IMPROVING ONLINE VISIBILITY:

HOW TO EFFECTIVELY USE TAGS AND HASHTAGS IN YOUR LAW FIRM SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

AMERICAN ACADEMY
of Estate Planning Attorneys
Since 1993

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the specific channel your law firm uses to market your original content, the end goal is the same: to maximize exposure and be found online. While there are several factors that determine the number of people who find your content, tags and hashtags play a major role. In addition to your main keywords, they are used by search engines to determine how relevant your content is to what people are searching.

They are also used as a means of classification on social networks so users who are interested in your content can find it with greater ease. Let's review the importance of choosing relevant tags and hashtags and some tips for performing research about tag and hashtag trends.
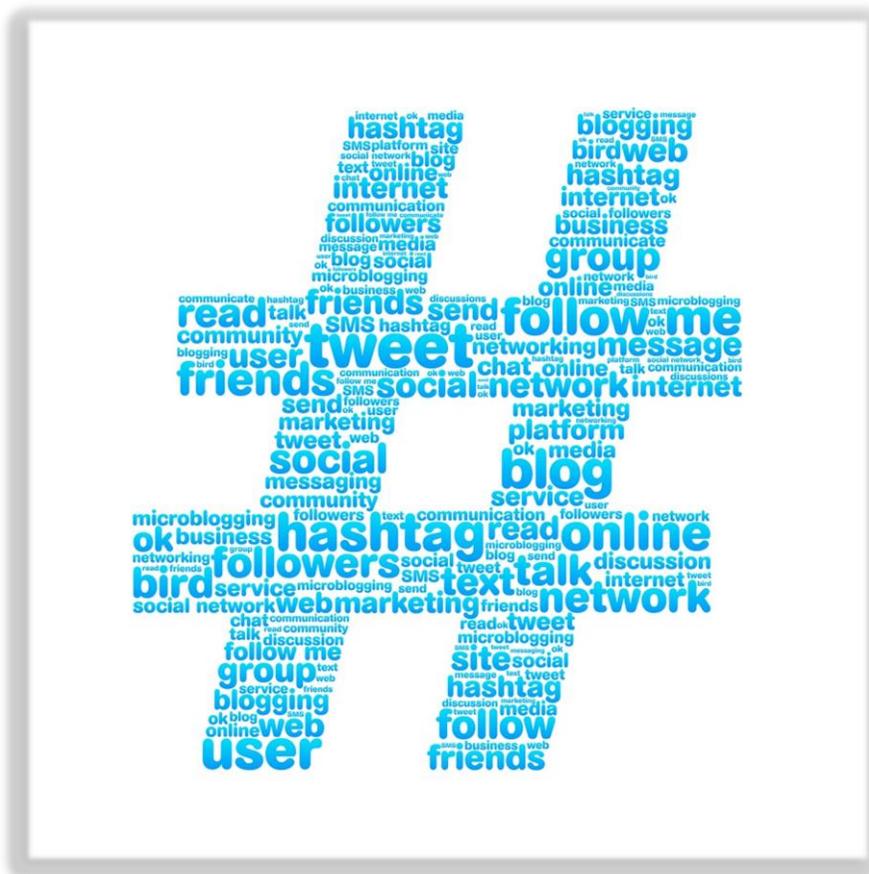
STANDING OUT WITH TAGS

Internet users are being barraged with more content than ever, making it necessary to take every possible measure to gain the attention of your prospective legal clients. For blog posts, taking the time to add some quality tags is helpful for making your posts more indexable by search engines. This ultimately improves your odds of ranking higher in search results. In addition to simply having your primary keyword phrase(s) to examine, this helps search engines better determine what your legal content is about and how relevant it is to what is being searched.

Tags can also take a relatively narrow topic and expand it for added SEO (Search Engine Optimization) juice. For example, if you wrote a blog post using the primary keyword phrase, "estate planning," including tags like "trust provisions," "real estate," and "inheritance" would let Google know about the details of the article. The end result should be more organic traffic from a targeted demographic with a genuine interest in your law firm. Tags are incredibly easy to add, especially using platforms like WordPress, so there is no reason not to take the extra time to incorporate them into your content.

