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 DOLAN MEDIA

## Winning Web Sites Praised For Clean Design, Focused Content

### *Lawyers Weekly's Best Law Firm Web Site Contest*

Law firm Web sites with crisp designs, focused content — and in one case, a bulldog named Winston — have won top honors in Lawyers Weekly's first annual "Best Law Firm Web Site Contest."

Judges praised several entrants for their consumer-friendly pages that also reinforced the firm's brand and image.

Lawyers Weekly publisher David Blackwell said the competition would become an annual event.

"It has become clear to us that a Web site is a necessary component of today's law practice," Blackwell said. "We hope this contest will benefit the entire bar by showcasing innovation and creativity among their peers."

Among the criteria used by judges to evaluate each site:

- **Branding and positioning.** Did the Web site and its content convey the firm's unique selling proposition?

- **Design.** How good was the site's overall look and ease in reading?

- **Communication of focus and expertise.** Was the breadth of the firm's practice and expertise readily available?

- **Web visibility.** How easy was it to find the firm doing a Google, Yahoo or related search?

#### **The Winners Are...**

There were three finalists in the categories of small firm (1-5 attorneys), medium firm (6-25 lawyers) and large firm (26 or more lawyers). An overall winner was also selected.

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# Best Law Firm Web Sites

contact: mike.dayton@sc.lawyersweekly.com

## Winning Web Sites Praised For Clean Design, Focused Content

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• **Large firms.** This year's large firm and overall winner owes its success, in part, to Winston, the bulldog that serves as the advertising mascot of Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice.

One judge said Womble Carlyle's use of Winston on its Web site was "unique, fresh and very strategic. Not only does the character add to the approachable, comfortable feel of the site but it also strongly reinforces the

firm's brand equity."

The judges also praised the site for its "significant quantity of content" written in a persuasive manner and its "crisp, clear graphics throughout."

Winning second place was Nelson Mullins for a well-designed site with "deep content, many useful tools and resources." The labor and employment firm Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, P.C., placed third for a well-organized site with "sharp design and use of color and imagery."

• **Medium firms.** In the medium category, the judges selected the six-lawyer Foster Law Firm in Greenville as their top pick, praising its site for "deep and current content, which adds to the credibility."

Florence-based Willcox, Buyck & Williams, P.A, with 10 attorneys, placed second. The firm's site made a "good visual impression," the judges said, and had "substantial content that is laid out well."

Charleston's eight-lawyer Steinberg

Law Firm, with a personal injury and workers' compensation practice, took third place. Judges liked the site's clean and straightforward design and said its "imagery nicely reinforces the branding."

• **Small firms.** Taking first in this category was two-lawyer Monckton Law of Myrtle Beach, which focuses on criminal defense and personal injury. The judges said the site was "strongly branded and appeals to the consumer target." They also said "it is clear what the firm does when a visitor lands on the home page."

The site of Myrtle Beach personal injury lawyer David Swanner took second place. Swanner's site uses the catchy Web address "davidvsgoliath.com" and links to the trial law blog that he authors (see Dec. 12, 2005 Lawyers Weekly). Swanner's site had a "strong communication of brand" and "a consumer-friendly home page layout and design," the judges said.

The three-lawyer Strom Law firm in Columbia, founded in 1996 by former U.S. Attorney J.P. Strom Jr., took third place. The judges said it had substantial content and good navigation. They also said the site made it easy to contact someone in the firm.

For a look at each winner's home page, see the special section on pages 8-13.

By MICHAEL DAYTON

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## Meet the Law Firm Web Site Contest Judges

### Mike Duncan

is CEO and creative director of Sage Island, an interactive marketing agency in Wilmington, N.C., with a 20-member staff including account executives, graphic designers, Web programmers, search engine and Internet marketing consultants, and administrators.

Clients include the North Carolina State Bar. [www.sageisland.com](http://www.sageisland.com)



### Dale Tincher

is the founder, president and managing partner of Consultwebs.com, Inc., a full-service Internet-Web design and Web consulting company with eight employees and 15 subcontractors in Raleigh, N.C. The company's primary focus is law firm Web marketing and design.

It currently supports more than 300 law firm client Web sites. Clients include the ABA. [www.consultwebs.com](http://www.consultwebs.com)



# Best Law Firm Web Sites – Large Firm

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## Winner

### Large Law Firms & Overall Contest

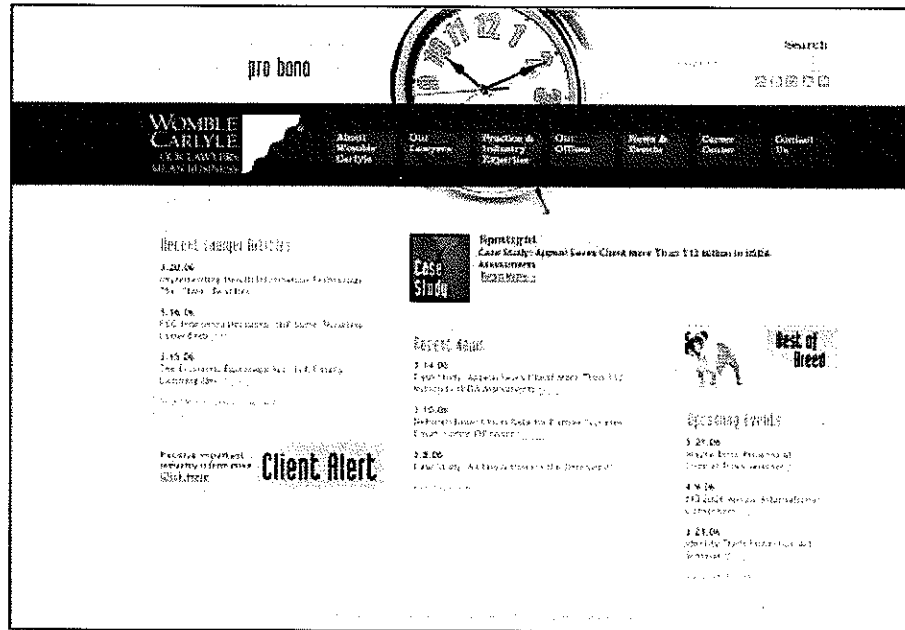
**Firm name:** Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice

