result, these content sites work hard to make their sites “sticky.” So, from header to footer, their pages are peppered with teasers and calls-to-action that are designed to keep you clicking. On a single article page of NYTimes.com, we recently observed 31 teaser links (not including navigation or advertisements) listed under eight headings:

- ▶ Trending on NYTimes
- ▶ Editors’ picks (in right sidebar)
- ▶ Comments
- ▶ Other articles by this author
- ▶ Additional opinion pieces
- ▶ Editors’ picks (a second, longer list in the footer)
- ▶ Email list signup
- ▶ Play the crossword





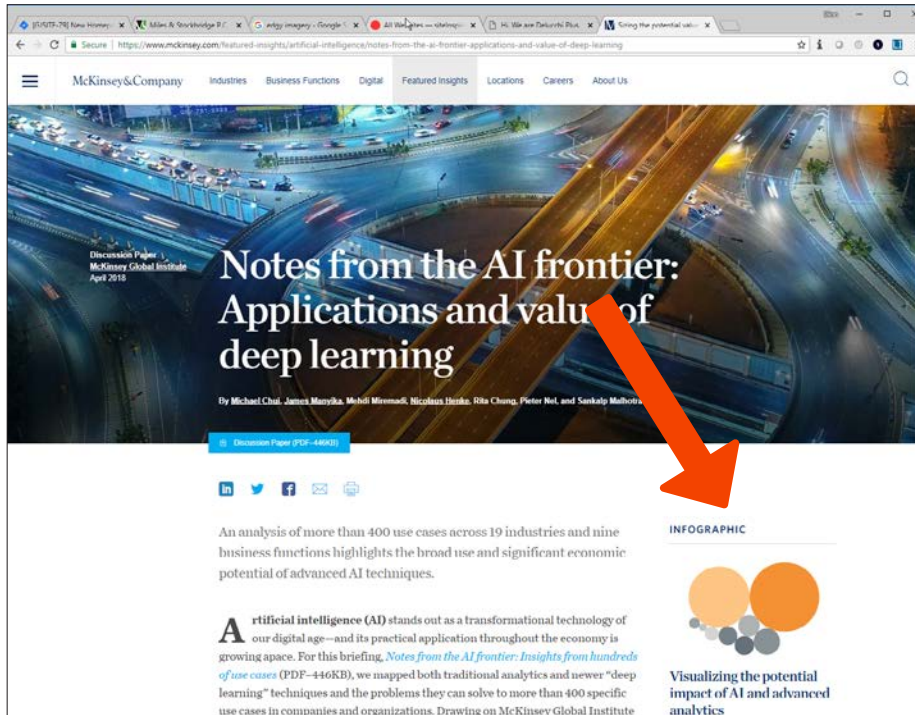
Are Accounting and Consulting Firms Doing This?

Large media websites aren't the only ones working hard to engage users. B2B professional service sites, like McKinsey.com and EY.com, also employ high-engagement techniques. Unlike NYTimes.com, these firms aren't in the business of selling advertisements on their websites. Rather, they seek to have prospective clients read more of their thought-leadership content.

