



RAISING THE BAR:
LEGAL INDUSTRY
REPUTATION
BENCHMARKS

HOW DIGITAL MARKETING AGENCIES CAN DEFEND
THEIR LEGAL CLIENTS' REPUTATION & HELP THEM
EARN NEW BUSINESS

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Executive Summary: What the 2025 Data Tells Us

A joint report by GatherUp + Postali

Reputation is no longer a byproduct of legal performance, it's a measurable growth channel. In 2025, the data tells a clear story: the most successful law firms combine client experience, proactive review collection, and reputation monitoring into a unified strategy.

Together, GatherUp and Postali analyzed data from over **1,500 U.S. law firm locations** across eight core practice areas, from personal injury to elder law, to uncover how digital reputation trends are shaping client acquisition and retention in the legal industry.

Our findings reveal that client satisfaction and reputation strategy are diverging sharply between firms that embrace proactive reputation management and those that remain reactive.

Top 5 Insights Agencies Need to Know

Email is Still the MVP — but SMS is the Secret Weapon.

Email remains the top channel for review requests (used by over 70% of firms), yet the fastest-growing firms combine email with SMS follow-ups, achieving up to **2x higher review volume** than email alone.

First-Party Reviews Outperform Public Ratings.

Average first-party review ratings (4.8–4.9 stars) consistently exceed public Google ratings (4.5–4.7). For agencies, this reinforces the value of pairing first-party feedback with local SEO tactics for better visibility and client trust.

Volume Doesn't Equal Trust.

Law firms with the highest review volume frequently scored *lower* on Net Promoter Score (NPS), proving that quality and authenticity of feedback matter more than quantity. Agencies should focus on sustained, ethical review generation rather than bulk tactics.

The Reputation Leaders Share a Pattern.

Top-performing sectors like **Criminal Law** and **Elder & Estate Planning** achieved the strongest balance of NPS and ratings; evidence that active solicitation and client communication directly correlate with higher satisfaction and referrals.

Reputation is Becoming a Compliance Issue.

As FTC enforcement grows and fake reviews surge, agencies must now defend their clients' reputations as a matter of risk management, not just marketing. Tools like GatherUp's Fake Review Defense and Postali's ethics-first marketing standards are becoming essential safeguards for law firms.

Why It Matters for Agencies

The 2025 legal reputation landscape is defined by **visibility, velocity, and veracity**:

- *Visibility* through optimized Google profiles and review freshness
- *Velocity* through consistent, multichannel review generation
- *Veracity* through transparency and authentic client feedback

Agencies that can deliver on all three will not only attract higher-value legal clients but also demonstrate measurable ROI.

By benchmarking your clients' reputation performance against these legal sector norms, your agency can:

- Quantify client satisfaction using NPS and review metrics
- Pinpoint areas for optimization in review request strategy
- Reinforce your agency's role as a trusted reputation strategist, not just a marketing vendor

* KEY TAKEAWAY

Reputation is the new referral.

For law firms, every client interaction can become a trust signal that fuels growth but only if agencies know how to capture, manage, and defend it.

This report gives agencies the data and framework to do exactly that: benchmark their clients, identify opportunity gaps, and raise the standard of reputation management in the legal industry.



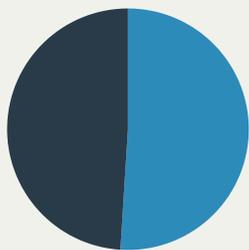
Introduction: Why Reputation Is Critical in the Legal Industry

A strong reputation has always been a central pillar of the legal industry. From criminal defense to family law to personal injury, law firms across sectors have long depended on their good name to get word-of-mouth referrals and reinforce their trustworthiness and credibility.

Today, the importance of having a strong reputation is magnified. A law firm's reputation is more visible and measurable — and therefore more marketable — than ever before. Reputations are built online through Google reviews and ratings, third-party review sites, and social media chatter. They're augmented through NPS surveys and first-party feedback forms. They're amplified in advertisements. Anywhere you look, a lawyer's reputation is on display.

