

INDUSTRY RESEARCH REPORT

The State of Personal Injury *Marketing*

Every channel, every number, one honest picture of how injury firms win clients today — and where the market is heading next.

\$4B

SPENT ON LEGAL ADS
IN 2025

30M+

LEGAL ADS RUN IN A
SINGLE YEAR

90%

OF PI FIRMS LOOK
IDENTICAL

ABOUT THIS REPORT

A straight answer to an expensive question.

If you run a personal injury firm, you are competing in one of the most saturated, most expensive advertising markets in the country. This report exists to help you spend into it with your eyes open.

Every channel a firm can buy — television, streaming, radio, search, social, billboards, directories, direct mail — is covered here, with real numbers from primary sources: the American Tort Reform Association, Nielsen, the American Bar Association, and published industry benchmarks. Where a figure is disputed or varies by methodology, we say so rather than pick the flattering number.

This is not a sales document. No vendor is recommended. No channel is crowned. The goal is narrower and more useful: to give you an accurate map of where the money goes, what it buys, what's changing, and where the leverage actually sits for a firm that wants to stand out instead of blend in.

How to read this report

Each chapter covers one channel or theme. Statistics are cited inline and collected in full at the back. Dollar figures are U.S., current as of the most recent available data (2024–2026 depending on the source). Read it start to finish, or jump to the channel you're evaluating.

What you'll take away

- The true size and shape of legal advertising spend — and who dominates it.
- A channel-by-channel breakdown of cost, reach, and realistic return.
- The single biggest structural problem in PI advertising, backed by side-by-side brand data.
- How consumer behavior — search, reviews, response time — decides who gets the call.
- Where the market is heading as streaming, AI search, and short-form video reshape attention.

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THE SHORT VERSION

Ten things the data makes clear.

- **The market is enormous and still growing.** An estimated \$4 billion was spent on more than 30 million legal-services ads in the U.S. in 2025 — roughly a 44% jump over the prior year. For comparison, that dwarfs entire consumer categories.
- **A handful of firms dominate.** The nation's largest PI firm alone spent an estimated \$218 million on advertising in 2024 — about 8% of all legal-services ads in the country.
- **Television is still a billion-dollar channel** — roughly \$1.03B in legal TV spend in 2024 — but the audience underneath it has fundamentally shifted.
- **Streaming has overtaken traditional TV.** By mid-2025, streaming crossed 47% of all U.S. TV viewing and, for the first time ever, beat broadcast and cable combined.
- **Search is the most expensive real estate in advertising.** Some personal-injury keywords now exceed \$1,000 per click in competitive markets.
- **SEO delivers the best long-run return** of any single channel — an estimated 526% three-year ROI — but it is slow and compounding, not instant.
- **The local map decides local cases.** Top-ranked Google Business Profiles capture the plurality of local-pack clicks; review volume and photos move rankings more than most firms realize.
- **Trust is gated by reviews.** Surveys find roughly 9 in 10 consumers won't consider a firm rated under four stars.
- **Speed wins.** Firms that respond within minutes convert dramatically better; a large share of prospects simply move on if no one answers quickly.
- **The category looks the same.** When brands are audited side by side, about 90% of PI firms are visually and verbally interchangeable — which is precisely where the opportunity lies.

The firms that win the next five years won't be the ones who spend the most. They'll be the ones who are remembered.

CHAPTER ONE

The Market

01

Personal injury is not just a large advertising category. It is one of the most contested, fastest-inflating, and most top-heavy ad markets in the United States.

Start with the size. According to the American Tort Reform Association, an estimated **\$4 billion was spent on more than 30 million legal-services ads** across television, radio, print, digital, and outdoor in 2025 — an increase of roughly 44% over comparable local ads the prior year. In 2024, that figure was more than \$2.5 billion across 26.9 million ads. To put the volume in perspective, ATRA notes that pizza restaurants — a household-name national category — spent about \$1.1 billion on 4.1 million ads over a comparable period. Lawyers out-advertise them several times over.

\$4B

Estimated U.S. legal-services ad spend, 2025 (ATRA)

30M+

Legal-services ads run in 2025 across measured media

~44%

Year-over-year increase in local legal ad spend

The market is top-heavy

The spending is not evenly distributed. A small number of national and super-regional firms account for a wildly outsized share of all legal advertising. In 2024, the largest personal-injury firm in the nation spent an estimated **\$218 million** on advertising — accounting for roughly 8% of all legal-services ads in the entire country, and out-advertising its nearest competitor by more than a 4-to-1 ratio in ad quantity.

That concentration matters for a mid-sized or local firm. You are not competing on a level field; you are competing against opponents who can afford to blanket a market. Which means matching them dollar-for-dollar is not a strategy. Standing out is.

\$218M

Estimated 2024 advertising spend by the single largest PI firm in the U.S. — about 8% of all legal-services advertising nationwide. The top ten spenders together account for a large share of the entire category. (ATRA, 2025)

Why the money keeps climbing

The economics of personal injury pull spending upward relentlessly. Contingency fees on catastrophic-injury cases are large enough that firms will pay extraordinary sums to acquire a single client. The U.S. personal-injury legal-services industry generated an estimated **\$61.7 billion in revenue in 2025**, and roughly 135,000 attorneys — about 10% of all U.S. lawyers — work in the field. High case values plus intense competition produce exactly what you'd expect: an arms race.