THE ROLE OF HASHTAGS

The definition of a hashtag is a word or phrase on social networking websites preceded by a hash mark or pound sign (#), used within a message to identify a keyword or topic of interest and facilitate a search. Simply put, hashtags streamline the process of searching for information on a particular topic on social media platforms. This manner of conversation indexing was first introduced by Twitter, but is now used by numerous social networks including Facebook, Google+, Tumblr, Instagram and Flickr.

A hashtag functions similarly to a regular tag, but tends to focus more on current trends or topics. It's more temporal and may lose its relevancy after a few weeks or even a few days in some cases. If there was a particular legal case being widely discussed, you could incorporate a hashtag involving that case into a tweet or other social media post. This way, you immediately capitalize on a popular trend and potentially see a surge in exposure for a day or two. Ideally, this brings potential clients to your social media profile and results in a considerable amount of new followers, who may convert to potential clients.

CHOOSING TAGS AND HASHTAGS

To be effective, you can't blindly create tags and hashtags and expect them get any significant results. Instead, it's important to take a calculated approach where they are strategically selected for maximum impact. This starts with taking your primary keyword phrase and branching out from it. Here is an example:

If you created a post where your core keyword phrase was "Estate planning for aging parents," some potential tags could include "elder law," "child trust," and "financial planning." For hashtags, you would want to use a trending term like "#estateplanning2014." If there was a current case in the news relevant to your content, you could also base a hashtag around that story.

GENERAL TIPS

The terms you choose for tags and hashtags should be highly relevant and naturally complement your primary keyword phrase(s). They should branch out logically and include words that your legal audience might be looking for on search engines.

Keep tags and hashtags relatively brief and easy to understand. Using overly long tags or terms that only insiders would understand could minimize the overall exposure your content receives. Narrowing your focus and using words that are specific to your content is important for alleviating confusion. Also, remember that spaces are used in tags, but not in hashtags.

In general, you want to use a maximum of three tags or hashtags per post. Overdoing it and adding too many can actually be a detriment and potentially annoy readers. This is especially true with hashtags because more than three can make a post look like spam. This help center article from Twitter explains the guidelines for correctly using hashtags and the general etiquette you should keep in mind.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Consider using the following platforms that are helpful for doing research about trending tags and hashtags that will help rank your content higher in online searches.

- **Google Trends** – This acts like the pulse of the Internet and lets you see which terms are being searched at the moment.

- **TweetChat** – This makes it easy to follow hashtags across Twitter so you can get an idea of which terms you can use for your tweets.

- **Hashtagify** –Twitter hashtag search engine that allows you to search for certain keywords to come up with ideas.

- **What the Trend** – Similar to Google Trends, but focuses on the most popular hashtags at the moment.

By understanding how your law firm can benefit from tags and hashtags and making the effort to do some research, you can optimize your content marketing campaign. The precious time

that you spend creating content will pay off when you see increased interaction with your material than you would have without tags and hashtags. This subsequently means more spotlight on your law firm and an ongoing stream of potential clients.

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ESTATE PLANNING ATTORNEYS

The American Academy of Estate Planning Attorneys was founded in 1993 by two successful San Diego estate planning attorneys, Robert Armstrong and Sanford M. Fisch. Robert and Sandy envisioned a better way to practice law, so they created it. The Academy was born of their desire to share the valuable lessons they'd learned in transforming their practice into a flourishing, dynamic business. Over the past two decades, the Academy has helped hundreds of attorneys transform their lives and their legal practices.

The Academy thrives on seeing our Members' lives change as proven systems help them predictably generate more revenue, provide a work/life balance, and serve clients in an unparalleled way. We continually look for new and innovative ways to serve our Members, from capitalizing on the latest technology to helping them broaden the scope of their practices. Our goal is to reignite your passion for what you do and have it enrich every part of your life.

If you're ready to learn more about how we can help you, please contact us at info@aaepa.com or call (800) 846-1555.