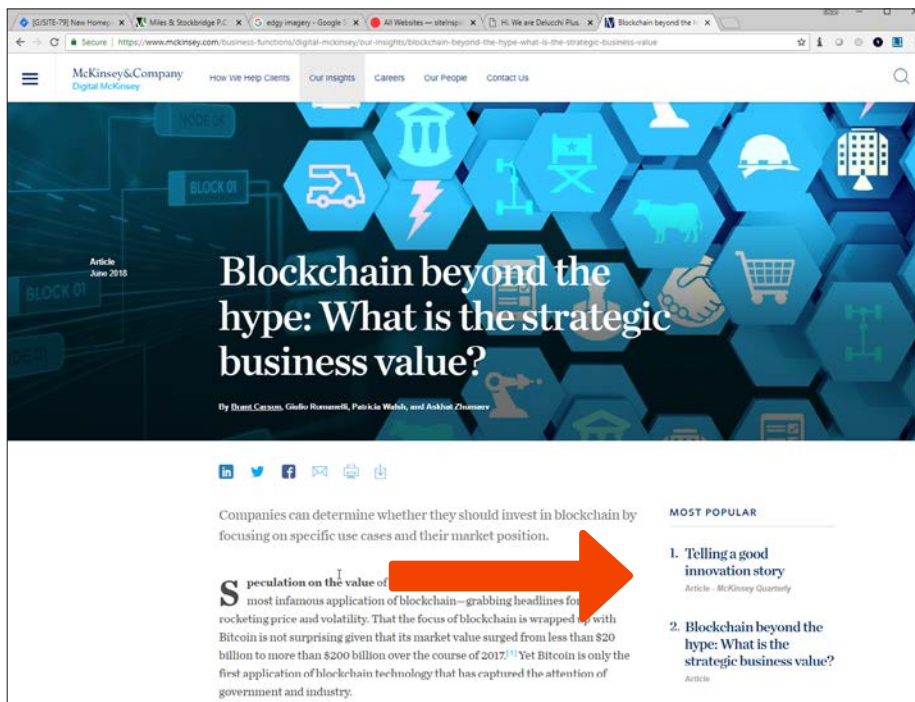
Firms like McKinsey and EY dedicate tremendous resources to creating reputation-enhancing content like articles, blog posts, and whitepapers. Like law firms, they create this content to reinforce their reputation for having expertise in their particular areas of service. And having gotten a visitor to their website to read an article, it's in their interest to have that visitor stick around to read more and learn how they are different from and better than their competition. They do this by teasing related content and highlighting key facts that demonstrate their knowledge and expertise.

By eliminating dead ends (which are so common on law firm websites), you can keep visitors engaged and learning about your firm's capabilities.