Client reviews are arguably the most important reputation tool, providing critical social proof for people who are searching for legal representation, often under stressful circumstances. The details shared in reviews — good or bad — directly impact how the firm is publicly perceived, influencing the decisions of potential clients to choose that firm or move onto the next.

HOW CONSUMERS RESEARCH LAWYERS*



MORE THAN HALF (51%) OF
CONSUMERS TRUST ONLINE
REVIEWS OF LAWYERS

2

NEARLY 98% OF CONSUMERS
TALK TO OR MORE FIRMS
BEFORE MAKING A DECISION.



73% OF CONSUMERS TAKE 3
OR MORE DAYS TO
RESEARCH, CONSULT WITH,
AND HIRE A LAWYER.

The Age of AI and The Evolution of The Client Journey

The rapid rise of AI is changing how people find lawyers. ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Perplexity, Gemini, and Google AI Mode use a law firm's reputation as a key ranking factor when determining which law firms to recommend.

Historically, firms could dominate local search with a robust Google Review strategy, but times are changing quickly. These AI engines, or Large Language Models (LLMs), are looking at reviews from across multiple review sources.

Key Review Sites for Lawyers Beyond Google

1. [Lawyers.com](#) - this website's reviews are referenced by AI engines, and the reviews there also get pulled into Avvo for double benefit. Bing Places also cites review info from Lawyers.com (Microsoft Copilot and Perplexity both utilize Bing Places for local business information)
2. Facebook - this social media giant is referenced by all AI engines, and reviews there are a main source of reviews for Bing Places
3. BBB (Better Business Bureau) - this organization is referenced in AI results and used by consumers as well

There are also peer review sites that legal marketing teams should also consider in their overarching review strategy, including Avvo, [BestLawyers.com](#), Justia, SuperLawyers.com, and Martindale-Hubbell.

Yelp has rules against review solicitation, but marketing teams should monitor this site closely and respond to reviews to protect the firm's reputation.

AI engines not only look at review count and rating scores, but they also consider the frequency of reviews (aka review velocity), the sentiment of the reviews, and the firm's public-facing responses.

All law firms should reevaluate their online review strategy to account for these changes and set themselves up for a successful future. Failing to adapt will cost law firms more and more clients as AI becomes increasingly popular. Alternatively, firms that adapt have an opportunity to increase their market share by getting ahead of the competition now.

The Changing Landscape of Google Search

Despite the unprecedented adoption of AI generative engines, Google search is still widely used by consumers. However, the results page continues to change, keeping law firms and marketing agencies on their toes.

Google searches now often lead with AI Overviews. These overviews often successfully answer searchers' questions and have significantly decreased clicks on the blue links below.

Although law firms are losing clicks for informational searches to Google's AI Overviews, the most valuable traffic to websites (where potential clients are looking to contact firms) remains strong for local searches. These clicks happen in one or more of the following four places:

1. Google Local Services Ads (LSAs)
2. Traditional PPC Google Ads
3. Local Maps Pack
4. Organic Search Results

Two of these four areas on the results page use reviews as their primary ranking factor: LSAs and Local Maps Pack. This means that law firms with the best online review strategy are able to dominate search results and, in turn, dominate their competition.

Google's Local Services Ads (LSAs)

In 2020, Google rolled out Local Services Ads (LSAs) for the legal profession. These ads show at the top of most local searches, in the most prime real estate on the search results page, above both traditional Google Ads and Google Maps results.

LSAs have far fewer targeting options, optimization options, and bidding strategies than traditional Google Ads. The primary ranking factor for LSAs for law firms is Google Reviews.

Prior to 2020, firms with fewer reviews might have been able to make up ground by jumping the Local Pack with traditional Google Ads. However, since the widespread acceptance of Local Services Ads, law firms with the most reviews and best ratings once again have taken center stage.

Attorneys and marketers often wonder why their LSAs are not performing as well as they'd like - and in nearly every instance, the reason is reviews. LSAs primarily rank firms on the best combination of review score, number of reviews, and review velocity.

