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GETTING A LARGER PIECE OF A SHRINKING PIE MARK E. COHEN BANKRUPTCY LAW OFFICE

CHALLENGE

Mark E. Cohen practices bankruptcy law as a sole practitioner in Forest Hills, New York. For the past 25 years, he has built a reputation for providing excellent personal service and a shoulder for consumers facing bankruptcy to lean on. “These are people who see their lives falling apart,” says Mark. “It’s not a matter of ‘getting them.’ They need to be reassured that I understand not only bankruptcy law, but more importantly their individual worries and situation.”

Personable and outgoing, Mark served as a bartender through college and law school, so developing a good bedside manner for bankruptcy clients came easily. The challenge arose recently as the number of bankruptcy filings began to decrease. A national wave of bankruptcies that started in 2008 reached a peak in September 2010, when nearly 1.6 million bankruptcies were filed. Since then, there has been a steady decline, with the number of bankruptcy filings in June of 2016 reaching the lowest for any 12-month period since 2007.

While Mark’s website helped him project a reassuring image, he was not getting value for his investment. Faced with a shrinking customer base, he decided to look for a new marketing partner.

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SOLUTION

“Martindale started out as a publisher of legal books, so they were in a much better position to understand the legal industry and my needs,” he said. “I remember when I was speaking to the company — I was in the car for a long ride and the sales rep was very comprehensive in explaining what I would get for my money and what to expect.”

When we assumed responsibility for Mark’s website, we knew he had built up tremendous brand equity and search engine value in his domain, nyconsumerbankruptcy.com, so we did not change that. What we did change was his site’s content and design. Mark’s tagline captures the essence of his brand: “Bankruptcy is not an end but a new beginning. We know numbers. We know people. We can help.”

To support Mark’s goals, we wove in emotion-invoking phrases such as “I understand the distress you deal with,” and “I bring debt relief to those who desperately need it.” The addition of FAQs and bankruptcy myth debunkers addresses consumers’ concerns and reassures them that they have found the right lawyer. Heartfelt testimonials help seal the deal.

Next we added Ngage Live Chat, so Mark could further emphasize his concern for his clients. “It lets people feel that there’s someone on the other end of the line. I’ve had live chats in the middle of the night. It might be 11 or 12 o’clock and I’ll send them an email: ‘I see you’re online and I will contact you in the morning.’ Live chat allows Mark to provide the personal touch that distinguishes him from his competitors.

The website’s new design supports Mark’s mission by featuring a soft and inviting color palette and a user-friendly navigation that makes it easy for anxious prospects to find what they need quickly.

RESULTS

STEADY SUCCESS AS A SOLE PRACTITIONER

Mark doesn’t rely on his website alone to bring in clients. He also purchases bankruptcy leads in Queens County, NY from Martindale-Nolo. Mark wasn’t a stranger to the benefits of buying qualified leads, as he previously used a similar service, but he found he cut his costs by two-thirds when he shifted providers. With Martindale-Nolo he focuses on leads from a very targeted area: the zip code where his office is and a neighboring zip code. This enables Mark to be efficient in managing the leads as a sole practitioner.

In addition to receiving a better return on his investment, Mark has seen the number of leads from his website increase by 55 percent, thanks to Ngage as visitors who were previously leaving the site became clients.

This steady growth has counteracted the steady decline in bankruptcy cases. “I have a target number of cases I strive for each month based on my overhead and the amount I would like to bring home,” said Mark. “My number has been steady for the past few years because I’m getting a larger percentage of a smaller pie.” ❖