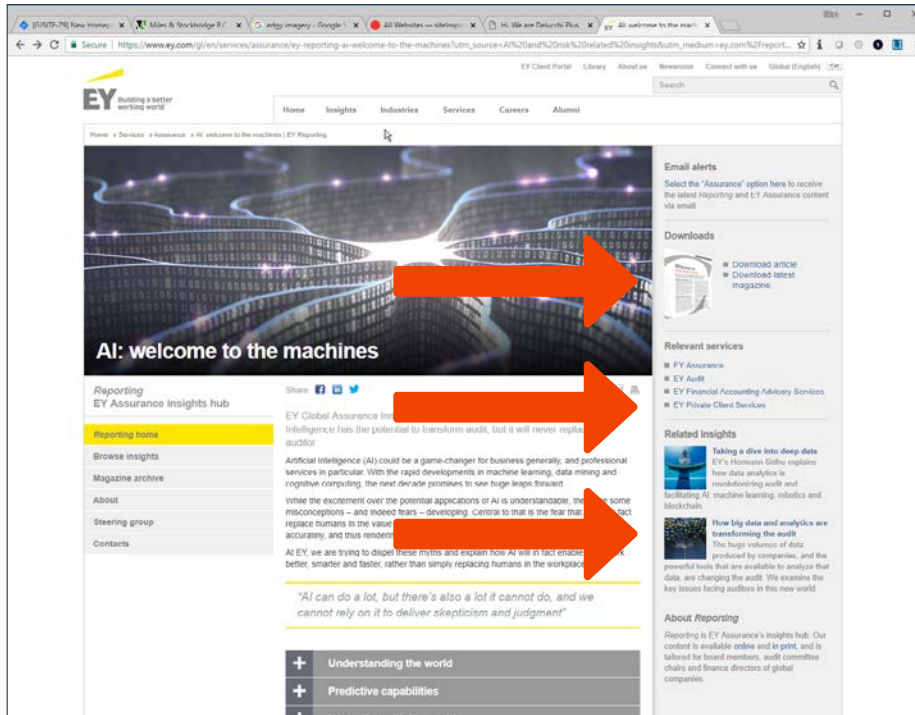
McKinsey.com



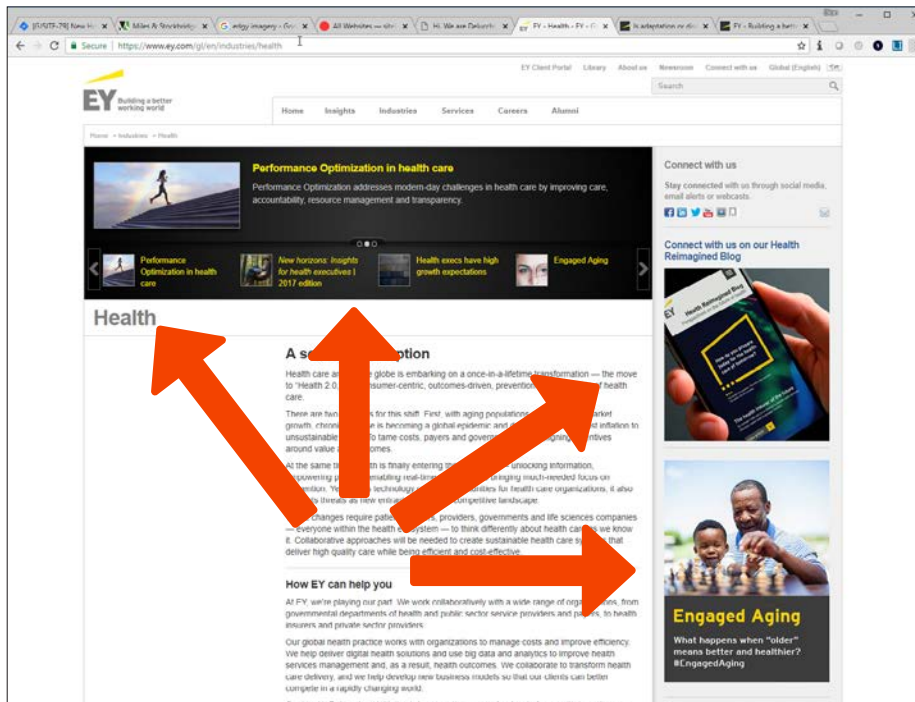
Many pages on McKinsey.com engage users with a list of "most popular" articles. Additionally, the site uses information graphics to highlight key pieces of thought leadership.



EY.com



EY.com uses both header and sidebar areas to tease related content and highlight key information that visitors would find useful.



What about Law Firm Websites?

Oddly, law firm websites have not typically been built with robust content-teasing tools. Why? Historically, the dissemination of thought-leadership content has not been the focus of law firm websites.

Until recently, law firms viewed their websites as an electronic version of the firm's old printed brochure. In this "brochure" model, bios and practice area descriptions were considered to be the primary content—and thought-leadership content like articles, blog posts, and whitepapers were ancillary.

Even today, many law firms don't publish their best thought-leadership content on their websites. Rather, their best content appears on the firm's blogs, which are located on different servers and accessible at different domain names.

However, this is changing. As the market for legal services has become more competitive, law firms have begun creating more content as a means of distinguishing themselves from their competitors. As a result, they are now seeing their websites as "publishing platforms" that are meant to (a) be a repository for all of their reputation-enhancing content, including their blog posts (see the Great Jakes blog post [What's Next for the Law Firm Blog?](#)), and (b) maximize the exposure and impact of that content.

In short, as firms invest in developing more content, they are looking to maximize the return on that investment. So, it only makes sense that there is now increased interest in content-teasing tools that help to maximize the chance that visitors will read the firm's best reputation-enhancing content.

Part 2: The User-engagement Toolbox

In 2018, Great Jakes set out to develop a toolset that would make law firm websites more "sticky" and thus more effective. We call it the "User-engagement Toolbox," and it allows website editors to easily tease content and highlight key information in a way that keeps visitors engaged and informed.

Below is a breakdown of its key characteristics.

Placement

The User-engagement Toolbox allows firms to place teasers on areas of a web page that are often underutilized. Typically, this means two places:


1. **The Right Sidebar** – To the right of the main body text, spanning the full length of the page.
2. **The Footer** – Below the body text and above the footer links. These teasers generally appear on every page of the site.

In chapter 11, a class accepts a plan if it is approved by the holders of claims representing two-thirds in amount and a majority in number. For instance, a case with \$300,000 in unsecured claims held by 25 creditors would require approval by creditors holding at least \$200,000 in claims and the affirmative vote of at least 13 creditors. In single asset real estate cases, debtors are often able to make attractive offers to unsecured creditors because the amount of such claims is often low, meaning the cash cost is modest.

To prevent such a result, unsecured creditors sometimes challenge the plan. The Bankruptcy Court to designate the class of unsecured creditors for such a draconian remedy. In *Farmington*, the debtor proposed a plan that impaired the claims of both Pacific Western Bank and the unsecured creditors. In response, Pacific Western purchased the claims of some – but not all – unsecured creditors, enough to block acceptance of the plan of reorganization by the class.