Local Maps Pack

Google's Local Maps Pack accounts for another massive portion of clicks in the search results. Just like LSAs, Google most consistently shows firms with the best reviews ahead of the competition.

While other factors are taken into account for Local Maps, such as geographic location and user interaction, positive reviews are a law firm's key to dominating the local search results. The firms with the best reviews get the most clicks, the most clients, and then oftentimes more reviews because of it, entrenching them as leaders in their local competitive landscape.



The Role of Your Business and This Report

Everything a law firm's agency or digital marketing team does — from managing SEO and AI optimization, PPC and LSAs, or providing full-service local marketing — comes down to reputation. Without a strong reputation, it's much harder for any campaign to deliver expected results. To get the optimal performance for a law firm's digital marketing, the core of what needs to be done first and foremost is about defending and enhancing the firm's online reputation.

How do you do that? Start with data.

With reputation data at the industry and sector level, you gain an insider's view of the norms and trends to benchmark against. For example, if a Personal Injury firm has a 4.2 Google rating and only gets one review per week, you can determine whether that's par for the course — or a big red flag.

To help our agency friends, we analyzed key reputation metrics across eight different sectors (or areas of practice) that comprise GatherUp's legal industry clients. The data was collected between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2024.

In this practical guide, we'll share that data and break it down into actionable insights and guidance so you can:

- Compare current reputation performance to industry norms.
- Strengthen review generation tactics.
- And for marketing agencies, you can
- Advise your clients in their local marketing efforts to help them earn more business.
- Strengthen your overall reputation management services.
- Demonstrate forward-thinking and expertise in reputation defense, positioning your agency as a go-to resource for the legal industry.

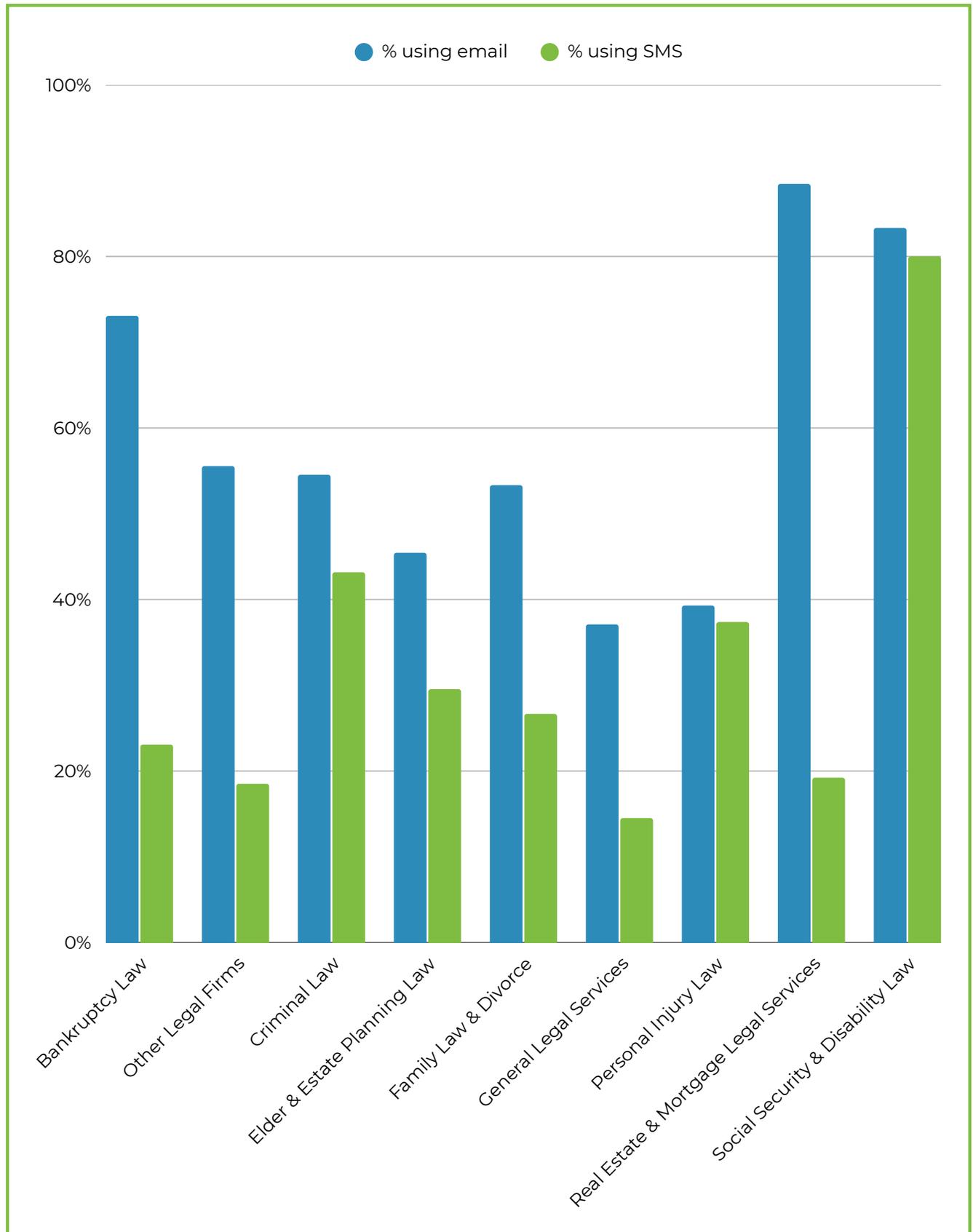
Let's dive in.

