

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a single wooden block above a stack of several other wooden blocks. The blocks are light-colored wood with a dark stain on one side. The background is a plain, light color.

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# 3 Keys to Attorney Success

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To say that this has been a year of change is probably the understatement of the century. People across the globe have had to adapt their ways of living and working. Legal was no different.

There are 1.3 million lawyers in the United States, and all of them had to adapt on a dime to shifting their practices 100% remote. Some were already situated to do so and have managed the past year successfully as a result. Others had to be resourceful and make significant changes to their practices to survive.

It's been remarkable. The amount of change in just one year to continue to deliver critical legal services would typically have taken the industry five years or even a decade.

As we begin to return to some normalcy, there will be two kinds of lawyers: those who breathe a sigh of relief that they can resume their usual ways of working, and those who will seize a tremendous opportunity to build on the advancements of the past year and drive more revenue for their firms.

Three keys to success will drive firms to new heights going forward.



The right experience and good representation are table stakes today. Today's consumer expects more; they expect a seamless five-star experience. We live in a world where, for nearly anything you need, you have at your fingertips multiple options, clear pricing, and more information than you could want.

Think for a moment about how you choose what product to use. Nine times out of ten, it is the product or company that provides the most seamless experience. Why? Because a seamless experience builds trust and says to the customer, "we get you." That is what you are selling to your prospective clients: that they can trust you to handle their most sensitive issues.

This moment in time provides a massive opportunity for attorneys to deliver their services in line with client expectations. The past year has shattered the long-held belief by many in the legal industry that legal was ill-suited for modern ways of delivering service. Legal was never ill-suited; it was just resistant to change. That will no longer fly.

So how do you establish a five-star client experience that builds trust? After extensive customer research, three key areas come up time and again:

1. Low friction
2. Transparent process
3. Clear pricing

That shouldn't be surprising. Forget about being a lawyer and imagine for a minute that you are a prospective client looking for legal help; what would you want? You'd want it to be easy to find the right help, you'd want to know what the legal process will look like, and you'd want to know roughly how much it will cost to resolve your issue.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

### 1. Low Friction

Low friction is the first and most important key because it carries through every aspect of the client experience.

Typically, clients looking for legal help are facing a stressful time in their lives. They need to deal with their legal issue, but they also need to carry on with the rest of their lives. They've got jobs to maintain, bills to pay, maybe families to take care of, and countless other everyday necessities. It should come as no surprise that the last thing a client wants is added stress and complexity from their lawyer. You are there to help solve your client's problems, not create more stress and anxiety for them.

Not all friction is bad. This is the legal industry, so some friction is necessary. For example, you're going to need to check conflicts and get formal engagement terms in place. But in every aspect of service, you should aim to make it as frictionless as possible.

The easier you make it for potential clients to find you, connect with you, and pay you, the better client experience you will deliver. Let's look at each of these in turn.

### **Make it easier for clients to find you**

While some of your clients may come to you through referrals, many clients search for legal help on their own. And that number is only increasing each year. You need to have a presence across the web, so clients can find your website, find you on Google, find you on directories (and yes, find you on [evident](#) too!).

We know that's easier said than done. It may seem daunting to have to manage your presence across multiple areas of the web. And even if you show up in ads, on Google or on directories, there's no telling whether a client will actually find their way to you and reach out.

At [evident](#), we flipped that on its head and have created a marketplace for legal services where you can make your pitch to live clients who need your help.

### **Make it easier for clients to connect with you**

Low friction doesn't just mean making it easier for consumers to find you. You also need to make it as easy as possible for consumers to connect with you. No one wants to trade emails back and forth, or play phone tag, just to set a meeting and get some information about your services.

A frictionless experience means a consumer can get that information with minimal effort. People are busy and are used to all sorts of information being just a click of a button away. So here are a few tips:

*Make your website clear and easy to navigate.* Your contact information should be in plain sight, you should clearly describe your experience, and explain your pricing policies.

*Include a link that allows potential clients to schedule a meeting automatically.*

[Calendly](#) is a great option, and it syncs automatically with your schedule so it only shows times that you are available.

*Give your clients options.* Different clients have different preferences. Allow them to choose whether to book a phone call, a Zoom meeting, or contact you over email or text message. And don't make them trudge into your office!

At [evident](#), we make it easy for you to take the friction out of connecting with clients. You can send information about your experience and pricing, and let the potential client book meetings automatically, all through a seamless user experience.

### **Make it easier for clients to pay you**

In today's world, there's no excuse for not offering your clients electronic payment options. Requiring clients to pay by cash or check is not only a poor client service indicator; it also hurts your bottom line.

Clio [reports](#) that 57% of law firms accepting credit cards get paid the same day they bill, and 85% get paid within a week of billing. More than 65% of consumers prefer paying by credit card, debit card, PayPal or Apple Pay over cash or check. The statistics are even worse than you might think for lawyers who don't offer electronic payment options: [40% of consumers](#) would never hire a lawyer who didn't take debit or credit cards.