At the reorganization plan's confirmation hearing, the Bankruptcy Court held that because Pacific Western had not offered to purchase the claims of all unsecured creditors, it was acting in an unfair manner to creditors who did not receive the offer. Consequently, it designated the votes of the unsecured claims held by Pacific Western Bank as being in favor of the plan. The Bankruptcy Court refused to take testimony on Pacific Western Bank's motivation for purchasing less than all of the claims and confirmed the plan. Pacific Western

FEATURED PUBLICATION



The Ohio BWC's New Rule on Health and Behavioral Assessment Intervention

[READ MORE](#)

SUBSCRIBE

Are you getting our alerts? If not, you're missing attorney insights on issues and regulations impacting business. See why 10,000+ leading industry professionals read our legal alerts.

[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)

SERVICES

- [Litigation](#)
- [Tort & Catastrophic Events](#)

Teasers in right sidebar


is able to obtain the acceptance of one class of creditors holding impaired claims. To accomplish the latter, debtors often propose sufficiently generous payments to the unsecured creditor class.

Resources

- 📄 [Download PDF of article](#)
- 🗞️ [Visit Litigation Blog](#)


Teasers in footer

NEWS



Armstrong Teasdale Earns Top Marks in 2018 Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index

EVENT



Perspectives and Projections for the 2018 Legislative Session

PUBLICATION

Increases Coming to Retirement and Welfare Plan Limits in 2018

On Oct. 19, the Internal Revenue Service announced that some key retirement plan dollar limitations will increase in 2018, including the limit on elective salary deferral contributions on a combined...

Widget System

The User-engagement Toolbox is set up as a system of widgets. The tools are simple, so new widgets can be created in seconds by non-technical website editors. An unlimited number of widgets can be applied to any website page, and widgets are managed using simple drag-and-drop tools.

The widgets have a variety of forms and functions, but they fall into three main categories:

- ▶ **Suggested Content Teasers** – These widgets allow you to promote your best reputation-enhancing content such as articles, blog posts, and case studies. You can manually curate these teasers or select “automatic mode,” which enables the system’s algorithm to automatically tease relevant content. (More about “auto” mode in a bit.)

The screenshot displays a website layout with a large orange callout box labeled "Suggested content teasers" pointing to a sidebar widget. The main content area on the left contains several paragraphs of text, including phrases like "ts a plan if it is approved by the holders of claims representing majority in number. For instance, a case with \$300,000 in creditors would require approval by creditors holding at least affirmative vote of at least 13 creditors. In single asset real estate e to make attractive offers to unsecured creditors because the en low, meaning the cash cost is modest." and "ers sometimes offer to purchase claims in the unsecured class class acceptance. When that happens, debtors sometimes hs as not being in good faith, and ask the Bankruptcy... to aving voted in this manner, b debtor owned r mortgage hel s of both Paci urchased the e of the plan of reorganization by the class." and "confirmation hearing, the Bankruptcy Court held that because red to purchase the claims of all unsecured creditors, it was o creditors who did not receive the offer. Consequently, it unsecured claims held by Pacific Western Bank as being in favor Court refused to take testimony on Pacific Western Bank's ss than all of the claims and confirmed the plan. Pacific Western t Court, which affirmed the Bankruptcy Court's decision." and "it, the decisions below were reversed and remanded, as the tern Bank's actions in buying claims to protect its interest were".

The sidebar widget on the right contains three sections:

- FEATURED PUBLICATION**: Includes an image of a hand writing on a document and the text "The Ohio BWC's New Rule on Health and Behavioral Assessment Intervention" with a [READ MORE](#) link.
- UPCOMING EVENT**: Includes the text "Labor & Employment Webinar Series: Emerging LGBTQ Issues and Trends in Employment Law" with a [READ MORE](#) link.
- FROM OUR EMPLOYER LAW BLOG**: Includes the text "MSHA's Workplace Examination Final Rule: The Effective Date is Right Around the Corner" with a [READ MORE](#) link.

