

THE NATIONAL LAW REVIEW

10 Insights Into What Today's Legal Consumer Wants From Attorneys ~ Part 1

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Today's savvy legal consumer doesn't need attorneys the way they used to because they don't buy legal services the way they used to. The consumer is more knowledgeable and has more options available than at any other time in history.

Understanding legal consumers is more significant now than ever because technology has shifted the power to them. They are in control, and they know it.

When I begin a consulting project for a law firm or work one-on-one with attorneys, many are shocked to find out that they are using an initial consultation approach that is out of date, out of sync and clashes with the way that consumers retain attorneys and buy legal solutions.

Since new clients are the lifeblood of every practice, why not do all that you can to create the most positive outcome?

If I asked a hundred attorneys whether they are interacting with today's legal consumer using an updated and evolved approach, 99 percent of them would say that they are. But it is this very self-deception that is causing them to continue to be the runner-up. Coming in second place is costly.

By the time the legal consumer meets face-to-face with an attorney, a whopping 65 to 70 percent of their decision making process is complete. They are doing their homework on their terms, their turf, and their time. The consumer will hop from website to website to research you, google you, read about your credentials and expertise, and check out your ratings and reviews.

The remaining 25 to 30 percent of their journey comes down to YOU. Will you engage, connect, and communicate with prospects in such a way that they do not need to visit the competition or continue shopping for an attorney? Will your one-on-one communication skills and approach be current or look like you got stuck in the 80s?

The initial consultation is that make-or-break meeting whether someone will hire your firm on the spot or retain your competition.

Before writing both of my books for attorneys, I conducted extensive research into the mind of today's legal consumer. I ran focus groups with individuals who went through the process of buying legal services and retaining an attorney. They openly and candidly revealed their wants and needs. They shared with me what makes them tick and what ticks them off.

Below are the first five insights into the mind of the new legal consumer:

1. Skip the superficial small talk. When meeting a potential client, attorneys are taught to begin a consultation with small talk, to chat about the weather, traffic, parking, or commenting on what someone is wearing or a current event. *Did you have any trouble finding the building? Did you have any issues with parking? How was the traffic getting here? Is it hot enough out there?* STOP! Enough already! Every other attorney is using this thirty-year-old, antiquated approach. Contrived chit-chat does nothing to build rapport, create a strong connection, or make a dynamic first impression. Remove this old-school tactic immediately. Connect authentically, not artificially.



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2. Connect and relate to me. People are looking for an attorney who makes a sincere connection and cares about them and their situation. They want you to take a genuine interest in them, give them your complete attention, and truly listen to them. When prospects don't feel a connection, they disconnect from you. Disconnected people don't write retainer checks. They don't care if you can solve their problem. They don't care if you are the best in the business and come highly recommended. The legal consumer thinks, *I am hiring you as a person first and as an attorney second. I am buying who you are and how you treat me, not just your expertise. Please make me feel like I matter and I am not just another consultation.*

3. Don't treat me like I am clueless about my legal options. In the past, the traditional consultation approach relied on meeting with a potential client willing to sit quietly and be *educated*, a time where people had little knowledge and fewer legal choices. Attorneys were taught not to sell but rather to educate. Don't sell yourself or your services. Educate. Educate some more, and the consumer will write you a retainer check. Not anymore! Education is still important, but you need to educate people from where they are, not where they used to be. Find out where a prospective client is regarding their knowledge and insight, and navigate the consultation from there.

4. Help me see why you are different than your competitors. The challenge that attorneys have when attempting to communicate how they are different is that to potential clients; they sound similar to their competition. When the legal consumer asks you how you are different or why they should retain your services, they don't want you to launch into a canned answer. *I have been an attorney for more than 22 years and have a stellar reputation in family law. I am very proud of my practice and the outstanding service that I provide to all of my clients. Blah, blah, blah.* Consumers are thinking, *Tell me something that I can't get from your website. Give me something that I can't read in your bio.* You must articulate and connect the dots about *why* you are different and *how* that difference relates to them and their situation.

5. I have a name; please use it. The consumer declared *I was shocked that the attorney never used my name in our entire conversation, except to greet me. I would never hire an attorney who did not see me as a person with a name.* How much is this bad habit costing you? How would you feel if your heart surgeon, financial planner, tax accountant, or interior designer never used your name in a consultation? Addressing your client by their name not only personalizes your conversation, it builds a deeper connection. Do not overdo it, that's creepy.

These issues are not minor, they are major keys to genuinely influencing others. The more your approach is aligned with what the new legal consumer wants, the more you can stand out, pull yourself ahead of the pack, gain more referrals and win more business. And if you are already very successful and want to notch up your skills in this ever-evolving legal market, you will see that fine-tuning these areas of your approach will make a major impact on your results.

Click [here](#) for the next five insights.

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