That arms race is the backdrop for everything that follows. Every channel in this report is more expensive in legal than in almost any other vertical — because everyone is bidding for the same injured client at the same moment of need.

Sources: American Tort Reform Association, "Legal Services Advertising in the United States" (2024–2025 reports). Clio, "Personal Injury Law Statistics" (2026), citing IBIS World revenue data. IBIS World industry revenue estimates.

Where the money goes, by medium

Law firms distribute their budgets across a familiar mix. Published surveys of firm budget allocation put the rough shares like this — useful as a directional picture, though individual firms vary widely by market and practice area.



Directional budget-share estimates aggregated from CallRail and On The Map survey data. Shares vary substantially by firm size and market; digital's true share is larger for firms weighted toward search and social.

Two ways the trend line is bending

Beneath the topline growth, ATRA's data reveals a structural shift worth understanding:

- **Digital got more expensive and less voluminous.** Between 2020 and 2024, the quantity of digital legal ads fell more than 50% — yet spending on those ads rose 84%. Fewer ads, far higher prices.
- **Traditional media didn't retreat — it surged.** Television ad quantity peaked in 2023 at more than 16.4 million legal TV ads (about a 44% increase over 2017), and radio ads peaked in 2024 at more than 6.8 million — a 261% increase over 2017.

The takeaway is counterintuitive: even as digital ate attention, the biggest legal advertisers *increased* their traditional-media saturation. They pursue omnichannel presence — TV, radio, outdoor, and digital simultaneously — because frequency across channels is how you stay top-of-mind for an event (an accident) that a consumer can't schedule in advance.

The structural reality

A personal-injury client is created by an unplanned event. No one shops for an injury lawyer until they suddenly need one. That single fact explains the entire category's behavior: firms pay to be *remembered* before the event, and to be *found* the instant after it. Both halves matter.

Sources: ATRA, "Legal Services Advertising in the United States, 2020–2024" (2025). CallRail and On The Map law-firm marketing survey aggregations (2024–2025).

CHAPTER TWO

Television

02

For decades, TV was the definitive way a personal injury firm announced itself to a city. It still commands about a billion dollars a year in legal spend — but the ground beneath it has moved.

Legal television advertising reached an estimated **\$1.03 billion in 2024** for traditional TV spot placements specifically, with broader measured-media estimates running higher. Legal services is one of the heaviest TV advertising categories in America, representing roughly 3% of all local TV advertising revenue — remarkable for a single professional-services vertical.

\$1.03B

Legal TV ad spend, 2024 (traditional spot)

16.4M

Legal TV ads at 2023 peak (+44% vs. 2017)

~3%

Legal's share of all local TV ad revenue

The spend is concentrated at the top

As with the market overall, TV spend is dominated by a few heavy hitters. The largest PI firm's estimated \$218M advertising budget leans heavily on broadcast. Industry tracking has documented individual firms running staggering airing volumes: one firm reportedly ran 55,000 broadcast airings over three years; another 47,000; another 31,000. For a typical firm, average legal TV spend runs an estimated \$15,000–\$50,000 per month depending on market, while top firms in major metros exceed \$100,000 monthly.

55,000 airings in three years is not strategy. It's saturation. And in most markets, higher frequency simply amplifies sameness.

What TV still does better than anything

Despite the audience shift, television retains genuine, research-backed advantages that digital struggles to replicate:

- **Reach and trust.** A broadcast presence still signals scale and permanence to a consumer — a firm "big enough to be on TV" carries implicit credibility.
- **Emotional storytelling.** The format allows narrative and production value that a search ad or banner cannot. This is where brand memory is built.
- **Frequency for an unschedulable need.** Because injuries can't be planned, staying top-of-mind through repeated exposure is worth real money — you're buying recall for a future moment.

A note on the numbers

Estimates for legal TV spending vary by source and methodology. ATRA and some measured-media sources have cited figures closer to \$1.2 billion for broader TV categories, while the \$1.03 billion figure tracks traditional TV spot placements specifically. Directionally, all sources agree: legal TV is a billion-dollar-plus channel.

The busiest legal-ad markets

Legal advertising is intensely local, and a handful of media markets absorb a disproportionate share of it. In 2024, the ten U.S. markets with the highest quantity of legal-services ads were:

Rank	Media market (DMA)	Rank	Media market (DMA)
1	Orlando, FL	6	Dallas, TX
2	Los Angeles, CA	7	Phoenix, AZ
3	Atlanta, GA	8	Las Vegas, NV
4	Miami, FL	9	San Antonio, TX
5	Tampa, FL	10	Ft. Myers, FL

Source: ATRA, "Legal Services Advertising in the United States, 2020–2024" (2025). Ranked by quantity of legal-services ads. Florida markets are notably over-represented.

The strategic problem TV now presents

Here is the tension every firm evaluating TV must confront. The channel's reach is real, but the audience is leaving linear television for streaming (Chapter 3). At the same time, the creative running on it is nearly interchangeable — the same stock courtroom footage, the same "injured? call now" script, the same tone. So a firm buying TV today faces two risks simultaneously: paying for a shrinking linear audience, and blending into a wall of identical ads.