- ▶ **Calls-to-action** – These widgets encourage people to take an action like register, subscribe, or contact someone for more information.

firmation hearing, the Bankruptcy Court held that because
to purchase the claims of all unsecured creditors, it was
editors who did not receive the offer. Consequently, it
secured claims held by Pacific Western Bank as being in
cy Court refused to take testimony on Pacific Western
g less than all of the claims and confirmed the plan.
to the District Court, which affirmed the Bankruptcy


the decisions below were reversed and remanded, as the
n Bank's actions in buying claims to protect its interest
pty Court had focused on two main issues in its decision
ot make an offer to purchase all unsecured claims: "The
ve had an unfair advantage that would have been only
it had vote
good faith
decision in
ome untow
a creditor
bad faith o

on by the Bankruptcy Court for its decision, and that
e claims in a class is an indicator of good faith, not
s. The Ninth Circuit had previously decided in *Figter* that
an is not bad faith. Following that logic it held that because
merical majority of the class, or a majority of the class by
representing a blocking position is not bad faith conduct:
e Bankruptcy Code and case law, without evidence of
ad faith. Not offering to purchase all of the claims in a
to block a plan) is not – alone – sufficient to evidence bad
tes under section 1126(e)."

to the Bankruptcy Court's focus on the effect of blocking a
nkruptcy Court ruled that Pacific Western Bank's actions
e over other creditors that would be highly prejudicial. The
, finding that the Bankruptcy Court erred in focusing solely
im purchase on other creditors, rather than Pacific

CALLS-TO-ACTION


DOWNLOAD WHITEPAPER




Read our report on Banking Regulatory Reforms and the changes coming to the industry.

[READ MORE](#)

CONTACTS US

 **John L. Smith**
302.277.2389
[Email](#)

 **Sally Johnson**
302.277.2365
[Email](#)

SUBSCRIBE

Are you getting our alerts? If not, you're missing attorney insights on issues and regulations impacting business. See why 10,000+ leading industry professionals read our legal alerts.

[SUBSCRIBE NOW](#)


- ▶ **Information Highlights** – These widgets can draw attention to the most important information on a page. With just a few clicks, you can add content highlights such as videos, photos, pull-quotes, and testimonials.


and the affirmative vote of at least 13 creditors. In single asset real estate reorganizations, secured creditors are often able to make attractive offers to unsecured creditors. The cost of such claims is often low, meaning the cash cost is modest.

As a result, lenders sometimes offer to purchase claims in the unsecured class. In this case, the Bankruptcy Court's actions are being challenged as having the effect of blocking class voting. The Bankruptcy Court's actions are being challenged as having the effect of blocking class voting in this case. In Fagerdale v. Pacific Western Bank, the Bankruptcy Court ruled by a \$4 million majority that the impaired trust of Pacific Western Bank, Pacific Western Bank, was not enough to block acceptance of the plan of reorganization by the creditors.

At the plan's confirmation hearing, the Bankruptcy Court held that because the plan was not offered to purchase the claims of all unsecured creditors, it was an unfair plan to creditors who did not receive the offer. Consequently, it was an error to classify the claims of the unsecured claims held by Pacific Western Bank as being in the secured class. The Bankruptcy Court refused to take testimony on Pacific Western Bank's purchase of less than all of the claims and confirmed the plan. The Bankruptcy Court's decision was appealed to the District Court, which affirmed the Bankruptcy Court's decision.

On appeal, the Ninth Circuit, the decisions below were reversed and remanded, as the Bankruptcy Court had focused on two main issues in its decision, the Bank did not make an offer to purchase all unsecured claims; and the Bank did not have an unfair advantage that would have been highly






The firm has added 4,000 square feet of space to our Chicago office.

[READ MORE](#)

We are committed to being at the forefront of all aspects of diversity and inclusion at every level.

John Smith, Partner



Auto-teasing Algorithm

One of the most powerful features in the User-engagement Toolbox is auto teasing. If you set teasing to “auto,” a proprietary algorithm will automatically select related content to promote on that page. The system allows the cross-promotion of various content types. For example, an article about nanotechnology will include teasers to events and case studies about the same subject.