The Data: Reputation Metrics for the Legal Industry

We collected data on Google ratings, NPS, first-party review ratings, and first- and third-party review volume for all sectors. Here's what we found:

	Avg. Google Stars Rating End	Avg. NPS End	Avg. 1st Party Review Stars Rating	Avg. Total 3rd Party Reviews End	Avg. 1st party reviews collected 1/1 - 12/31/04	Avg. 3rd party reviews collected 1/1 - 12/31/04
Bankruptcy Law	4.6	94.61	4.88	87	46	10
Criminal Law	4.82	91.93	4.84	195	24	21
Elder & Estate Planning Law	4.77	89.97	4.93	90	49	25
Family Law & Divorce	4.51	89.67	4.72	92	11	16
General Legal Services	4.59	88.82	4.72	99	16	21
Personal Injury Law	4.79	84.14	4.63	147	29	37
Real Estate & Mortgage Legal Services	4.51	56.23	4.32	125	54	13
Social Security & Disability Law	4.57	75.29	4.98	229	6	35

We also tracked how each sector was requesting reviews — by channel:



Sector-Specific Insights & Actions

Based on the data above, here are our sector-specific insights along with targeted recommendations for how your agency can act on this information:

Bankruptcy Law

This sector's biggest strengths are its high average NPS (94.61) and solid first-party ratings, but its weakness is low review volume.

Targeted actions:

- To capitalize on this sector's strong use of email for review requests, formalize an email review request campaign by consistently asking the firm's clients for a review after case completion.
- Increase the use of SMS by texting follow-ups to remind clients to leave a review if they haven't already done so. SMS can reach people faster and enables quicker responses — which can help grow review volume.

Criminal Law

This sector's main strength is that it has balanced metrics across the board — high average ratings and NPS, and a good number of third-party reviews.

Targeted actions:

- Emphasize collecting more first-party reviews, which can be shared publicly on the firm's website and boost SEO.
- For marketing agencies: Use this sector as a model for ideal reputation outcomes.

Elder & Estate Planning Law

This sector has a high average star rating from first-party reviews (4.93) — a major strength.

Targeted actions:

- Automate seasonal review requests when the firm's client activity is high — such as during tax preparation or probate cycles — to increase review volume.
- For marketing agencies: Showcase this star rating benchmark in your sales decks when speaking to prospective clients in this sector. It makes the case for seeking more first-party feedback as part of your strategy.

Family Law & Divorce

This sector has moderate ratings but a small review footprint.