Neither risk is a reason to abandon television. Both are reasons to be deliberate: to follow the audience onto connected TV where the economics are better, and — more importantly — to make creative that is actually distinguishable. A memorable, well-produced spot on a smaller, better-targeted buy can outperform a generic spot blasted at high frequency.

4-to-1

The ratio by which the nation's top legal advertiser out-advertised its nearest competitor in ad quantity in 2024. Frequency dominance is available only to the largest budgets — which is exactly why smaller firms must compete on distinctiveness instead. (ATRA, 2025)

CHAPTER THREE

Streaming & Connected TV

03

This is the most important shift in the entire report. The television audience did not disappear — it moved. And most legal advertising has been slow to follow it.

In May 2025, streaming crossed a historic threshold: for the first time ever, its share of total U.S. TV viewing **surpassed broadcast and cable combined**. Nielsen's data put streaming at 44.8% of TV viewership that month, versus broadcast (20.1%) and cable (24.1%) together at 44.2%. By July 2025, streaming reached a record **47.3% of all U.S. TV viewing time**.

47.3%

Streaming share of U.S. TV viewing
(July 2025)

73.6%

Of all TV viewing is ad-supported
(Nielsen Q2 2025)

85%

Of U.S. households have a smart TV
(Parks, 2025)

Ad-supported streaming is where the audience is

Crucially for advertisers, the streaming audience is increasingly watching *with ads*. Nielsen's Ad Supported Gauge found that in Q2 2025, content with ads accounted for **73.6% of all TV viewing**, up 1.2 points quarter-over-quarter, with streaming picking up nearly all of that gain. Subscription fatigue has pushed consumers toward ad-supported tiers on Netflix, Disney+, Amazon Prime, and the free FAST services. The result is more premium, targetable TV ad inventory than has ever existed.

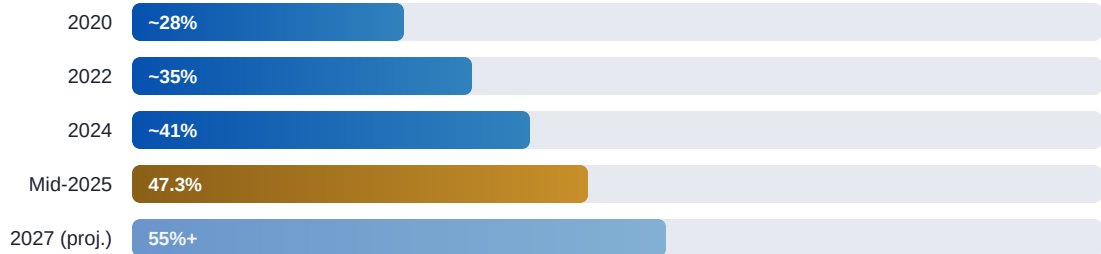
Within streaming's share, the market is fragmented across services — YouTube leads all TV viewing at about 10.6%, Netflix at 7.9%, with Amazon Prime Video, Hulu, Disney+, and numerous FAST channels dividing the rest. For advertisers, that fragmentation is a feature: it enables demographic and geographic targeting that linear TV cannot match.

Streaming has done for TV advertising what search did for print: made it measurable, targetable, and — critically — accessible to firms that could never afford blanket broadcast.

Sources: Nielsen, "The Gauge" and "Ad Supported Gauge" reports (2025). Nielsen "Connected TV Is Transforming Advertising" (2025). Parks Associates smart-TV penetration data (2025).

The trajectory is one-directional

Streaming's share of TV viewing has climbed steadily and the growth is accelerating: roughly 28% in 2020, 35% in 2022, 41% in 2024, and 47%+ by mid-2025. Industry analysts project streaming will reach 50%+ of TV viewing by late 2025 and 55%+ by 2027. During prime-time evening hours, streaming's share often already exceeds 50%.



Streaming share of total U.S. TV viewing time. Historical figures per Nielsen "The Gauge"; 2027 is an analyst projection, not a measured value.

Why legal is late — and why that's an opening

Legal advertising has been one of the last major categories to shift budget to connected TV. Industry tracking found that even as CTV ad spend across all categories surged, legal followed the curve later and with less sophistication. For a firm willing to move now, that lag is the opportunity: CTV offers the emotional, brand-building power of television with the targeting and measurability of digital — and, right now, less competition from other law firms than linear TV carries.

- **Targeting:** Reach specific demographics, households, and geographies rather than paying for a broad linear audience, much of which is outside your market.
- **Measurability:** CTV campaigns can be tied to outcomes and attribution in ways linear never could.
- **Cost accessibility:** Streaming has put TV-quality advertising within reach of firms that could never afford dominant broadcast buys.
- **Premium context:** As live sports and premium content migrate to streaming, the environment is high-attention and brand-safe.

The practical implication

If your firm is buying only linear TV, you're paying for a declining share of the audience. If you're ignoring TV entirely, you're surrendering the emotional brand-building that streaming now delivers affordably. The firms positioned best treat linear and connected TV as one converged strategy — and put real creative behind it.