The content-selection algorithm has over 200 rules to ensure that the most appropriate content is

selected for promotion on each page of your website. However, the algorithm is focused around four primary factors:

- ▶ **Timeliness** – The newest content is prioritized for promotion. Each content type (e.g., news, articles, blog posts, events, case studies) has a different “expiration date” on which that content will no longer be displayed. For example, the algorithm will not promote firm news older than three months. However, it will display a relevant case study that is two years old.
- ▶ **Relevance** – Relevance is determined primarily by the people, practices, and industries that are associated with that item. So, if a news item is associated with Financial Services, the algorithm teases other content (e.g., events and case studies) also associated with Financial Services.
- ▶ **Placement on Site** – If you’re on an attorney’s bio, the system will tease content written by that person. Likewise, if you are on a practice area page, it will display content from within that practice area.
- ▶ **Exclusions** – The CMS allows you to easily exclude any specific piece or type of content from the algorithm.

Auto-teasing is very convenient but might not be appropriate for every circumstance. If you ever want to promote a specific piece of content, you can use the “manual” mode and designate that content for teasing.

Other Powerful Features

The User-engagement Toolbox has many other powerful features. Here are just a few:

- ▶ **Personas** – Are you looking to target several categories of visitor? The Toolbox allows you to promote certain articles, case studies, and events to a specific type of visitor—and different collections of content to each visitor persona.
- ▶ **Global Widgets** – You can place the same widget on lots of pages—and then edit it centrally. This is extremely valuable for law firm websites, which can have thousands of pages.
- ▶ **Rotating Content** – A single widget can be configured to promote multiple pieces of content (e.g., articles, case studies, blog posts, video, pull-quotes). Each time the page loads, it will randomly display one of those pieces of content.

- ▶ **Widget Templates** – The system has nine pre-configured widget templates, which makes it very easy to deploy a widget that makes your page look great. For example, you simply select a person’s name, and the “contacts” widget is automatically populated with that person’s photo and contact information.

Benefits of Teasing Functionality

So, what benefits could law firms derive from using tools like those we’ve developed in the User-engagement Toolbox?

1. Increased Visibility for Content

A firm’s best content is often buried deep within its website. In most cases, visitors to a law firm website wouldn’t know that a new or valuable piece of content existed unless they were specifically directed there via email or social media. Teasing functionality will direct visitors to your best stuff.

2. Elimination of Dead Ends

When a visitor finishes reading an article, teasing functionality allows you to spoon-feed them the next piece of “suggested content.” By eliminating dead ends (which are so common on law firm websites), you can keep visitors engaged and learning about your firm’s capabilities.

3. Cross-selling of Services

Teased content offers firms a way to cross-promote practices and communicate new areas of service. For example, a case study about a big victory on a false claims matter would obviously appear on your False Claims practice page. But it might also make a lot of sense to promote in other practice pages, like Alternative Dispute Resolution or Litigation.

4. Enabling Calls-to-action and Lead Generation

Sidebar widgets can be configured as calls-to-action. For example, you can prompt visitors to “Subscribe to Alerts,” “Register for a Webinar,” or “Download Our Whitepaper.” These actions would allow you to capture the contact information of your prospective clients, so that you could consider sending them your recent whitepaper or inviting them to an upcoming event.

5. Facilitating Advanced Visitor Tracking

Marketing automation tools (e.g., Marketo and HubSpot) allow you to know the names and page-visit histories of your website visitors. This can provide actionable insights into a

prospective client—provided that you've gathered enough page-visit data. Content teasing and calls-to-action help maximize clicks, which produces a greater volume of actionable data.

6. Making Pages Look More Compelling

Text-heavy pages can often make law firm websites feel lifeless. In contrast, sidebar items, especially those containing graphics, can highlight key reputation-enhancing messages and bring visual interest to every page.

7. Increasing Page Views

Teased content will increase the number of pages a visitor sees on your site. Sites that make it a priority to promote their content via teasers in sidebars and footers typically see a 10%–25% increase in page views.

The Bottom Line

The User-engagement Toolbox is built to maximize a visitor's engagement with your website. It's meant to keep them glued to your website for as long as possible, so that they will read more of your best content and do things like register for your events and subscribe to your newsletters.

Why is this important? Because your website visitors are a highly targeted audience. They have gone out of their way to learn more about your firm. So, you want to keep them engaged and surfing your site as long as you can. If you keep visitors engaged, they will

- ▶ Gain a greater understanding of your services.
- ▶ Learn the breadth of your experience.
- ▶ Appreciate why you are different and better.
- ▶ Develop an emotional connection to you.
- ▶ *Be more likely to use your services when the need arises.*

Simply put, using the most advanced tools available, a law firm website can achieve a level of engagement that improves reputation and generates new business.