Targeted actions:

- When reaching out to the firm's clients with review requests, use emotionally sensitive language. This area of law can be highly stressful and emotional — and clients may need a soft touch before they're willing to leave a review. This more sensitive approach can build a larger volume of reviews over time.
- Use NPS surveys and client testimonials to help uncover improvement areas for the firm.

Personal Injury Law

This sector performs consistently in all reputation factors.

Targeted actions:

- Increase the use of social proof with video testimonials and review reels that can be posted on the firm's website.
- Lean into SMS review requests and frame them around outcome satisfaction.

General Legal Services

The biggest strength of this sector is that it has good average ratings from first-party reviews (4.72), but its average Google ratings trail behind (4.59).

Targeted actions:

- Optimize the firm's Google Business Profile and use structured review prompts so clients have guidance about what types of details to include. Reviews that include city names and category keywords can also help boost GBP rankings. Provide clients with structured review prompts for guidance about what types of details to include.
- Create "reputation rescue" workflows for low-star firms — including proactively requesting reviews to increase review volume, monitoring and responding to reviews across all channels, and defending against fake or spam reviews.

Real Estate & Mortgage Legal Services

This sector's high review volume is a strength, but it has the lowest average NPS (52) and the lowest average Google and first-party ratings out of all the sectors.

Targeted actions:

- Conduct a full customer experience audit of the firm to map where and how the drop-off in sentiment occurs.
- Switch the review focus from quantity to quality — highlighting the positive, detailed reviews in ads, social media, and on the firm's website.

Social Security & Disability Law

This sector has the highest average first-party rating (4.98) out of all sectors, but its average Google rating (4.57) is on the lower end.

Targeted actions:

- Create a robust review response plan that includes prompt, resolution-based responses to negative reviews. Showing the firm's clients that the firm is paying attention, cares about the feedback, and wants to resolve problems can improve average Google ratings over time.
- Highlight the firm's satisfied clients with anonymized case studies.

Key Takeaways Across Sectors

Here's how to think about the data at a high level:

* Email Has the Upper Hand

Using email to request reviews is an overall better option than SMS for legal clients. Based on our previous research, when lawyers use email to request reviews, they get an average of 36 reviews per location, as opposed to an average of 14 reviews per location when they just use SMS.^[1] But don't discount SMS altogether. Using both channels for review generation will still produce better results than using a single channel. Lawyers who use both have an average of 65 reviews per location.

^[1] "How to Get Reviews for Your Law Firm — with Data and Tips." GatherUp. Nov. 7, 2024.



WANT TO BOOST REVIEW VOLUME? LAWYERS GET 6X MORE REVIEWS WHEN THEY SEND REVIEW REQUESTS THAN WHEN THEY DON'T.

[1] "HOW TO GET REVIEWS FOR YOUR LAW FIRM — WITH DATA AND TIPS." GATHERUP. NOV. 7, 2024.

* Volume Does NOT Equal Satisfaction

Don't confuse having a lot of reviews with high client satisfaction, though. This is illustrated in the Real Estate & Mortgage Legal Services sector: Though the sector is in the top 3 in review volume, it's at the bottom in NPS. On the flip side, the Criminal Law and Elder & Estate Planning Law sectors have fewer reviews but a stronger reputation overall. Law firms can't overlook the fundamentals of providing excellent client service to keep overall customer sentiment high.

* First-Party Reviews Matter

First-party reviews tend to produce better ratings and better insights — and also give you better control over where and how you post the reviews. If you're skipping out on gathering first-party reviews, law firms are missing key sentiment information that not only can increase their ratings but also help them understand exactly what's working in their services and what isn't.

Next Steps for Law Firms

Law firms looking to speak with a digital marketing agency to guide their firm's online marketing and review efforts should contact Postali.

Since starting in 2009, Postali has specialized in growing law firms across the United States. Postali's services include reputation management, SEO, PPC, and award-winning website design.

Contact Postali today at postali.com or by calling (614) 556-4618.

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3-Part Action Plan for Marketing Agencies

Here's where the rubber meets the road. With this action plan, you can serve your legal clients in more effective, targeted ways.

