

THE 2026 LAW FIRM GUIDE

Where Law Firms Lose Consults

The 7 leaks between someone searching for a lawyer and a signed retainer, how to spot each one in your firm, and a 30-day plan to fix them.

For established firms: personal injury, employment, immigration, criminal defense, real estate, bankruptcy and more.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Most firms don't have a marketing problem. They have a leak.

When Clio had secret shoppers contact 500 US law firms as potential clients in 2024, most firms never answered. The people were ready to hire. The firms just weren't there.



40%

of law firms answered the phone when a potential client called, down from 56% in 2019.

Clio Legal Trends Report 2024, secret shopper study of 500 US firms

33%

of firms replied to a potential client's email.

Same study

45%

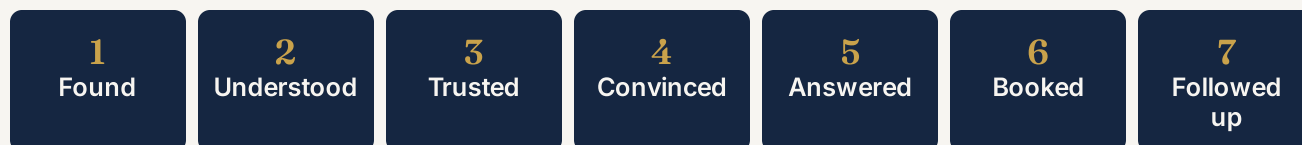
of US consumers now use AI tools like ChatGPT to find local businesses.

BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 (1,002 US adults)

What it means for you: the firms that win aren't always the best lawyers or the biggest spenders. They're the ones who get found, look trustworthy, and answer first. Every one of the leaks in this guide is fixable without a bigger ad budget.

Seven places a consult slips away

A potential client moves through the same steps every time. A leak at any step and they call the next firm.



Leak	What it looks like from the outside
1. Not in the answer	You don't show in the Google Maps top three or in the AI answer for your practice area and city.
2. One page for everything	A single "practice areas" page, so Google and AI can't tell exactly what you handle.
3. Silent reviews	Few recent reviews, and the ones you have don't say what you helped with.
4. A site that doesn't answer	No clear "can you help me, what happens next, what does it cost to talk."
5. The phone	Calls go to voicemail, especially after 5 PM and on weekends.
6. Slow forms and email	Long intake forms, and replies that come the next day, or never.
7. No follow-up, no tracking	No one follows up after the first call, and nobody knows which source brings signed cases.

Which leak is costing your firm the most?

Take the free 2-minute visibility score. 10 questions, instant result.

[Get my free score](#)

Getting found and understood

LEAK 1

You're not in the answer

Many local searches are decided on the map or, more and more, in an AI answer. If you're not in either, you may never make the shortlist.

- Choose your Google Business Profile's main category on purpose (for example "Personal injury attorney," not just "Lawyer").
- List every practice area as a service, add real photos, and keep your hours current, including after-hours intake.
- Keep your firm name, address and phone identical on Google, your website, the State Bar profile, Avvo, Justia, Yelp and Apple Maps.
- Run the test: ask ChatGPT and Google "Who's the best [practice area] lawyer in [city]?" Write down who gets named.

LEAK 2

One page for everything

Google and AI tools recommend firms they can clearly describe. A list of twelve practice areas on one page describes nothing.

- One page per practice area, and one per city or county you really serve.
- First sentence says what, who and where: "We represent injured workers across San Diego County."
- Add the 5 questions people ask on the phone, answered in plain English.
- End every page with one next step: call, text or book a consultation.

Earning trust before the first call

LEAK 3

Silent reviews

68% of consumers require at least a 4-star rating, and 74% prefer reviews from the last three months. (BrightLocal 2026)

- Ask every satisfied client, soon after a good outcome, by text with your direct review link.
- Invite detail: "If you mention what we helped you with, it helps people in the same spot find us."
- Reply to every review, professionally and without confirming anything confidential.
- Never buy, write or incentivize reviews. The FTC bans fake reviews and Google can suspend your profile.

LEAK 4

A site that doesn't answer the real questions

In Clio's study, only 14% of shoppers could find any pricing information on a firm's website, and only 30% could easily understand how to hire the firm.

