

O2O Business Strategy Analysis in Legal Consulting Industry —Take lawyer Fei Long as the Case

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Abstract: This article analyzes the advantages of adopting O2O (online to offline) in the legal consulting industry and takes Lawyer Fei Long as a case study for in-depth analysis. The paper indicates four potential benefits of O2O's implementation in law firms, including expanded consumer scope, accumulated reputation, reduced information asymmetry, and networking. Furthermore, the paper identifies uniqueness, personal image, and the inherent public-welfare purpose as the critical factors for Lawyer Fei Long's business success. Overall, this paper seeks to provide insights and practical suggestions for both legal firms and other industries on whether to implement O2O for business innovation and continuous improvements.

Keywords: O2O business strategy, legal consulting industry, online marketing, offline services, Lawyer Fei long

1. Introduction

Online marketing and physical commerce are becoming more closely linked as e-markets and social communities develop rapidly. O2O (online-to-offline), created by Eric Rampell, is designed to help firms increase overall offline profits by transferring online traffic to offline services. Since there is a positive relationship between consumers' satisfaction and reuse intention [1], as well as a positive correlation between customer loyalty from O2O experiences and repurchase desire [2], companies are encouraged to equip themselves with various online marketing platforms to collect information about customers' expectations first and then provide matched services to generate satisfaction.

Even though there was research on O2O's real-situation implementations, the research on O2O in the legal consulting industry remains scarce. As Cuppens emphasized [3], O2O's interoperability means the application in law firms requires interactions between online and offline platforms. To help close the gap and facilitate more legal business successes, this paper aims to enable different types of industries to obtain a general overview of O2O's several modes, the benefits of O2O, and its critical factors.

The remaining paper is structured as follows. Section 2 talks about O2O's business model and its applications in legal companies. Section 3 uses Lawyer Fei Long as a case study. Section 4 reveals some limitations of O2O in legal consulting enterprises. The last section concludes the paper.

2. O2O's Different Modes and its Applications in Law Firms

This section contains two sub-parts: one describes four modes of O2O. and the other discusses the beneficial effects of O2O in legal enterprises.

2.1. O2O's Four Modes

The first part explains the different modes and uses specific firms to help clarify the concepts.

2.1.1. Online to Offline Mode

This model largely relies on online information flow, requiring potential customers to search for the products' information online and then match their consumption willingness to make offline purchases; for example, Starbucks's mobile app enables the consumer to order online and then pick up the drinks in stores. For this mode, Zhu emphasizes the importance of offline experiences because customer satisfaction is positively related to continuous use intention [4].

2.1.2. Offline to Online Mode

This model first popularizes goods or services offline and then asks curious customers for online purchases. For example, suning. cn enables the potential consumers to experience offline services first; then, the enterprise drives these offline business flows to online platforms for online consumption, successfully creating the interaction between offline and online platforms.

2.1.3. Offline to Online to Offline Mode

This model transfers the offline commercial flow to the third-party online transaction and finally enables consumers to enjoy offline services. Because of the need for a third-party online platform, Hwang indicates the importance of instant messages for the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and overall O2O satisfaction [5]. For example, Papa John's pizza sets up a third-party app for consumers to make online orders before they get to the physical store they choose.

2.1.4. Online to Offline to Online Mode

This model shares the online traffic to offline services and then returns to online platforms, which may work better for large group purchase websites. For example, Jingdong creates JD.com for online marketing, then asks some wholesalers to experience products offline, and finally encourages them to re-purchase in large quantities through JD.com.

2.2. The Potential Benefits of O2O's Application in Law Firms

The second part focuses on O2O's implementations in legal consulting industries and illustrates a logic map, Figure 1, to demonstrate its possible benefits.

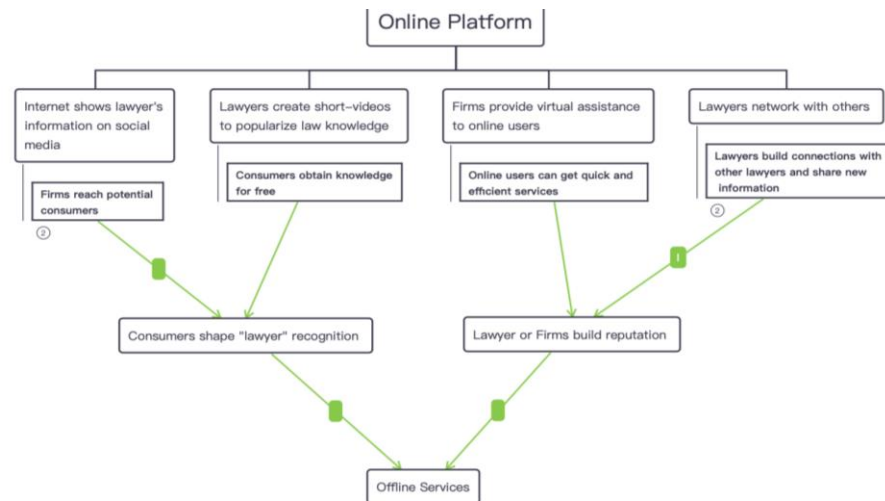


Fig. 1. The implementations of O2O in legal consulting industries.