Strengthen Your Legal Reputation Offering

If you're already working with legal clients, or plan to grow this area of your agency, here are some ways to strengthen your reputation services for this industry:

- **Implement a proactive review request plan.** In general, most consumers (66%) prefer being asked for a review on the same day as the service. While this is a good rule of thumb to follow, you may need to determine the preferred request cadence of the law firm's clients — such as the same day as a consultation or a few days after a case wraps. Then make sure you have an automated, consistent outreach plan for proactively gathering the reviews. Use email for requests, but supplement with SMS whenever possible.
- **Create sector-specific email and SMS templates for review requests.** Alter the request language per sector to increase the chances that the firm's clients will respond. As we noted above, clients of Family & Divorce Law attorneys may be more responsive to emotionally sensitive language.
- **Emphasize more first-party reviews.** Because first-party reviews and feedback tend to be more detailed than third-party reviews, they provide excellent insight into how the firm can improve its services. With better service and higher client satisfaction, the firm can also see a bump in their NPS scores.

Need help packaging and pricing a full-service reputation offering? [Learn more here.](#)

Focus on Quality Signals

Help your legal clients improve their own reputation and grow their business:

- **Encourage detailed reviews from the firm's clients.** In addition to providing the firm with great insight, detailed reviews are also extremely helpful for potential clients who are researching the firm online. The more details, the better for people who are tasked with making such a significant decision.
- **Prioritize reviews with descriptive text.** Showcase the best, most richly detailed reviews by posting them everywhere you can — on social media, in review reels, and on the firm's website (taking care to follow your state's laws for using client testimonials).

GatherUp's social sharing feature helps you turn your legal clients' reviews into social posts. [Learn more here.](#)



Elevate Your Reporting

Access to sector-level reputation data is a gift to reporting. To use it effectively:

- **Create dashboards that use this benchmark data.** That way, you can see at all times how your reputation strategies are performing per client, and where you might need to tweak or overhaul any part of your plan.
- **Highlight your legal clients' wins and compare them against industry norms.** Being able to compare how your legal clients' reputation stacks up against the industry helps you prove the ROI of your reputation management offering and attract and convert more legal clients who need your services.
- **Integrate reports into your monthly client check-ins.** Having real numbers to show every month not only reinforces your agency's reputation management expertise, it also enhances your commitment to great client service, which can lead to more productive and longer-term client relationships.

GatherUp can help your agency save 6+ hours per month on reporting using pre-built dashboards. [Learn more here.](#)

Additional Tools

Metrics Glossary

How the reputation metrics we measured are defined and used

Net Promoter Score (NPS)

A measure of client sentiment. Clients of law firms assign a score on a scale of 0-10 for how likely they are to recommend the firm to others, with 0 being “not likely at all” and 10 being “highly likely.” The score is calculated by first determining the number of Promoters (clients that gave scores of 9 or 10), Passives (clients that gave scores of 7 or 8), and Detractors (clients that gave scores of 0-6), then dividing those numbers by the total number of respondents to get to a percentage for each category. The percentage of Promoters minus the percentage of Detractors is the final NPS score for the law firm (Passives aren't included in the final score calculation). Generally speaking, the score ranges are the following:

-100 to 0 = Poor and needs improvement

1 to 30 = Average

31 to 70 = Good

71 to 100 = Exceptional

First-party reviews

Reviews given by clients directly to the law firm (such as on their website). These are generally written reviews, but can also include a rating. First-party reviews are usually detailed and give more insight than other types of reviews. The firm owns these reviews and can apply schema markup to them so that they are indexed as relevant, user-generated content that helps the firm's website be more visible in search results.

Third-party reviews

Reviews given by clients to third-party sites like Google as well as industry-specific review sites like Avo. The law firm does not own these reviews; rather, the individual sites where the reviews are posted own them. These reviews tend to be seen as fairer and more impartial than other types of reviews because they're hosted on independent platforms, providing valuable social proof and unbiased opinions about the firm.