Sources: Nielsen "The Gauge" (2020–2025). AdWave / MNTN Research CTV analyses (2025). IAB digital video ad-spend reporting (2024–2025).

CHAPTER FOUR

Radio & Audio

04

Radio is the channel most people assume is fading. The data says the opposite: legal radio advertising has been one of the category's fastest-growing formats.

According to ATRA, the quantity of legal radio ads **peaked in 2024 at more than 6.8 million** — an increase of more than **261% compared to 2017**. That is not a channel in decline; it's a channel the biggest spenders have aggressively expanded into as part of an omnichannel saturation strategy.

6.8M

Legal radio ads at 2024 peak

+261%

Growth in legal radio ad quantity vs. 2017

Why radio still works for injury firms

Radio's enduring value for personal injury is specific and practical:

- **The drive-time audience.** A large share of vehicle accidents involve people who spend significant time in cars — the exact audience radio reaches during commutes. The channel and the risk overlap.
- **Frequency at low cost.** Radio delivers high repetition affordably, reinforcing the name recall that matters for an unschedulable need.
- **Local dominance.** Station-level buys let a firm own a market's audio presence in a way that's harder and pricier on TV.
- **Audio's expansion.** The rise of podcasts and streaming audio (with insertable ads) extends radio's logic to new, targetable inventory.

The same creative caveat applies

Radio suffers from the category's universal problem even more acutely, because it strips away the visual: without a face or a scene, most legal radio spots collapse into an identical formula — a jingle, a phone number, a promise. The firms that stand out on radio are the ones whose voice, message, and brand are distinctive enough to survive with audio alone. Consistency across radio, TV, and digital — the same voice and identity everywhere — is what turns repetition into recognition.

Where audio fits

Radio and podcasts are frequency-and-recall channels, not decision channels. They rarely close a client on their own; they keep a firm's name available for the moment a listener — or someone they know — suddenly needs it. Budget radio as brand reinforcement within a broader mix, not as a standalone lead engine.

Sources: ATRA, "Legal Services Advertising in the United States, 2020–2024" (2025). Radio ad-quantity data derived from ATRA's audio pattern-matching methodology across monitored markets.

CHAPTER FIVE

Search & PPC

05

Paid search is where intent is highest and prices are most brutal. Personal injury keywords are, dollar for dollar, among the most expensive words in all of advertising.

When someone types "car accident lawyer near me," they are ready to act — and every firm in the market knows it. The result is a bidding war. Analysis of Google Ads data shows some personal-injury keywords now **exceed \$1,000 per click** in the most competitive markets. For context, a similar study in 2019 found the most expensive keyword (Florida mesothelioma lawyer) topped out at \$485. Prices have roughly doubled in a handful of years.

\$1,000+

Cost per click for the most competitive personal-injury keywords in top markets. The most expensive terms cluster around catastrophic-injury cases — offshore, maritime, and truck accidents — where payouts are largest. ([Attorney at Law Magazine keyword study, 2025](#))

The real math of PPC

Averages tell the story less dramatically but more usefully. Across legal, the average cost per click sits around \$9 and varies sharply by practice area, but personal injury runs far above that. Downstream, the economics compound:

Metric	Typical range (personal injury)
Cost per click (competitive PI terms)	\$100 – \$1,000+
Cost per lead	\$700 – \$1,500
Cost to acquire one signed case	\$2,500 – \$3,000
Leads needed per new client (all areas avg.)	~13.4

Sources: *The National Law Review* (2025); *Consultwebs* (2025); *Martindale-Nolo* (2024). Ranges vary by market and case type; catastrophic-injury terms sit at the top end.

At the extreme end, published modeling suggests a firm trying to generate 300 signed cases a month could face PPC spend approaching several million dollars monthly. That's the top of the market — but it illustrates why paid search alone is a punishing place for a firm without a large budget.

Sources: Attorney at Law Magazine, "Why Law Firm Marketing Costs Are Skyrocketing in 2025." *The National Law Review* (2025). *Consultwebs* (2025). Practice Proof 2025 benchmarks.

Paid search is shrinking as a share of the page

A second, less-obvious shift is underway. Even as clicks get more expensive, paid ads are losing real estate on the search results page itself. Google's AI Overviews, local map packs, and Local Services Ads increasingly push traditional paid text ads down the page. Firms are paying more for a smaller and less prominent slice of attention.

This is why sophisticated firms treat PPC as one instrument, not the whole orchestra. Paid search captures the ready-to-act searcher *right now*, but it does nothing to build the brand recognition that makes a searcher choose your name when several options appear. It rents attention; it doesn't own it.

PPC buys you the click. It does not buy you the reason someone picks your firm over the four others in the ad block.

Local Services Ads: a distinct animal

Google's Local Services Ads (LSAs) — the "Google Screened" listings at the very top of many legal searches — operate on a pay-per-lead rather than pay-per-click model and carry a verification badge. Published data identifies LSAs as a meaningful lead source for a segment of firms, and they occupy premium placement above traditional ads. They reward responsiveness and reviews, which ties directly into the reputation and speed themes later in this report.