2.2.1. O2O Attracts More Potential Consumers

Since the Internet displays various pieces of information on different social media platforms, such as the contracted lawyer's information or their areas of expertise, more users can get notified about lawyers' backgrounds. Smith indicates that additional platforms are beneficial; so, it is recommended for lawyers to employ the power of social media [6], such as maintaining accounts on LinkedIn or Twitter, as a method to connect with clients and the public. Through high exposure online, lawyers can describe themselves to potential consumers and gradually promote "lawyer" awareness among them, driving these clients to experience offline consulting services.

2.2.2. O2O Helps Popularize Law Knowledge to Build the Firm's Reputation

As Elefant identifies [7], social media allows lawyers to educate the public and gradually build a reputation. Many of them create short videos to impart legal knowledge through online platforms such as Douyin. Compared with traditional forms of learning, short videos are more entertaining, enabling users to learn basic legal concepts while enjoying their leisure time. From such a public-welfare effect, more people realize the importance of legal knowledge and get familiar with certain lawyers through social media. As his or her reputation grows, that lawyer may get offline cases sent to him or her by people who found him or her online.

2.2.3. O2O Reduces Information Asymmetry Through Online Services

By providing affordable virtual services to consumers, lawyers reduce the high consulting fees caused by information asymmetry. For example, on LegalShield, once the review is accepted, the client can be contacted by a lawyer in 4 hours or less. This virtual quick response can help resolve many simple issues, simplifying the whole consulting process and making the legal industry more transparent. Such an effect not only decreases the possibility of being charged with inflated consulting prices but also draws online consumers whose cases are more complicated into physical firms for further assistance.

2.2.4.O2O Facilitates Networking Among Lawyers for Successful Legal Careers

Lawyers have long recognized the importance of networking, and social media provides the opportunity to network with other lawyers. Lackey regards professionally-focused social media sites as valuable networking tools [8], and Chester reveals that through the media [9], lawyers can share information about the law and practice with each other. Networking is necessary because it not only generates personal referrals to certain delegates but also reflects a lawyer's professional reputation, creating a more respected personal image for further legal careers.

3. A Case Study: Lawyer Fei Long

Fei Long is a lawyer who does online legal consulting through her live streaming on Douyin. Her broadcast is designed to help people who need legal support learn basic laws and give suggestions to protect these consultants' properties to the greatest extent. Thus, this section of the article takes lawyer Fei Long as an example to deeply analyze her applications of the O2O business model and illustrate the key factors that led to her success on Douyin.

3.1. Long's Business Strategy

3.1.1.Value Orientation

As a lawyer, Long provides her consultants with rational advice from a practical point of view to protect their interests to the greatest extent.

3.1.2.Business Strategy

Long's live broadcast constantly shapes her fan base, building the foundation for her future offline consulting services. Long's daily fixed online consulting streaming times are 12:00-15:00 and 20:00-23:00 in the evening, which not only generated expectations among the audiences but also made them accustomed to her show, gradually shaping customer loyalty, which worked as preparation for Long's future offline services.

3.1.3.Profit Method

Long makes profits in two ways. One method is that whenever Long does a live broadcast, audiences can reward her with live gifts, and several top ones can do online consulting with her. When these rewards are accumulated to a certain amount, Long can monetize them directly from her account. Also, Long posts some of the re-edited fragments from her life on the account. When she publishes these short videos, Douyin pays her with a creator's fund. The other way is through offline services. Since Long gradually expands her popularity on Douyin, she accumulates a fan base and builds her credibility as a lawyer, encouraging the online traffic to be transformed into offline case delegates.

3.2. The Key to Long's Business Success

This part focuses on exploring the key factors that facilitate Long's popularity and illustrates Figure 2 to vividly demonstrate the logic.

