



A GUIDE TO SHOPPING FOR AN ANSWERING SERVICE FOR **LAWYERS & LAW FIRMS**

If you're looking for a way to give your law firm a competitive edge, provide better service, and bring in more customers, an answering service may be just what you need.

In this whitepaper, we'll discuss the basics about answering services, the benefits of using one in your firm, a few things you should look for in a prospective answering service partner, and some top tips that you can use while searching for an answering service.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

A 24/7 answering service is exactly what it sounds like. Using basic call forwarding, you route calls made to your office to an outside service where a virtual receptionist or customer service representative answers your calls, listens to your clients' questions or issues, and takes the appropriate actions.

Call answering services can be used to replace your reception team completely, but are most often used to augment in-house staff, especially during non-business hours.

For example, if a new client is looking to schedule a free consultation and calls outside of regular office hours, he or she may normally get a voicemail, but with a call answering service these calls can be routed directly to an experienced receptionist. Each caller can get personalized service, even when your team is unavailable or out of the office.

BENEFITS OF USING A 24/7 LIVE ANSWERING SERVICE

Using a true 24/7 live answering service has a number of great benefits for your law office. Here are just a few of them.

- **No more voicemails or robotic menus** - Even outside of office hours, your clients no longer have to leave a voicemail or navigate through a touch-tone menu to leave a message, or contact their attorney. They will always get a friendly, real person on the other end of the line, who will listen to their issues and respond according to your instructions. Using a professional answering service ensures your clients always feel like they can reach your office and that they receive amazing customer service when they do.
- **Never miss out on a lead** - If a potential client calls your office and gets a voicemail, or a "busy" signal, he or she might not call again, and instead look for another attorney. With a call answering service, you never have to worry about missing calls.

“WITH A CALL ANSWERING SERVICE, YOU NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MISSING CALLS.”



- **Avoid unnecessary interruptions** - If you work as an independent lawyer, or your office is not yet big enough for a reception team, answering phone calls can be a big drain on your time and resources. A call answering service can help you minimize interruptions by taking messages and delivering them to you via text, email or voicemail, and can also ensure that only vetted, high-quality potential and existing clients get their calls put through to you and your team.
- **Benefits your image and reputation** - Your virtual receptionist will answer with the name of your law firm, and give the impression that they are part of your office staff – because they are! This helps improve your brand image, particularly if you run a smaller firm with only a few employees, and no dedicated reception staff.

“FIRST AND FOREMOST, FIND AN ANSWERING SERVICE THAT HAS EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH ATTORNEYS OR LEGAL FIRMS.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHILE SHOPPING

So, you want to hire a call answering service for your law firm – but you’re not sure where to start. Let’s look at a few of the things you should be looking for, so that you can determine whether or not a prospective call answering service is a good partner for your firm.

- **Specialization** - First and foremost, find an answering service that has experience working with attorneys and legal firms. Even though answering services act as customer service professionals, not legal professionals, you want to find a service that’s comfortable and familiar working with callers seeking legal assistance.
- **24/7/365 Service** - Never settle for a service that’s not available 24/7/365. The biggest advantage of using a call answering service is that you can “staff” your reception office 24/7. If a client has a question at 1 am, he or she can call and be connected to a virtual receptionist – or if a client has an issue on a holiday, he or she can still call and talk to a live person. 24/7/365 service ensures that your clients can always connect with you, even after hours, on holidays and on weekends.



“AN ANSWERING SERVICE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PRIORITIZE CALLS BASED ON IMPORTANCE AS WELL AS YOUR EXISTING PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES.”

- **Case Prioritization** - An answering service should be able to prioritize calls based on importance as well as your existing protocols and procedures. Your partner should be able to route calls based on case type, the importance of a call, and the attorney handling the case. This ensures that critical calls reach you ASAP – while less important messages can be delivered later.
- **Appointment Scheduling** - A professional answering service should be able to integrate with your existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software or scheduling platform so that they can schedule appointments for clients on your behalf. This type of integration streamlines the appointment setting process.
- **U.S. Based Staff** - A U.S. based answering service will be able to provide better service to your customers by circumventing language barriers and cultural differences.

SHOPPING FOR AN ANSWERING SERVICE - OUR TIPS

How can you find the right call answering partner? Here are a few of our top tips for your search.

- **Ask for recommendations from other law offices** - If you are part of your local legal community, chances are that some of the other law offices in your area have been using an answering service. It's a good idea to reach out to friends and colleagues to see if they have any experience or recommendations for you.
- **Check out the reviews and testimonials online** - Online reviews are a great way to get an idea of the overall quality of an answering service or call center. After you've identified a few companies that you're interested in working with, make sure to read as many reviews as you can to get more details about the service and the experiences that other businesses have had using them.



- **Call the service** - Want to know how an answering service answers phone calls? Call them. If you experience long hold times, unprofessional interactions with their employees or any other issues when you place your first call to them then it's safe to say that your clients won't be treated any better and you should look for another option.
- **Look for pay-as-you-go pricing** - While some companies may charge you a monthly retainer or use a different fee-based model, pay-as-you-go pricing is the best option.

With this pricing model, you only pay for the time that the receptionist spends talking to your clients – and nothing else. This billing method ensures that you can budget properly and easily scale up your team of virtual receptionists as your company grows, with no hidden fees.

CONCLUSION

Whether you're looking to gather more high-quality leads, answer more calls on holidays and weekends, or boost client satisfaction, a call answering service for attorneys may be right for you.

With this simple guide, you should be able to pick a service that's right for you – and start enjoying all of these benefits right away. So keep our tips in mind, find a 24/7 live answering service and take the first steps toward building a more cost-effective, profitable law firm today.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Contact AnswerFirst at 1-800-645-2616 or visit our website at answerfirst.com.

“WHILE SOME COMPANIES MAY CHARGE YOU A MONTHLY RETAINER OR USE A DIFFERENT FEE BASED MODEL PAY-AS-YOU-GO PRICING IS THE BEST OPTION.”

