

Digital Content Marketing Survey – How to Reach In-House Counsel

Law firms have made massive investments in content, mostly aimed at deepening their engagement with in-house counsel. But, for the most part, their efforts are falling short, according to a recent survey by strategic communications firm **Greentarget** and consulting firm **Zeughauser Group**.

Only about half of in-house attorneys consider law-firm content “good to excellent,” the same as in 2017, and up only slightly since 2015, according to the 2018 State of Digital & Content Marketing Survey, released by Greentarget and Zeughauser Group.

But the survey also provides clear guidance on how firms can make inroads with their most important readers. For our seventh annual survey we asked in-house counsel not only about their content consumption habits, but also what content they value most, where they get it, and how often they go there. The survey found that:

- In-house counsel want content that helps them do their jobs. More than three-quarters of our respondents say they most value utility in the content they consume – ahead of timeliness (58 percent), reliable sources (56 percent) and compelling headlines (51 percent).
- And they want it in the form of articles, alerts and newsletters, respectively. Those are respondents’ most preferred content vehicles.
- Email works – when it’s good. Forty percent of in-house counsel say they get information from email notifications every day – but only 25 percent say they find them valuable. That’s a huge opportunity to reach clients and prospects, and

to stand out from the noise, by creating email alerts that deliver on the qualities in-house lawyers are looking for.

- Traditional media most trusted. Fifty-four percent of respondents go to traditional media (e.g., The Wall Street Journal) on a daily basis for legal, business and industry news and information, and 45 percent find such sources very valuable – far above any other source.

- Brevity matters. Nearly a third of in-house counsel value shorter content, while only 5 percent value longer pieces. They also want email alerts to be brief. And they only rank in-depth as a key attribute for a single content category – research reports.

- Podcasts show promise. More than a quarter of respondents put podcasts among their preferred content vehicles – ahead of video and perhaps surprising for a relatively new medium. Audio content gives consumers hands- and eyes-free information for their commutes or during workouts. And podcasts are the only medium where respondents say they consider entertainment value – an opportunity to rise above the noise for firms that are willing to break from the industry's staid conventions.

- On social media, more noise than signal. About a third of in-house counsel look at social media every day, but only 11 percent find anything of value there. By contrast, less than a quarter view industry association publications and websites every day, but 43 percent find those valuable.

“This is the age of information overload,” said John Corey, founding partner of Greentarget. “In-house counsel want content that’s useful, timely, well-sourced and provides lively engagement starting from the subject line. If they want to elevate the conversation, firms have to quickly and efficiently tell in-house counsel what they have to say, why it matters and what law departments should do about it.”

The 2018 report went further than in past years, identifying which content types were most preferred by in-house counsel – and what attributes are most valued regarding those content

types. Respondents' top three content types are articles, alerts and newsletters – and in each case, they want that content to be relevant and timely. For articles and newsletters, respondents want content to be educational – and they prefer that alerts be brief.

“Drilling down to this level of detail about what is and isn't working when it comes to law firm-generated content is important – and consequential,” said Mary K. Young, a partner with Zeughauser Group. “Firms can take this information and the related guidance and find ways to stand out and build their brands with in-house counsel, who are, of course, key decision makers within their organizations.”