Payment plans are also a way to offer a better client experience and expand the reach of your practice. [72% of consumers](#) would prefer to pay their legal fees on a payment plan. Yet many firms don't offer payment plans. This is an easy way to separate yourself from the competition and provide a better client experience. Coupled with offering electronic payment options, you'll likely find that your firm is more profitable than ever before.

## 2. Transparent Process

Now that you've created that first trust block by removing unnecessary friction, your next task is to make sure your client understands what to expect.

Remember, your client may be experiencing a legal issue for the first time. And even if they're not, the legal process is still daunting for most people. So you must put their mind at ease by bringing some transparency to the process. Explain simply and clearly what to expect and when to expect it.

We recommend a couple of strategies.

### **Create a roadmap**

For each area of law you practice, we recommend creating a roadmap document. A chart, a PowerPoint slide, or even a simple Word document that clearly explains the legal process can be invaluable to your client.

For example, an estate planning attorney would set out a roadmap that shows each step in drafting and executing a will and everything required of the client. A divorce attorney would similarly set out a roadmap that shows the various options available to the client, what the next steps are for each option, and the expected length of time.

What's important is that you don't hand your client a dense tome of text that looks, feels, and probably is overwhelming and difficult for your client to understand.

As best you can, explain the process visually (think flow chart or steps) and reserve dense text only for where it is necessary. Even better is to turn that text into a checklist where possible.

### **Agree on scheduled updates, and stick to it**

Speak to your client about how often they would like to receive case updates. Setting a clear update schedule acts to put your client's mind at ease and helps you establish a schedule rather than fielding ad hoc calls or emails.

Even if nothing eventful happened in the case, an email that simply says, "No updates this week. I'll be back with another update next Friday unless there is something more immediate to report" shows your client that you have their case under control and are thinking about them. It just might be the best 30 seconds you can spend on your client relationship.

### **Avoid surprising your client**

This one needs little explanation. No client wants to be surprised by a change in strategy, an important update on their case, or a legal bill they didn't expect. Keep them in the loop and clearly explain what the client should expect at every opportunity.

### **3. Clear Pricing**

Consumers want an estimate of the total cost of their case. Full stop.

Now, that may make some attorneys uncomfortable, but those who look at it as an opportunity will win more business.

Put your consumer hat on again. Whenever you are buying something, you want to know the price, or at the very least, an estimated range of pricing. Maybe you buy Google ads for your firm or subscribe to trade journals. I bet you wanted to know how much it would cost you before making that purchase, and the more certainty you got on pricing the better you felt.

The law is no different. Not only do clients deserve to know the cost of services upfront, but it also creates a better client experience and will drive more business for you.

Clients much prefer flat fees or other alternative billing structures, but not every legal matter lends itself to those pricing models. So let's address the typical concerns we hear about providing price estimates when using the billable hour method.

### **What if my estimate is wrong?**

This is a perfectly valid concern. It doesn't help anyone to provide an estimate and then blow right through it. It creates a poor customer experience. You also need to make sure you don't leave an impression that your estimate is a binding price.

Here's where we come out on this: **give yourself more credit**. If you've been a practicing lawyer for some time, you have a very good sense of the range of fees you earn per case. So give a range, and control for the outlier cases by doing the following:

- Make it crystal clear that it is *just an estimate* based on the typical case in your experience.
- Explain what that typical case looks like (several depositions, a hearing, drafting documents, whatever the case may be).
- Commit to communicating a revised estimate to your client if their case becomes more complex.

**Won't I lose business to competitors who undercut my price, or scare clients off if my estimate is high?**

This may seem like a reasonable concern, but we disagree for two principal reasons.

First, 62% of consumers who have hired a lawyer say it's worth paying a high price if the lawyer is good. In other words, while some consumers may decide only on price, the majority don't. That shouldn't be surprising. Put your consumer hat on again. If you had a significant medical issue to deal with, would you race to the doctor with the lowest price, or would you weigh price, experience, reviews, and references? You'd do the latter, of course. And the vast majority of consumers do the same when looking for legal help.

Second, your practice shouldn't be focused on picking up any potential client who comes through the door. You want to work with clients that are right for your practice. That's not a selfish view. In fact, that approach creates a better outcome for you and your clients. Suppose you're engaged by a client who only wants to pay the bare minimum, but you're focused on providing quality legal representation. In that case, both sides of that client relationship will be unhappy. That's a bad outcome, and you both would have been better off with the client finding other representation that better fit their needs.

# The way forward

A close-up photograph of a hand placing a single wooden block on top of a stack of other wooden blocks. The blocks are light-colored wood with a visible grain. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color. The overall mood is one of building and progress.

As we reflect on the past year and the opportunities that lie ahead, we think legal's best days are ahead of us.

We are in a unique moment in time in the legal industry. Consumers and lawyers alike now recognize that we don't need to keep doing things the way we've always done things because that's the way we've always done things....

There is a better way. Legal can be easier. And as we return to some normalcy and regain the human connection we've all longed for over this past year, opportunity awaits for those who build on the learnings of the past year to provide the five-star client experience of the future.