How to Increase Leads Without Free Legal Consultations

Free legal consultations can be a double-edged sword. Many attorneys focus on results and prefer not to spend non-billable hours on prospects who may not commit. This is why many attorneys grow frustrated or find it hard to balance the benefits of free consultations within their practice.

Some law firms find free legal consultations as a lucrative business move to generate more leads, while others find it a blow to their bottom line. Fortunately, free consultations aren't a necessity — here are alternatives that will still drive clients to your door.

Profitable Alternatives to Free Legal Consultations

Attracting and converting clients is one of the most difficult parts of running a successful law firm. Law school often overlooks effective marketing strategies, leaving many attorneys to figure it out on their own. This gap presents a valuable opportunity for growth.

If your law firm isn’t in a position to offer free legal consultations, here are four alternative steps you can take to generate an avalanche of leads. While they may require some upfront work, the results continue paying off over time.

Step #1: Know Your Ideal Client

These are your best, most profitable clients. They’re the clients you’d fight to keep. If you attract ideal clients at the very start, you have a very good chance of converting them into advocates for your firm.

A client advocate displays specific **behavioral** and **outcome** markers.

- **Behavioral markers:** Your ideal client may display significantly higher engagement levels, a positive relationship, and even admiration for your firm. Ideal clients have the character traits your firm is looking for.
- **Outcome markers:** These are the results of desirable character traits. When clients trust, respect, and admire your firm, they’re less likely to haggle or complain. They eagerly pay higher fees, value your work, and regularly spend (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or annually).

Firms with an intimate understanding of these client advocates win in the long term. Why? You attract what you have. Client advocates attract and refer more ideal clients, creating a cycle that fills your firm with client advocates.

Now, let’s look at the types of clients you might encounter. Here are the three basic types of clients:

1. **Advocates:** Clients that display the behavioral and outcome markers you need. They’re enthusiastic, loyal, and profitable. They consistently request more work, and they repeatedly promote your firm.
2. **Apathetics:** Clients who are discount shoppers who are more than willing to jump ship for a better deal. They’re indifferent to you, your firm, or your contributions to their well-being.
3. **Skeptics:** These clients have had negative experiences with other firms and are wary. You shouldn’t shy away from these clients, but they may require more 1:1 time to build trust in you and your services.

How do you find the client advocates you need for your law firm?

Start with your core values. Identify the traits you want in your best clients. Here are some markers to consider:

- **A Positive Relationship***:* Clients who are a pleasure to work with, pay on time, and don’t haggle over fees.
- **High Engagement**: Clients who respond promptly, ask questions, and request help often.
- **Admiration for Your Firm***:* Clients who chose you because they believe in your expertise and view you as an authority in your field.

Define your “ideal client” carefully. Avoid descriptions that are too broad or too narrow. Focus on two or three key traits that matter most to you. Consider the traits you value and those you dislike in clients. Then, create a balanced outline that guides you in identifying the right clients.

Next, find a client or prospect that meets your criteria. Choose the best candidates who are willing and able to pay for your services, and then conduct interviews with these clients. You’re looking for a list of their:

- Desires
- Goals
- Fears
- Frustrations
- Problems

Get to know these clients thoroughly. Make this an in-depth request; you’ll be using the information they give you in your marketing later. Do this for each practice area, if needed.

Step #2: Create Content That Addresses Client Concerns

Now it’s time to create urgency for prospective clients who are just like the ideal clients you’ve identified. Highlighting genuine problems they face will provide them with the spark of motivation they need to contact you.

How do you do this? You abandon selling in favor of enhancing your value proposition. Do this by:

- Educating them about their expectations
- Addressing their fears and associated risks
- Discussing outcomes of poor decisions and available options
- Positioning yourself as a thought leader

Aim for high standards in your free content, making it more valuable than most legal content available online. Amazing, high-quality content is easy to understand and simple to create. We know it when we see it because we're intuitively aware that it depends on a formula. Let's go through each part of this formula:

1. **Data**: Content backed by scientific research, statistics, metrics, or original data. It should be thorough, credible, and supported by reliable, peer-reviewed sources.
2. **Drama**: Content that evokes strong emotional responses. The delivery method is secondary to the strength of the story or the emotion generated. It's compelling because it taps into emotional and psychological triggers.
3. **Degree**: A large volume of quality content produced consistently. Whether random or scheduled, the sheer amount of quality content sets a high standard.
4. **Depth**: Detailed content that provides comprehensive coverage of a topic from various angles. It answers readers' questions and addresses their objections thoroughly.
5. **Design**: Visually appealing content that's enjoyable to consume. It's attractive to look at and engaging to read.