- Answer "Can you help with my situation?" in the first screen of every practice area page.
- Spell out what happens next: the first call, how long it takes, what to bring.
- Say how the first conversation is priced (free, flat fee or contingency), even if full fees depend on the case.
- Show the attorney's face and a short video. People hire people.

A note on the rules

California's attorney advertising rules (Rule 7.1 and the State Bar's advertising standards) put conditions on testimonials, results and claims. Many firms add a disclaimer near testimonials. We're not lawyers and this isn't legal advice: check your marketing with your ethics counsel.

Answering before they call someone else

LEAK 5

The phone

60% of firms didn't pick up in Clio's secret shopper study, and 48% were unreachable by phone entirely.

- Call your own firm at 12:30 PM, 6 PM and on a Saturday. What happens?
- Every call is answered by a person or a trained answering service, or called back within minutes.
- Missed calls get an automatic text right away: "Sorry we missed you. Can we call you back in 10 minutes?"
- Your intake person has a short script: the problem, the timeline, the next step.

LEAK 6

Slow forms and email

Only 33% of firms replied to email in Clio's study. The longer a new inquiry waits, the more likely they've already called another firm.

- Cut the website form to name, phone, email and "what happened." Your intake team gets the rest on the call.
- Every form gets an instant reply that says what happens next and when.
- Set a rule: a person reaches out within 15 minutes during business hours.
- Submit your own form this week. Time how long the reply takes.

Follow up, then measure

LEAK 7

No follow-up, no tracking

Not everyone signs on the first call. And if you can't see where signed cases come from, you can't spend smarter.

- A simple follow-up plan for people who didn't book: a call the next day, a helpful email that week.
- Ask every new client "How did you find us?" and write it down.
- Track four numbers monthly: inquiries, consultations, signed cases, and where each came from.

Score your firm (1 point per yes)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | We show in the Maps top three for our main practice area and city |
| ☐ | ChatGPT or Google's AI names us when asked for our practice area |
| ☐ | Each practice area has its own page |
| ☐ | We got 3+ new Google reviews in the last 90 days |
| ☐ | Our site explains what happens after someone reaches out |
| ☐ | A person answers or calls back within 15 minutes, including after hours |
| ☐ | Our intake form has 5 fields or fewer |
| ☐ | We know which source brought each signed case last month |

7 to 8: strong, protect it. **4 to 6:** you're leaking cases every week. **0 to 3:** start with leaks 5 and 6 this week. They're the fastest money.

YOUR 30-DAY PLAN

One month, about two hours a week

Week	Do this
Week 1 Plug the phone	Call and email your own firm as a potential client. Set the 15-minute reply rule, the missed-call text and after-hours coverage. Cut the form to 5 fields.
Week 2 Get found	Fix your Google profile: main category, services, photos, hours. Match your name, address and phone on your top 10 listings. Run the AI test and write down who's named.
Week 3 Get understood	Rewrite the top of your 3 most important practice area pages: what, who, where, what happens next. Add 5 real questions and answers to each.
Week 4 Get trusted	Text 10 recent satisfied clients your review link. Reply to every review. Start asking "How did you find us?" and log the answers.

Track it

One line a week: calls answered vs missed, forms and how fast you replied, consultations booked, cases signed. Four weeks of notes shows you exactly which leak was costing the most.

Scored under 7? Let's find the fastest fix.

Book a free 30-minute plan call. I'll look at your firm live and hand you the three fixes that would sign the most cases.

[Book my free call](#)

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want us to find your firm's leaks?

Take the free visibility score: 10 questions, 2 minutes. It shows where your firm is losing people on Google, AI, your website and intake.

Then book a free 30-minute call. I'll look at your firm live and build you a custom plan: where you show up on Google Maps and AI for your practice areas, where your site and intake lose consults, and the three fixes that would bring in the most signed cases, fastest.

You keep the plan whether we work together or not.

[Get my free score](#)

[Book my free plan call](#)



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SCAN FOR YOUR
FREE SCORE

Sources: Clio, Legal Trends Report 2024 (secret shopper study of 500 US law firms), clio.com/resources/legal-trends · BrightLocal, Local Consumer Review Survey 2026 (1,002 US adults, Feb 2026), brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey · FTC Trade Regulation Rule on the Use of Consumer Reviews and Testimonials (2024). This guide is marketing guidance, not legal advice.