

Top 5 Untold Reasons Your Law Firm Didn't Get Hired

Almost any law firm (or any business, for that matter) has had this happen. You meet a prospective client, tell him or her about a possible opportunity and have what you think is a good conversation— but they don't hire you. You wonder why: "He was the perfect potential client"; "I could provide him exactly what he needed"; "I can't believe she didn't want to work with me."

There are many reasons why that client goes elsewhere, and when we lose, it is easy to blame it on price. There are many more important factors, however, and most are never disclosed by those prospective clients. I'm going to share a few of these "untold" reasons with you. Consider this a behind-the-scenes-look at the things prospective clients don't tell you.

1. I thought you cared more about yourself and your firm than my problems/needs, either in our conversation or in your website content.

How to fix it:

As someone with a need, a client cares about their need and getting it solved quickly and completely by someone who cares about them, or at least makes them feel like they care. The prospective client wants to work with someone who spends more of the initial interview time asking questions and listening than they do asserting their awards and qualifications. As an attorney, focus your approach and content on recognizing the client's needs and goals in considering working with you, and put them at the center of your presentation.

2. I didn't feel like I'd be an important client, since you didn't follow up or show me what working with you might be like.

How to fix it:

Make the prospective client a priority. We're now in an age of instant messaging and Internet time. For interactions that begin online, you should expect that people want immediate response, and you'll be judged based on how quickly you respond (as well as the quality of that response). When you meet someone offline, follow up within 24 hours. When you get a referral or lead online, follow up immediately, even if just to clarify their information and ask for a little more information. If you can't commit to doing that yourself, then hire someone and make sure they do it.

3. I didn't think that we would work well together, in our communication and styles.

How to fix it:

Make yourself easy to do business with and adapt to the prospective client's preferences. Figure out what their preferred method of communication is – phone, email, etc. and use that medium. Don't force them to work the way you work – if they sense that, and it is uncomfortable, they will run away.

4. I didn't sense the competence and professionalism that I would expect from an attorney I would hire.

How to fix it:

Look professional, but not so over-the-top that the prospect thinks you have poor taste or are too expensive: find a comfortable mid-point. You don't have to drive a Mercedes or wear Armani, but you should at least demonstrate a reasonably successful and positive appearance. You were clearly smart enough to graduate law school, so develop a strong brand for your firm and use it well – on your business cards, website, etc. Time to drop the AOL, Hotmail, Yahoo or Gmail account as your business email account. That's fine to use with friends and family, but not with a client. They are determining whether they want to pay you a lot of money to represent them!

5. From the research I did online, I see many others with more information there. If you were really good, I'd see that online and I would find you more easily on Google.

How to fix it:

Recognize that people will look around online for information about you and similar lawyers. Part of the decision-making process today involves tapping into personal networks for referrals and doing basic searches. Make sure you know what comes up on Google for your name and your main keywords (ex: estate planning attorney in San Diego). Are you there? If not, devise your plan. You want to participate and have awareness so you can address what's out there. Can a potential client find you on LinkedIn? You can control many of these profiles and make it a positive extension of your practice, helping your cause with prospective clients.