The honest read on paid search

Paid search is essential for capturing high-intent, ready-now searchers — and it is punishingly expensive and getting more so. It works best as a capture layer on top of strong organic presence and brand recognition, not as a substitute for them. A firm that is only visible when it's paying is a firm renting its entire pipeline.

Sources: Attorney at Law Magazine (2025). Justia and SeoProfy legal-marketing statistics (2026). Practice Proof benchmark data.

CHAPTER SIX

SEO & Google Business Profile

06

If paid search is the most expensive channel, organic search is the most valuable long-term one. It's also the slowest — which is exactly why so few firms do it well.

Search engine optimization delivers the strongest sustainable return of any single digital channel. Published analysis estimates the three-year ROI of law-firm SEO at approximately **526%** — a figure that dwarfs other channels and explains why an estimated 45% of legal marketers allocate budget to it. The average law firm spends roughly \$150,000 annually on SEO, and the largest firms invest up to \$10,000 a month with specialist agencies.

526%

Estimated 3-year ROI of law-firm SEO

~96%

Of people seeking legal help start with a search engine

\$150K

Average annual law-firm SEO spend

The reason SEO wins over time is structural: it captures demand you don't pay per click for. Once a firm ranks, every subsequent visitor is effectively free — the opposite of PPC, where the meter runs on every single click, forever.

SEO is a compounding asset. PPC is a running meter. The firms that treat them the same misunderstand both.

The catch: it is slow and getting harder

SEO is a long-term investment, not immediate gratification. And the search results page is getting more crowded and complex — AI Overviews, local packs, and LSAs are all claiming space, and Google's algorithm updates demand constant maintenance. Organic visibility is more valuable than ever precisely because it's harder to earn.

Sources: Revenue Memo law-firm marketing statistics (2026), citing FirstPageSage SEO ROI data. SeoProfy (2026). Attorney at Law Magazine (2025).

The local map pack decides local cases

For a personal injury firm, the single most important piece of search real estate isn't the blue links — it's the **Google Business Profile** and the local "map pack" of three listings at the top of local searches. Most people looking for an injury lawyer don't start at your website. They start at Google's map. If you're not in the top listings, you're effectively invisible.

A study of 3,200 personal-injury Google Business Profiles across 20 major U.S. cities identified what actually moves local rankings. The findings are specific and actionable:

- **Top listings capture the clicks.** The highest-ranked profiles in the local pack receive a large plurality of clicks — one analysis put it around 42% to the top listing.
- **Review volume correlates with ranking.** More Google reviews correlated with higher map positions. Notably, review *rating* had little effect — because most PI firms cluster at similar star ratings, volume is the differentiator.
- **Photos matter more than firms expect.** Profiles with more photos ranked measurably higher.
- **The right category and keywords help.** Choosing "personal injury lawyer" as the primary category, and including "lawyer"/"attorney" in the profile, had positive ranking impact.
- **Proximity dominates.** Distance from the searcher is the leading local-pack factor — which is why a physical office location in-market is a genuine asset.

42%

Share of local-pack clicks captured by the top-ranked Google Business Profile listing. Combined with proximity being the dominant ranking factor, this makes local presence and review volume the highest-leverage, lowest-cost work a firm can do. (Rankings.io GBP study, 2025)

The cheapest high-leverage work in legal marketing

Unlike TV or PPC, optimizing a Google Business Profile costs almost nothing but staff attention: complete the profile, choose the right category, add photos regularly, post updates, and systematically request reviews. For local firms, this is frequently the single highest-ROI activity available — and most firms do it poorly or not at all.

Sources: Rankings.io, "Google My Business Ranking Study" (2025). SearchLab Digital, "2025 Google Business Profile Report: Personal Injury Edition," analyzing 3,200 PI profiles across 20 cities.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Social Media & Short-Form Video

07

Social media is the most misunderstood channel in legal marketing. It rarely produces cold leads — but it does something else that increasingly decides cases.

The honest framing, backed by practitioner data: social media doesn't generate cold leads so much as it **warms the leads who are already researching you**. The call a firm gets is rarely "I saw your Instagram post." It's "I've been following your content, and now I need help." Social builds the familiarity and trust that convert at the moment of need.

Adoption is broad — surveys find roughly 71% of lawyers have generated leads from social media — but the channel's real mechanics are shifting fast, and firms that treat it like a billboard waste it.

Organic reach has collapsed — except where it hasn't

On the established platforms, free reach has cratered. Facebook's organic reach fell from around 16% in 2012 to roughly 1–2% by 2025, and LinkedIn's organic reach dropped sharply year over year. These are increasingly pay-to-play environments.

The exception is short-form video. TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts still reward niche, educational content regardless of follower count — brand-new accounts can reach thousands with a single strong post. And critically, younger consumers now *search* on these platforms: an estimated 41% of Gen Z turn to social media first when looking for information, ahead of Google.

1–2%

Facebook organic reach in 2025, down from ~16% in 2012

41%

Of Gen Z search social platforms before Google

Sources: Superpractice / Hootsuite organic-reach analysis (2025–2026). Sprout Social Q2 2025 Pulse Survey. AttorneyAtWork social-media adoption data. Apaya legal social-media benchmarks (2026).

