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## Google This, Google That: Googling beyond the Search Engine

Author: Doug Jasinski  
Topic: Legal Marketing  
Date: March 2008  
Publication: Law Practice Magazine.



100-111 Water Street  
Vancouver, BC V6B 1A7  
Canada

604.739.8976  
info@skunkworks.ca  
www.skunkworks.ca



# Google This, Google That Googling beyond the Search Engine

By Doug Jasinski

While you are no doubt familiar with Google's eponymous search engine, you may not yet have explored many other Google offerings. The company has developed several excellent applications that are all free and that can all be put to good use in the practice of law. Here are 6 additional Google tools you (or your competitors) will likely be using soon:

## 1. iGoogle - Personalized Google page

Google's standard search page is positively Spartan in terms of content. iGoogle gives you the option to populate some of that empty white space beneath the search box with a variety of components that you can configure in the order you like, from the practical (top news items, a 7-item to-do list, a currency converter, a clock, weather, a Wikipedia search box) to the whimsical (horoscopes, mini-golf, Dilbert). That yellow 7-item maximum to-do list on a stylized notepad in the middle of the screen staring back at you every time you do a Google search can help you stay focused on accomplishing the first things first.

*Find it here:* <http://www.google.com/ig?hl=en>

## 2. Google Alerts - email notification for client & industry news

You can use Google Alerts to receive email notifications for any search term(s) you choose. Enter the names of your own firm, your key clients and particular phrases relevant to your client industry or legal specialty and receive alerts once a day, once a week or as it happens when your selected terms appear in the news. You'll know important news about your clients before they do.

*Find it here:* <http://www.google.com/alerts?hl=en>



### **3. Google News – Personalized news web page**

The Google news page aggregates headlines from more than 4,500 English language news sources, groups similar stories together, and then lets you customize from there. The sections are similar to those of a major newspaper (top stories, world, business, sports, entertainment, etc.) and each section shows a handful of headlines, a related picture, the source, and links to additional related articles. You can adjust the number of stories displayed in each section, re-arrange the section order, delete existing sections or add custom sections (for example I have added a section for “legal marketing” news). If you already use a feed reader, it has available RSS and atom feeds as well. All in all it’s a powerful tool for shaping news content in a way that’s meaningful for you.

*Find it here:* <http://news.google.com>

### **4. Google Analytics – Detailed website statistics**

Websites are the single most important marketing tool for most law firms. It is therefore critical for firms to understand exactly how their website is being used. Google analytics does a masterful job of presenting virtually anything and everything you want to know about your website traffic in an intuitive visual format (pie charts, graphs, maps) that doesn’t require a computer programming degree to understand.

From the main dashboard you can see at a glance the number of visits to your site in the last month, the number of individual pages viewed, the average number of pages per visit, the average length of time spent on your site, a map view showing where your visitors are geographically concentrated, the top pages on your website, and the respective percentage of visitors who found you via search engines, via links, or who went directly to your site. From there, you can delve deeper – much deeper – into almost any metric you choose. You can also easily email and/or export the automatically generated reports into pdf, xml, or other formats. Using this tool does require the installation of a small amount of computer code in your website, and so is best done by your website developer, but the resulting goldmine of information will be all yours.

*Find it here:* <http://www.google.com/analytics>



## **5. Google Maps – Map, satellite imagery, and directions**

If you haven't used Google maps to see satellite imagery of your own home yet, you are missing out. But beyond the simple "wow" factor of Google maps, which lets you choose between a map view, satellite view, or hybrid image that you can zoom in or out, there is also an incredibly good directions tool. Type in an address, select "get directions: to here" or "from here", type the second address, and presto, you have a detailed set of driving instructions from point A to point B including specific routes, distances for each segment, and estimated driving times. Get to that new client's office faster than ever before. Your website developer can also sign up for and use a free Google Maps API key to place a Google Map for your office on the contact page of your website, making it easier for your clients to find and visit you.

*Find the maps here:* <http://maps.google.com/>

*Find the tool to install a map on your own website here:*  
<http://code.google.com/apis/maps/>

## **6. Google Local – List your firm to increase online exposure**

Google often includes a section near the top of its search results (and map) pages for local businesses that match the search term in question. For example, type "Seattle Attorneys" into Google's search engine and you will see a small map near the top of the search results page with push-pin style markers identifying local firms within the area. These are firms that have registered a free listing with the Google Local service. You should too.

*Find it here:* <https://www.google.com/local/add/login>

Doug Jasinski LL.B. is the Principal of Skunkworks Creative Group Inc. ([www.skunkworks.ca](http://www.skunkworks.ca)), a professional services advertising agency, and President of Access Legal Systems Inc., an interactive legal marketing firm.

