

Case Study

The Law Office of John M. Holmes, Jr.

Restoring a Reputation to
Rebuild a Practice

About The Law Office of John M. Holmes, Jr.



Practice Area

Criminal Law



Challenge

Rebuilding an online reputation



Location

North Carolina

| Challenge

Recasting an online presence in a positive light

For John M. Holmes, taking a sleeping pill for the first time one night in 2012 would change his life—and his law practice — forever. “I sleepwalked, got a cab to a bar, got drunk and got in an altercation with police officers,” he was later told. Holmes had no recollection of any of the events and had to deal with the consequences. Holmes was a well-known criminal law attorney in Sanford, North Carolina, and the local news relished the irony of his arrest, blasting his mugshot on TV news, in newspapers and, most damaging of all, online. He was disbarred for over a year. By the time he had regained his license, his Sanford, North Carolina firm, The Law Office of John M. Holmes, Jr., was in shambles and his reputation boiled down to the mug shot that still came up on the first page of Google searches.

Prior to his arrest, Holmes had a successful criminal and family law practice that he ran by himself. He made limited marketing efforts and had a straightforward website for the largely blue-collar clients he attracted. The first college graduate in his family, he had a reputation for getting things done for clients who often paid his fees in cash. But after the arrest, the calls stopped, prompting the realization that he needed to try something new.

| Solution

Rebrand the firm and restore his reputation.

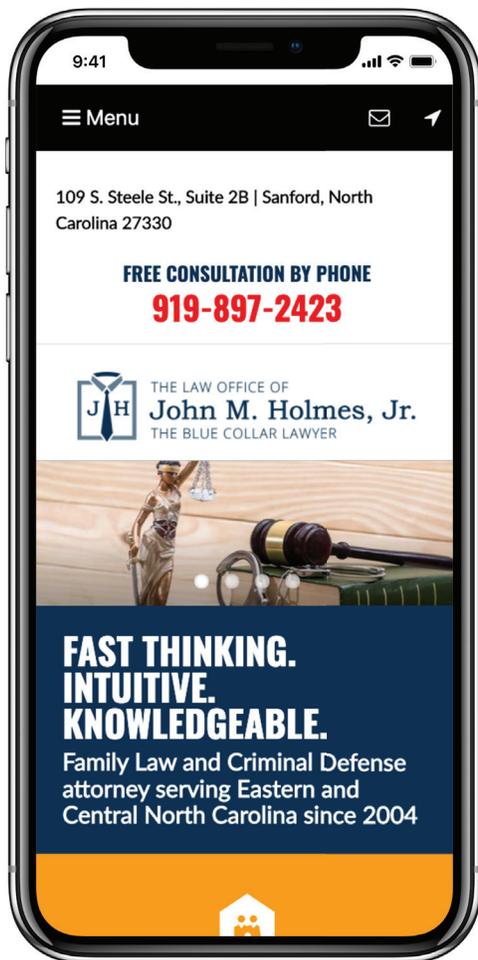
After contacting Martindale-Hubbell, Holmes was connected with his sales representative, Duke Guthrie, who became an invaluable, trusted partner. “He told me, ‘Look, it’s not going to happen overnight, but if you follow my instructions, I’ll get you where you need to be,’” recalls Holmes. “I said, ‘Okay, what do I need to do?’” The first step was getting listed on Martindale.com to quickly help his credibility. Then, as they discussed his own blue-collar background and working-class clientele, they landed on a rebrand: The Blue Collar Lawyer, which is now the tagline on the firm’s website and all of its marketing.

His sales rep also recommended that Holmes collect peer and client reviews, by asking current clients and lawyer peers to leave positive reviews on Lawyers.com, Martindale.com and other online review sites. He redesigned his website into a Martindale Bronze website, adding new custom content for his practice areas written by Martindale content pros, live chat and new static and animated banners. He also received a Reputation Boost on Lawyers.com and Martindale.com with fresh profile rewrites. Holmes and Guthrie decided to enhance his social media presence with Martindale’s Social Starter, which posts content related to criminal defense and family law topics on Holmes’s Facebook and LinkedIn pages.

| Results

A 10-fold increase in fee income.

Holmes had been warned by Guthrie that progress would be slow. But over the months to come, he gradually saw his mug shot get pushed down in Google searches. He also knew he was getting more calls via Google search, more views and engagement on his own site, more referrals from other attorneys and a growing collection of positive online reviews.



During the pandemic of 2020, Holmes worked from his deck in sunny North Carolina for months, regularly checking his stats on Lawyers.com, Martindale.com, Google My Business and his own website. In October—about a year and a half after seeking marketing help from Martindale—Google My Business reported 717 views for the Law Office of John M. Holmes and a 4.8 rating out of 5 with 18 reviews for the attorney. On Martindale.com, he had 4.5 peer rating and 100 percent rating from 25 client reviews. In the same month, his profile on Lawyers.com showed a 5 out of 5 rating from client reviews.

“I attribute that to Duke,” Holmes says of his sales rep. “He told me what to do, and I did it. I do the legal work and he does the marketing work. I’m not going to ask him to handle a speeding ticket for me. But I am going to ask him to do the marketing.”

“

My fee income has increased 10-fold,” he says. “Last month, I brought in a significant amount of income, and I basically do all my work from home now [due to the pandemic].”

For Holmes, it’s not just that he bounced back from a huge career crisis—it’s that he is actually doing better than before his arrest.

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Holmes says a lot of lawyers he knows think they don’t need marketing—that if you are good enough your peers will recommend you and your excellent reputation will precede you. But Holmes emphatically disagrees.

“I think it’s great when someone calls you and says my cousin or a friend told me you’re a great lawyer,” he explains. “That’s one thing. But you also have to be open to different avenues.” Adding wryly, “Such as actual marketing.”

Convert more visitors into clients

Grow Your Client Base

Martindale-Avvo™

Martindale-Hubbell is powered by Martindale-Avvo, the largest legal marketing network helping attorneys grow their practice through exposure to 25 million consumers monthly. We drive prospects to attorneys with real-time lead generation, online legal profiles, live chat, website services, and lead intake and management tools.

OUR LEGAL MARKETING NETWORK