What actually works on social for law firms

The research points to a consistent playbook — and it centers on video and education, not promotion:

- **Short-form educational video.** Sixty-second explainers answering the questions clients actually ask ("what happens to the medical bills after a car accident?") reach people at the moment they're searching for answers. "Legal TikTok" and legal YouTube are genuine categories with real reach.
- **A human face.** The content that performs humanizes the firm — a real attorney explaining a real issue in plain language. This is what builds the trust that converts later.
- **Platform fit.** LinkedIn remains the most-used platform among lawyers for referrals and authority; Instagram and TikTok reach consumers; YouTube anchors longer-form educational content.
- **Consistency over virality.** The same ten questions clients ask every week are ten posts. Showing up regularly beats chasing a viral moment.

Compliance is non-negotiable

Every social post is attorney advertising and subject to your state's Rules of Professional Conduct. That generally means: no false or misleading claims, caution with superlatives like "best" or "top" unless verifiable, required disclaimers in many states, and never referencing specific client matters without written consent. Build compliance review into the workflow from day one, not after a complaint.

The role social should play

Position social media honestly: it is a **trust-and-familiarity engine**, not a direct-response lead machine. It compounds the effect of every other channel — someone sees your TV or streaming spot, then finds a steady stream of helpful, human content when they look you up. That combination is far more persuasive than any single ad. Measured against cold-lead cost, social looks weak; measured as the thing that makes your other marketing convert, it's essential.

Social doesn't win the client at first contact. It's the reason they already trust you by the time contact happens.

Sources: Martindale-Avvo "2025 Predictions for Legal Marketing," Apaya, Superpractice, and LawRank social-media analyses (2025–2026). ABA Formal Opinion 512 (2024) on AI and client data.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Reviews & Reputation

08

You can win every other channel and still lose the client at the reputation gate. For a decision this high-stakes, social proof isn't a nice-to-have — it's a filter.

The numbers are stark. A study by iLawyer Marketing found that **89% of consumers would not consider hiring a law firm rated under four stars**. Reviews function as a threshold: below it, a firm is often eliminated before its marketing is even evaluated. Roughly two-thirds of legal clients research online before hiring, and reviews are central to that research.

89%

Of consumers say they would not consider a law firm rated below four stars. Reputation operates as a gate: strong marketing that drives a prospect to a weak review profile largely wastes the spend that got them there. (iLawyer Marketing survey)

What the research says about reviews

- **Volume beats rating in local ranking.** Because most PI firms cluster at similar star ratings, the *number* of reviews is the differentiator for Google map-pack position, not the average score.
- **Specificity persuades.** The most convincing reviews describe a specific problem and a specific resolution — "great lawyer!" does little; a detailed account of communication and outcome does a lot.
- **Response to negatives matters.** A negative review isn't always a dealbreaker; how a firm publicly responds shapes perception as much as the review itself. Professional, accountable responses build trust.
- **Keywords in reviews feed search.** Reviews mentioning "personal injury attorney" or specific case types act as relevance signals for local search, and increasingly feed AI-generated recommendations.

A compliance and ethics flag

Fake or incentivized reviews are now federally actionable under the FTC's 2024 review rule, with additional state-level exposure. Manufactured review bursts are both detectable and legally risky. The only durable strategy is systematically earning genuine reviews from real clients — and requesting them at the right moment, through the right channel (SMS dramatically outperforms email for response).

Sources: iLawyer Marketing, "How Consumers Choose Lawyers" (2024–2025). Superpractice review analysis (2026). BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey. FTC review rule (2024).

CHAPTER NINE

Billboards, Direct Mail & Directories

09

The traditional stack is where the "billboard lawyer" stereotype lives. It still works — for specific reasons, with specific limits.

Out-of-home & billboards

Outdoor advertising remains a staple of personal-injury marketing, and print plus billboard together command roughly 19% of the average firm's marketing budget. Its logic is pure frequency and geographic saturation: a billboard on a high-traffic highway reaches the driving population — again, the exact demographic most exposed to auto-accident risk — repeatedly, at the moment they're on the road. Outdoor builds raw name recognition better than almost anything per impression.

Its limits are equally clear: a billboard can carry a name, a phone number, and a face — little more. It cannot tell a story, demonstrate credibility, or differentiate beyond the visual. Which is why billboard-heavy markets are where the "every firm looks the same" problem is most visible, literally.

Direct mail

Direct mail persists in personal injury, often targeting people involved in recent accidents using public records. It's a small share of most budgets and ranked by only a modest slice of firms as their best-ROI channel. It can be effective for precise, time-sensitive targeting, but it operates under tightening regulation — several states restrict or scrutinize accident-victim solicitation mail, and it carries reputational risk if perceived as ambulance-chasing.

Legal directories

Platforms like Avvo, Martindale-Hubbell, Super Lawyers, and Justia occupy a specific niche: they provide credentialing and structured comparison. Avvo publishes ratings and disciplinary history; Martindale-Hubbell's AV Preeminent rating reflects peer evaluation; Super Lawyers combines peer nomination with research. A meaningful share of firms report generating leads from directory sites. Their value is less raw lead volume than *third-party credibility* — a signal a firm can point to, distinct from its own claims about itself.