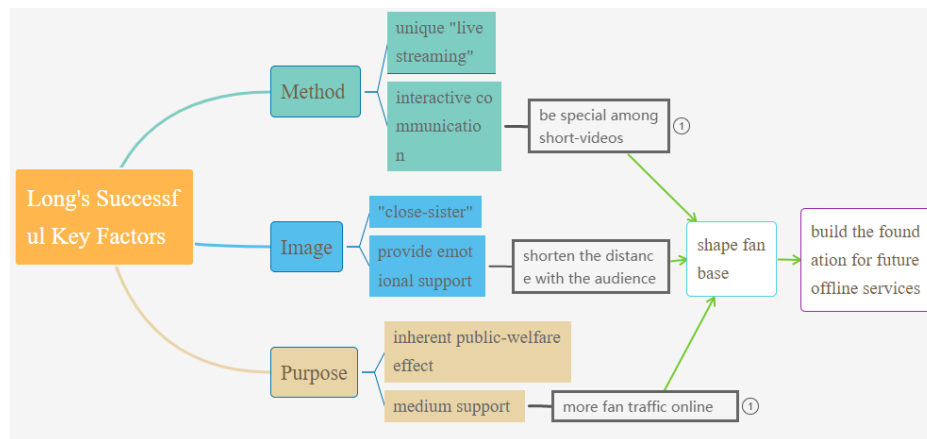


Figure 2: Critical factors toward Long's business success.

3.2.1. Uniqueness+O2O

Long's interactive live broadcast makes her special and prepares her to transform the online fan economy into offline revenues. Zeynep emphasizes that the engagement characteristics of vloggers elicited trust more than authoritative knowledge characteristics [10]. Long differs from other knowledge-spreading vloggers who simply describe concepts through short videos; she expands her popularity through the interactive communication of online consulting and re-edited live broadcast pieces. From these two methods, Long successfully stands out of the one-way "preaching" mode and establishes relationships with her potential clients. Then, popularity and reputation work together as preparations for future offline consulting, allowing Long to obtain additional income through offline case delegations.

3.2.2. Personal Image

Long's "close-sister" image enables her to build an emotional connection with the audience. Long does not wear a suit in her live-streaming room to convey a sense of affluence. Instead, she is bare-faced and wears comfortable clothes. This appearance successfully shortens the distance from her audience. Furthermore, as most of the stories shared in her broadcast are simple-life issues, Long's overall appearance helps her build an image of a close sister who listens patiently and gives rational opinions as well as emotional support.

3.2.3. Public-Welfare Purpose + Medium Support

Long's inherent public-welfare purpose and the medium's support help promote her popularity on Douyin. While she explains basic legal knowledge during her live broadcast, Long not only popularizes legal information but also makes the legal profession more transparent to the public to reduce information asymmetry between lawyers and the public. Moreover, since Douyin recently paid increasing attention to knowledge-sharing production, the platform tends to give operation suggestions for Long's account on gaining more fan traffic. Therefore, with her account's inherent public-welfare purpose and the medium of support, Long receives more attention from Douyin and gradually shapes her fan base, building the foundation for her future offline legal services.

4. Law Firms' Possible Limitation of Using the O2O Strategy

Even though O2O is designed to expand the consumer scope, the lack of online regulation may create some undesired results.

Since O2O demands online clients to consume offline, it requires firms to provide high-quality offline services that match the description shown online. However, as there is no relevant regulatory policy on the Internet, lawyers or law firms can provide exaggerated information to create a sense of professionalism, deceiving clients with incorrect personal backgrounds. Under such conditions, clients may not even receive the proper services they expected. Thus, to facilitate further re-use intentions, the Internet should create specific regulations to guarantee the credibility of the displayed online information and the quality of offline services.

5. Conclusion

As the world gradually changes into the digital era, many enterprises realize the importance of online marketing and the interaction between online and offline platforms. To better seek advantages from online marketing and increase overall profits, various firms decided to adopt the O2O strategy. This article applies two logic maps to investigate O2O's applications in the legal consulting industry, concluding that O2O can facilitate firms to expand consumer scope, build reputation, reduce information asymmetry, and network with other lawyers. Among these benefits, the paper emphasizes that the key to O2O success is to differentiate itself from the traditional way of online marketing and to build its special brand image online, gradually generating a fan base and transferring the fan traffic economy to offline businesses. Hopefully, the paper can provide practical advice for legal consulting industries to utilize the positive effects of O2O to its greatest potential.

Moreover, since this article strictly follows the general paradigm of a case study, it conducts an in-depth analysis of Lawyer Fei Long's business model and the critical factors to her success. However, there are some suggestions for future studies that can be improved upon in this paper. For example, further study can use regressions to identify the factors that directly link customers' loyalty or satisfaction with the firms' online or offline performances; since the regressions can generate a more obvious result with statistical support, readers or firms can receive directional recommendations on making business success.

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