



INTERNET

Lawsuits made simple? Website makes the claim

■ A South Florida attorney is launching WhoCanISue.com, a website to help users find the best lawyer for their needs.

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As an attorney with experience in online media companies, Curtis Wolfe saw problems in how lawyers advertise on the Web.

Even though he practices law himself, when he had to find a divorce attorney for a friend, it wasn't easy.

"I had to call five other attorneys until I got someone," Wolfe

said. So imagine how hard it is for people who don't have connections in law.

Some use a site like Lawyers.com, where the public can search for an attorney in their area, but Wolfe said navigating those sites can be "a very painful user experience."

And lawyers will use techniques like search-engine optimization and search-engine marketing to make sure they appear at the top of the list when you do a Google search.

•TURN TO LAWYERS, 6C

Website to match potential clients, attorneys

•LAWYERS, FROM 1C

But law firm sites can get lost in the mix, and it's not always effective. "None of it seems to capture — in my mind — the way it should be done," Wolfe said.

So with financial help from friends and family, the South Florida attorney built WhoCanISue.com. Users are asked to answer a few questions about their situation, and in turn, will get a list of attorneys who best fit their needs. It's free for users, but not for lawyers. The lawyer who pays the most to be shown for a particular specialty gets his name on the top of that list.

"I think we are really revolutionizing how people will find attorneys in the

future," Wolfe said. "Right now, the system isn't really effective."

HARD TO FIND

New York attorney and advisor Ari L. Kaplan recently released a book about how lawyers can stand out, called *The Opportunity Maker: Strategies for Inspiring Your Legal Career Through Creative Networking and Business Development*. He said lawyers find marketing a headache because it's not part of the traditional legal education.

"They study the law and they don't study how to promote what they do," Kaplan said. "Lawyers are now starting to realize the potential of online marketing."

Kaplan said if Wolfe can



WOLFE

better way to pair people," Kaplan said.

But Dan Alpert, a director at the digital marketing services firm Avenue A | Razorfish, said the site's name — WhoCanISue.com — is creative and memorable, but it could be misleading and therefore be problematic for this startup.

"There is a fine line between being literal and being catchy," Alpert said.

prove the value in his site, lawyers won't hesitate to pay to be featured on it.

"There's always a need for a better way to pair people,"

"It's catchy, but I'm not sure what it means. When not in context, WhoCanISue.com seems vindictive."

There are local bar association referral services available, but they are not always as user-friendly as WhoCanISue promises to be. The Broward County Bar Association has an online referral service form to fill out, but nowhere on the site does it explain how the service works. You have to call to learn more.

SHORT ON DETAILS

The Dade County Bar Association offers neither an explanation of the service on its site nor a form to fill out. There's only a phone number.

Both associations said it

costs \$50 for a half-hour appointment with a referred attorney.

Wolfe is announcing his website at the annual American Bar Association meeting Thursday in New York. He says the first 500 attorneys to sign up for the site will not have to pay the \$1,000 yearly membership fee. The site is scheduled to be open to the public in September, when Wolfe's commercials will begin to hit the airwaves.

"We've already been approached by a couple of groups interested in investing in the company," Wolfe said.

He said the site will also feature helpful legal information and tips for the public.