The common thread

Every channel in the traditional stack is a *recognition and credibility* play, not a storytelling one. They put a name in front of people and lend third-party trust. What none of them can do is make a firm memorable or distinct — which is the job that falls to creative, and the subject of Chapter 11.

Sources: CallRail and On The Map budget-allocation surveys. Spotlight Branding ROI survey (2024). Mayfield Law Firm directory analysis (2026). ATRA outdoor-advertising data.

CHAPTER TEN

How Clients Actually Choose

10

Every dollar in this report ultimately serves one moment: an injured person deciding who to call. Here's what the research says actually drives that decision.

What they look for

An open-ended survey of 1,274 people asked what matters most when hiring a personal-injury lawyer — with no pre-selected options to bias the answers. The results:

- **Experience and track record came first.** Nearly 40% cited experience and a strong track record as their top priority — both years in practice and success with similar cases.
- **Proof of success.** About 27% specifically mentioned "success rate," "winning," or "track record."
- **Reputation ranked second overall**, closely tied to reviews and referrals (the 89%-won't-consider-under-four-stars gate from Chapter 8).

Where they look

Google dominates the research phase — the overwhelming majority of people seeking legal help begin at a search engine, and a large share specifically look at the first local results. But the decision is rarely made online alone: many prospects still ask family and friends, weighing referrals alongside search and reviews.

The proximity preference is real

Despite remote consultations becoming normalized, people still strongly prefer a nearby lawyer. Survey data found nearly half of respondents prefer a firm within 30 minutes of home, and **82% want their attorney within 60 minutes**. A physical, in-market office is a genuine competitive asset — reinforcing why local search and proximity (Chapter 6) matter so much.

82%

Of consumers want their personal-injury attorney within 60 minutes of where they live. Local presence isn't sentimental — it's a hiring criterion, and it directly ties to how local search ranks firms. ([iLawyer Marketing](#))

Sources: iLawyer Marketing consumer studies (2024–2025). Attorney at Work survey coverage (2025). SeoProfy and Andava legal-marketing statistics (2025–2026).

Speed is the most underrated conversion factor

Once a prospect reaches out, how fast a firm responds may matter more than any other operational factor. The data is dramatic:

400%

Higher conversion for firms responding within the first five minutes

~80%

Of prospects move on if there's no response within 48 hours

Roughly two-thirds of legal clients say response speed factors into their hiring decision. A firm that answers in minutes — by phone, text, or a well-run intake system — converts dramatically better than one that lets inquiries sit. Personal injury also has the fastest decision timeline of any practice area, with signed clients often converting within days of first contact. The window is short, and it rewards firms built to answer immediately.

The best ad in the world drives a call to a phone no one answers. Intake speed is where marketing budgets quietly die.

Putting the decision together

The research composes into a clear sequence. A prospect is created by an event. They search — usually Google, often the map pack. They filter by reviews (the four-star gate) and proximity. They weigh experience and track record. Then they reach out — and the firm that responds fastest, most credibly, and most memorably wins. Every channel in this report is in service of showing up favorably at one or more of those steps.

The uncomfortable implication

Because the decision hinges on being *remembered*, *found*, *trusted*, and *responsive* — not on outspending competitors — a mid-sized firm can beat a national advertiser at the moment of choice. But only if it's distinct enough to be remembered and fast enough to answer. That's the whole game.

Sources: ALM Global (2025) response-time data. Martindale-Avvo (2023). Revenue Memo (2026) conversion-timeline data. Andava legal-marketing statistics (2025).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Sameness Problem

11

This is the finding that ties the whole report together, and the one most firms would rather not hear: the category has spent billions to look identical.

When personal-injury firm brands are audited side by side, roughly **90% of them look identical** — the same stock courtroom shots, the same aggressive-but-caring tone, the same "injured? call now" call to action, the same visual language. One creative analysis spanning 3,720 advertisers across 210 markets found the category converging on a handful of interchangeable formats. Nobody stands out, the analysis concluded, because almost nobody is trying to.

90%

Of personal-injury firms look identical when their brands are audited side by side across markets. In a category spending \$4 billion a year, near-total visual and verbal sameness is the single largest — and most fixable — source of wasted spend. (Creative analysis across 3,720 advertisers, 210 markets)

Why sameness is so expensive

The cost of looking like everyone else compounds through every channel in this report:

- **On TV and radio**, higher frequency of an interchangeable ad just amplifies the sameness — you're paying to reinforce that you look like the competition.
- **In search**, when a prospect sees five near-identical firms, the decision defaults to position, reviews, or price — not brand preference, because there's no brand to prefer.
- **In the decision itself**, "remembered" is a top driver of who gets the call. A forgettable ad fails the one job that matters most.

The firms buying signed leads from vendors compound the problem: they rent someone else's pipeline, close a fraction, and build zero name recognition or referral equity in the process. Nothing accumulates.

In a market where 90% look the same, distinctiveness isn't a luxury. It's the highest-leverage, lowest-cost advantage available.

What actually differentiates

The research and consumer data point to the same answer. Differentiation doesn't come from spending more on the same generic formats — it comes from **production value, a consistent and human brand identity, and creative distinct enough to be remembered**. A firm that shows a real, credible human; tells an actual story; and maintains one recognizable identity across TV, streaming, radio, search, and social will stand out in a category defined by sameness — often at a fraction of the frequency the giants buy.