**URL:** www.wcsr.com

**Web designer:** carbonhouse, inc.

**What the judges say:** Womble Carlyle had one of the strongest branded sites among all sites reviewed. The design and layout is both consumer friendly and current. The site offers multiple tools and resources which are very useful and easy to locate. The incorporation of Winston the bulldog is unique, fresh and very strategic. Not only does the character add to the approachable, comfortable feel of the site but it also strongly reinforces the firm's brand equity.

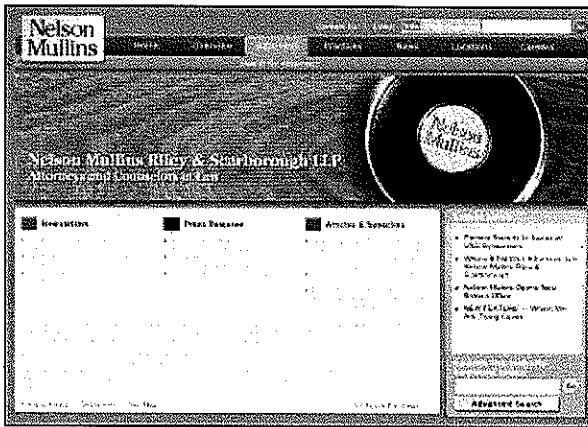
The Womble Carlyle Web site immediately presents a helpful and personable online face for the firm. Tailored to the consumer in all aspects, the site provides a significant quantity



of content and is written in an informative and persuasive manner. The crisp, clear graphics throughout the site assist in

keeping the visitor's attention while reinforcing each topic's content. The professional and consistent marketing/branding

of the firm through the visual interface and content development make www.wcsr.com stand out from other sites.



## 2nd place

### Large Law Firms

**Firm name:** Nelson Mullins

**URL:** www.nelsonmullins.com

**Web designer:** N/A

**What the judges say:** Well designed, deep content, many useful tools and resources. Communication of brand identity and distinction could be stronger.

## 3rd place

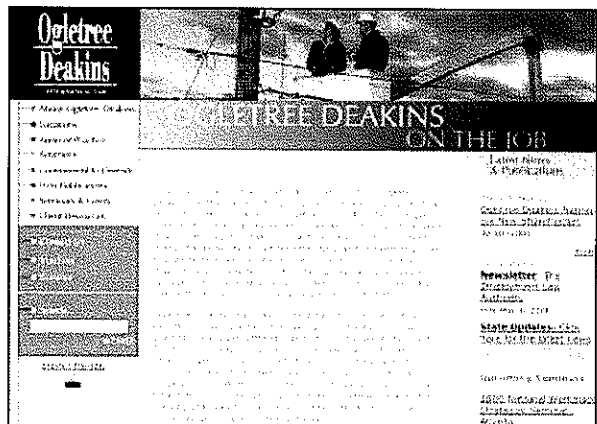
### Large Law Firms

**Firm name:** Ogletree Deakins

**URL:** www.ogletreedeakins.com

**Web designer:** N/A

**What the judges say:** Sharp design and use of color and imagery. Content well organized, possibly too many secondary menu items in left hand navigation bar.



# Best Law Firm Web Sites – Medium Firm

contact: mike.dayton@sc.lawyersweekly.com

## Winner Medium Law Firms

Firm name: Foster Law Firm LLP

URL: www.fosterfoster.com

Web designer: N/A

What the judges say: Nicely designed site with deep and current content, which adds to the credibility.

## 2nd place Medium Law Firms

Firm name: Willcox, Buyck & Williams, P.A.

URL: www.willcoxlaw.com

Web designer: N/A

What the judges say: Good visual impression. Substantial content that is laid out well.

## 3rd place Medium Law Firms

Firm name: Steinberg Law Firm

URL: www.steinberglawfirm.com

Web designer: N/A

What the judges say: Clean design. Layout is very straightforward and site is easy to navigate. Good use of tools and resources. Imagery nicely reinforces the branding.

# Best Law Firm Web Sites – Small Firm

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## Winner Small Law Firms

Firm name: Monckton Law Firm

URL:  
www.moncktonlawfirm.com

Web designer: N/A

**What the judges say:** Nice site with clear navigation, which organizes the deep content quite well. Strongly branded and appeals to the consumer target. Monckton Law Firm's site is attractive. The home page and site are easy to navigate. It is clear what the firm does when a visitor lands on the home page. The content is concise and informative and links to other pages of content. The newsletter page has a considerable amount of content. The contact information is easy to find. Print, E-mail and Bookmark icons are available. Areas that could be improved are moncktonlawfirm.com's search engine optimization and the testimonials and news page should be completed.

## 2nd place Small Law Firms

Firm name: David A. Swanner

URL: www.davidvsgoliath.com

Web designer: www.justia.com

**What the judges say:** Strong communication of brand. Consumer-friendly home page layout and design. Navigation is heavy.

## 3rd place Small Law Firms

Firm name: Strom Law Firm

URL: www.stromlaw.com

Web designer: N/A

**What the judges say:** Substantial content, good navigation. Easy to contact the firm.