Star ratings

A grading system in the form of 1 star (the lowest rating) to 5 stars (the highest rating) given by clients as part of a written review or as a standalone rating. Google and other review sites use star ratings in search results. Google assigns a rating by averaging all review ratings for that law firm that have been posted on Google.

Data Glossary - Page 9

High-level industry	% using email	% using SMS
Bankruptcy Law	73.08%	23.08%
Other Legal Firms	55.56%	18.52%
Criminal Law	54.55%	43.18%
Elder & Estate Planning Law	45.45%	29.55%
Family Law & Divorce	53.33%	26.67%
General Legal Services	37.10%	14.52%
Personal Injury Law	39.30%	37.38%
Real Estate & Mortgage Legal Services	88.46%	19.23%
Social Security & Disability Law	83.33%	80.00%

Sample Scripts for Email and SMS Review Requests

Use the following email and SMS scripts for review requests and adapt as needed to the type of sector, communication style of the law firm or attorney, and particular situation:

EMAIL REVIEW REQUEST TO A NEW CLIENT OF THE FIRM

Hi [Client Name],

How was your recent experience with [Firm Name]?

We'd love to hear from you. Just click the link below and leave us a review:
[review link]

Thank you for trusting us with your [case, legal needs, etc.].

The team at [Firm Name]

EMAIL REVIEW REQUEST TO A LONG-TIME CLIENT OF THE FIRM

Hi [Client Name]:

It's been a pleasure serving you over the past X [months, years]. I'm very pleased that we've been able to [details of positive experience with the firm].

If you're open to it, would you mind giving us a review? You're one of our most valued clients, and when you have a positive experience with our firm, it really matters to us.

Here's where you can leave the review: [review link]. Just type your response and click Submit.

Thank you for trusting us with your [case, legal needs, etc.].

I look forward to staying connected and talking with you again soon.

[Individual Attorney's Name or Firm's Owner/Partner]

SMS FOLLOW-UP TO AN EMAIL REVIEW REQUEST:

Hi [Client Name].

We recently emailed you asking if you'd like to leave [Firm Name] a review.

Are you still interested? If so, click here: [review link]

We appreciate it!

Reply STOP to end.

SMS-ONLY REVIEW REQUEST

Hi [Client Name].

How was your recent experience with [Firm Name]?

Leave us a review and let us know: [review link]

We appreciate it!

Reply STOP to end.

Dos and Don'ts of Review Requests

How you can optimize review requests for your legal clients:

DO:

- **Personalize them.** Use the client's name, and if it makes sense, mention a detail or two about their specific case or the type of advice or service given (this is easier when the request is emailed, since you don't have to worry about the character limitations of SMS). Attorney/client relationships are built on trust and empathy, so personalizing the request helps reinforce the human connection.
- **Provide clear instructions.** Make sure the instructions for leaving the review are easy to follow and that the process can be done relatively quickly (in a few clicks or less). Include the link to where they can leave the review. If you would like certain details to be included in the review, specify this. You can also provide a screenshot or short explainer video to assist.

DON'T:

- **Ask for or incentivize positive reviews only.** Not only do these practices violate the Federal Trade Commission's rules around customer reviews, it's also just a bad look for the firm or attorney. Honest feedback — even if the client's experience was negative — is always preferable, since negative reviews can offer valuable information the firm can use to make necessary improvements.
- **Bother the firm's clients.** Send the initial review request and follow up with a reminder shortly after. But if the client doesn't respond or doesn't want to leave a review, then leave it there. Being a nuisance will only hurt the firm's reputation in the long run.
- **Wait too long to ask.** Asking for a review when the experience or consultation is fresh in the client's mind is ideal. But waiting too long risks that the client will lose interest, forget key details, or get distracted by everything else going on in their life. Make sure your review request strategy is built around smart timing, and adjust accordingly based on the response rate you get.

Next Steps for Agencies: Schedule a Demo with GatherUp

Want to learn more about how GatherUp can power and support your reputation management offering for law firms? Schedule a demo today and talk with one of our experts who can answer your questions and help guide your client strategies.

Schedule a demo at gatherup.com

Let's build a scalable reputation solution together.