Sources: Taqtics creative analysis across 3,720 advertisers in 210 markets (2026). ATRA advertising-volume data (2025). Consumer decision-factor surveys (iLawyer Marketing, 2024–2025).

Rent cases, or earn them

Industry analysis frames the strategic choice bluntly: there are two ways a firm gets cases. It can **rent** them or **earn** them.

Renting

Buy leads or "signed retainers" from a vendor. Pay per case. Race to call first. Close maybe a third; the rest go to the next firm on the vendor's list. Zero name recognition, zero referral equity, zero compounding return. When you stop paying, it all stops.

Earning

Build brand presence, distinctive creative, strong local search, genuine reviews, and fast intake. Every element compounds — recognition accumulates, referrals grow, and the pipeline keeps working between campaigns. Slower to start; durable once built.

Neither is wholly wrong — many firms do both. But a firm that *only* rents is perpetually renting someone else's pipeline, with nothing of its own to show for years of spend. The compounding assets — brand, reputation, organic visibility — are the ones that survive a budget cut and keep producing.

The strategic summary

Put the whole report together and a coherent strategy emerges for a firm that wants to win without simply outspending everyone:

- **Be findable** at the moment of need — local search, Google Business Profile, reviews.
- **Be remembered** before the need — distinctive brand and creative, delivered through TV, streaming, radio, and social.
- **Be trusted** when evaluated — genuine reviews, credible track record, third-party signals.
- **Be responsive** when contacted — fast, human intake that converts the leads your marketing earned.
- **Be consistent** across all of it — one recognizable identity everywhere, so every impression reinforces the last.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Where It's All Heading

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The channels will keep shifting, but the direction is legible. Five forces are reshaping personal-injury marketing over the next several years.

1. AI search changes how firms get found

Google's AI Overviews and conversational AI search are compressing the traditional results page. Increasingly, a searcher may get an answer — and a recommendation — without scrolling to the old blue links. This elevates two things: structured, authoritative content that AI systems draw from, and Google Business Profile signals (reviews, recency, sentiment) that increasingly feed AI-generated local recommendations. Firms optimized only for classic SEO will need to adapt to being *cited* by AI, not just ranked by search.

2. Connected TV becomes the default

As streaming pushes past 50% of viewing, connected TV stops being an experiment and becomes the primary way TV advertising is bought. The firms building CTV presence and attribution now will hold the advantage as the rest of the category catches up — later and, historically, less skillfully than other verticals.

3. Short-form video becomes a search channel

With a large share of younger consumers searching TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube before Google, video presence on those platforms shifts from "nice to have" to a genuine discovery channel. Educational, human, plain-language video is the format that travels.

Sources: Martindale-Avvo "2025 Predictions." Nielsen streaming projections. Superpractice and Apaya AI-and-social analyses (2026). Sprout Social Gen-Z search data.

4. AI reshapes production and personalization

Artificial intelligence is changing both how marketing is made and how it's targeted. On the production side, AI tools are lowering the cost of generating and personalizing creative, scripts, and content. On the targeting side, predictive analytics are helping firms aim spend more precisely and pre-qualify leads. The caveat that runs through the research: AI accelerates execution, but it doesn't replace genuine expertise, authentic voice, or the human trust that actually converts an injured client. And it introduces new compliance obligations — including duties around client data and disclosure.

5. Costs keep rising — so efficiency matters more than volume

Every credible projection points the same way: legal advertising spend will keep climbing, with the U.S. legal ad market projected above \$3 billion (measured media) heading toward mid-decade and total spend already estimated at \$4 billion across all measured ads in 2025. As the market gets more expensive, the same budget buys less — fewer clicks, fewer impressions, fewer leads than a year earlier. That inflation punishes brute-force spending and rewards firms that get more from each dollar through distinctiveness, strong organic assets, and efficient conversion.

The next five years won't reward the biggest budget. They'll reward the firm that spends deliberately, builds compounding assets, and refuses to look like everyone else.

The one durable conclusion

Channels rise and fall — broadcast to cable to streaming, print to search to AI. But underneath every shift, the injured client's decision stays the same: they call the firm they *remember*, can *find*, and *trust*, that *answers* when they reach out. Technology changes the delivery. It never changes that. The firms that internalize it — and invest in being memorable rather than merely loud — are the ones that will still be standing when the next channel arrives.

A closing note on method

This report deliberately named no vendor and endorsed no channel as universally best, because the honest answer is that the right mix depends on a firm's market, budget, and goals. What the data does support without ambiguity: in a category defined by sameness, distinctiveness is the rarest and most valuable asset a personal-injury firm can build.

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This report synthesizes primary industry research, government and trade-association data, and published marketing benchmarks. Figures are cited to their originating source. Where estimates vary by methodology, the report notes the discrepancy rather than selecting a single figure. Projections are labeled as such and distinguished from measured data.

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A note on independence

Statistics were verified against their originating sources before inclusion. This report does not endorse any advertising vendor, agency, or channel as universally superior; channel recommendations depend on a firm's specific market, budget, and objectives. Figures reflect the most recent data available at publication and may be superseded by newer releases.



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