

Find Solicitors on the Internet – A Consumer Guide to Legal Sites

David Mort, Legallybetter.com - May 2010

The Internet is now used more than any other source (apart from friends and family) to find a solicitor and there are a number of web sites available to help you choose a legal representative. This guide describes the main ones but first the evidence of the growing importance of the Internet:

YouGov survey confirms the importance of the Internet when choosing a solicitor

More and more consumers are embracing the Internet as a route to finding a solicitor, according to new independent research from YouGov PLC. The YouGov research surveyed 2,266 adults in March 2010.

While recommendations from friends, relatives, and colleagues are still by far the most important method of choosing a law firm or solicitor, Web sources are the next most important channels.

Alongside general search engines like Google, Yahoo etc, the survey points to a clear interest in Web sites containing consumer reviews and ratings of law firms and solicitors suggesting that word of mouth marketing about legal services is moving increasingly to the Web.

The key results are:

- Over 60% of those surveyed would take recommendations from friends, relatives, or work colleagues.
- The second most important method of choosing a solicitor – mentioned by 21% of those surveyed – would be to use a search engine (Google, Yahoo etc).
- Web sites with independent consumer reviews and ratings of law firms and solicitors were the third most popular method – mentioned by 20% of those surveyed.
- Next in line would be advice from Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and other local agencies noted by 18% of the survey and then come traditional channels like Yellow Pages and other local directories mentioned by 16% of respondents.
- Some way behind are price comparison sites for law firms - favoured by only 10% - suggesting that many consumers have yet to be convinced that legal services can be compared just on price.

(More detailed results at the end of this guide)

The New Legal Web Sites

Choosing a solicitor is an important decision but it is not always that simple to find solicitors and choose the right one for you. Traditional methods include local phone books and directories but these tell you nothing about the quality of service available or the suitability of a specific legal adviser for your specific problem.

New websites are emerging to help you find a solicitor and choose the right legal representation for you and some of the leading sites are described below.

I am a co-founder and part owner of one such site – www.legallybetter.com which is an interactive law firm directory site based on consumer reviews and ratings of their solicitors

and lawyers – so you can see what other people have said about the quality of service from their solicitors and lawyers and then contact any solicitor or law firm that you like the sound of to obtain more details. Just the kind of site that is becoming more popular with potential law firm clients, according to the recent YouGov survey.

There are other sites which will give you contact details for relevant law firms for your legal problem if you are prepared to give some details about your specific legal issue.

We are all becoming familiar with comparison sites in other sectors, such as insurance, but many of these are looking for the best priced deals for a specific type of product. Given the complicated nature of many legal issues, a simple price comparison rarely works so legallybetter.com (and most other legal sites) is not a price comparison site but focuses on other areas such as quality of services, communications with the client etc .

Some Sites to Check Out

www.legallybetter.com

Legallybetter's unique feature is that it brings consumer reviews and ratings of solicitors from around the UK together in one place to enable other law firm users to compare solicitors and compare lawyers. All reviews and ratings are verified and come from genuine clients and focus on service quality and value not price.

Visitors to the site looking to find a solicitor in a specific locality or covering a specific practice area can check the ones reviewed by other clients through a free simple search with no registration needed from the home page. Once Legallybetter has a client review for a specific law firm the law firm can join the site. Membership is free and there are no introducer or referral charges so the site is completely independent.

www.qualitysolicitors.com

At qualitysolicitors.com, the user fills in a form covering the type of legal issue that they are interested in and the site then matches the user to a solicitor for the type of law needed after calling/emailing back to the user to discuss their needs in more detail. Law firms and solicitors pay an annual membership fee to be on the site.

www.takelegaladvice.com

Takelegaladvice describes itself as a "matching service" where individuals/businesses register and fill out a form with their specific legal issue, location, and personal details and the site then matches these to relevant law firms. The site also gives an estimate of the cost involved. No referral fees are involved but the site obtains revenue from advertising from law firms and others.

www.bidlegal.co.uk

Having submitted details (including name and address) in a 3-stage register process, the user's 'case' is submitted or lawyers to bid for. The user is emailed the bids by law firms interested in taking the case and a price is quoted. The law firm's identity is kept secret from the user – and vice versa - until a decision is made to use a particular lawyer. Law firms pay a registration fee to join the site and then an annual membership fee.

www.contactlaw.co.uk

Contactlaw is a Thomson Reuters web site where visitors can telephone or fill in a form online giving details of their legal requirements. Once the form is submitted, or the phone call made, someone from Contactlaw then phones the potential client back to obtain more information. The final stage is that the potential client is introduced to a preferred solicitor.

Detailed YouGov Results

Table 1: Methods of Choosing a Law Firm/Solicitor (% of respondents), March 2010

| Method | Total | Male | Female |
|---|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Recommendations from friend, relative, work colleague | 61.0 | 57.0 | 65.0 |
| Internet search engines (e.g. Google, Yahoo etc) | 21.0 | 23.0 | 19.0 |
| Website with independent consumer reviews/ratings of quality of services, helpfulness etc of specific law firms | 20.0 | 21.0 | 19.0 |
| Citizen's Advice Bureau or any other local advice agency | 18.0 | 18.0 | 18.0 |
| Yellow Pages or similar local directory | 16.0 | 17.0 | 15.0 |
| Price comparison site for law firms | 10.0 | 9.0 | 10.0 |
| Specialist web directory of law firms and solicitors | 9.0 | 9.0 | 9.0 |
| Ask my contacts on social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) | 4.0 | 4.0 | 3.0 |
| Other | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 |
| I have used same solicitor for years so none of above | 13.0 | 13.0 | 12.0 |
| I would not use law firm/solicitor to make a will or buy/sell property | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.0 |
| Don't know | 6.0 | 5.0 | 6.0 |

Question: Thinking about if you had to choose a law firm or solicitor for a relatively straightforward matter like making a will or buying/selling property, which, if any, of the following would you be likely to use to find a law firm or solicitor (please tick all that apply)?

Notes:

All figures unless otherwise stated are from YouGov PLC. Total sample size was 2,266 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2nd-4th March 2010.

The figures have been adjusted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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Further information, or more detailed analysis of the YouGov results by age, social class, and region from David.Mort@legallybetter.com

legallybetter.com The interactive law firm directory site

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