Content that meets any of these criteria is compelling and hard to compete with. Meeting two or more criteria makes your content exceptional. Achieving three or more can make your content legendary, especially with proper promotion.

Applying the Content Formula

You can apply these formulas to various types of content:

- Reviews and Testimonials
- Articles, Emails, and Guest Posts
- Visual Content (e.g., Infographics, Slide Decks)
- Books, eBooks, and Guides
- Audio, Video, and Presentations
- Seminars, Workshops, Podcasts, and Events
- Advertisements and Copywriting Pieces
- Social Media Content and Status Updates
- Print Collateral (e.g., Brochures, Booklets)
- Software and Tools

Generating Content Ideas

How do you come up with a steady stream of ideas? To maintain a steady flow of content inspiration, consider these steps:

1. Head over to a large site or a major competitor's website.
2. Create a list of their most popular articles, but *don't read them.*
3. Pick a headline, then outline your article.
4. Use *data, drama, degree, depth, or design* to create a high-quality version of that article.

Next, you can work on advertising and marketing your content.

Step #3: Create Successful Law Firm Advertising Campaigns

Many law firms invest heavily in advertising, but without proper training or understanding, these efforts can become costly. To make the most of advertising platforms, consider using the 60/30/10 method:

- **10% of your ad budget on Cold traffic:** Target groups who haven't heard of you. Offer value with a tool, quiz, download, or content without requiring an opt-in. Even if you lose money here, the insights gained will benefit your overall strategy.
- **30% of your ad budget on Warm traffic:** These are prospects familiar with your firm. They've heard of you, show interest in your offer, and are willing to engage. Warm traffic is more likely to convert.
- **60% of your ad budget on Hot traffic:** These prospects have engaged with your content, such as subscribers to your email lists, social media followers, or those who have downloaded information or requested a paid consultation. They have shown a clear interest in your services and are eager to hear from you.

With this method, you spend a significant amount of money on prospects who actually want to hear from you. With free legal consultations, you may spend more time and money on people who, while targeted, may not be interested in your services.

For example, if you have **$500 per month** budgeted for LinkedIn ads, you'd spend:

- **$50** on cold traffic
- **$150** on warm traffic
- **$300** on hot traffic

You can apply this method to your total ad budget across multiple platforms. For example, with a $2,500 monthly budget, you could use the 60/30/10 model for advertising on places like Yelp, Nolo, Avvo, and LinkedIn.

Step #4: Reach Out to Known Publications

Now that you have more content, it's time to get it out. Here is where you'll rely on partners or larger publications to circulate your content. If this sounds intimidating, these tips can help simplify the process:

1. Create a List of Publications

You'll want to create a list of blogs, magazines, media companies, etc., with an audience of potential customers. If you're a small business attorney, publications like Entrepreneur Magazine, Forbes, or Business Insider are great lead-generation sources to cultivate.

2. Categorize These Publications

Divide your list into three categories:

- **Traffic:** These are high profile sites with a large readership, a significant amount of daily visitors, and lots of prospects who are part of your target audience.
- **Authority:** These sites are authoritative, prestigious, and very credible. They may or may not receive a significant amount of traffic. That's okay because sharing your content with them boosts your credibility, status, and authority. You're able to use the "*as featured on*" tag to boost your trustworthiness.
- **Partnerships:** These sources serve the same clients you do in a complementary way. They're grateful for the value you can provide, and they're open to partnering with you in a variety of ways. You'll want to create a relationship by providing a significant amount of value.

Once you've sorted your list into these three categories, you're ready to pitch the sites in your inventory. Here are a few sites you can use to get started.

- ABA Journal
- Above the Law
- Attorney at Work
- Avvo

- Enjuris
- Halt.org
- HG.org
- LawFuel
- Lawyerist
- LegalZoom
- Nolo
- Quora

These are just *legal* websites. There are even more opportunities available if you focus your attention on or around the areas relevant to your practice areas. If your firm is local or regional, choose local or regional publications and partners. Approach sources in your metropolitan areas to generate results.

Free Legal Consultations Aren’t a Necessity

They have their place in your practice, but it’s important to weigh your options and explore alternatives that benefit your firm. With the right approach, you can attract more clients — the kind of clients who are eager, able, and willing to pay for your services.

To manage your growing client base, consider using Bill4Time, a comprehensive legal practice management platform. With Bill4Time, you can efficiently track time, manage billing, and ensure every billable hour is accounted for. Start your free trial of Bill4Time today to experience the benefits firsthand!