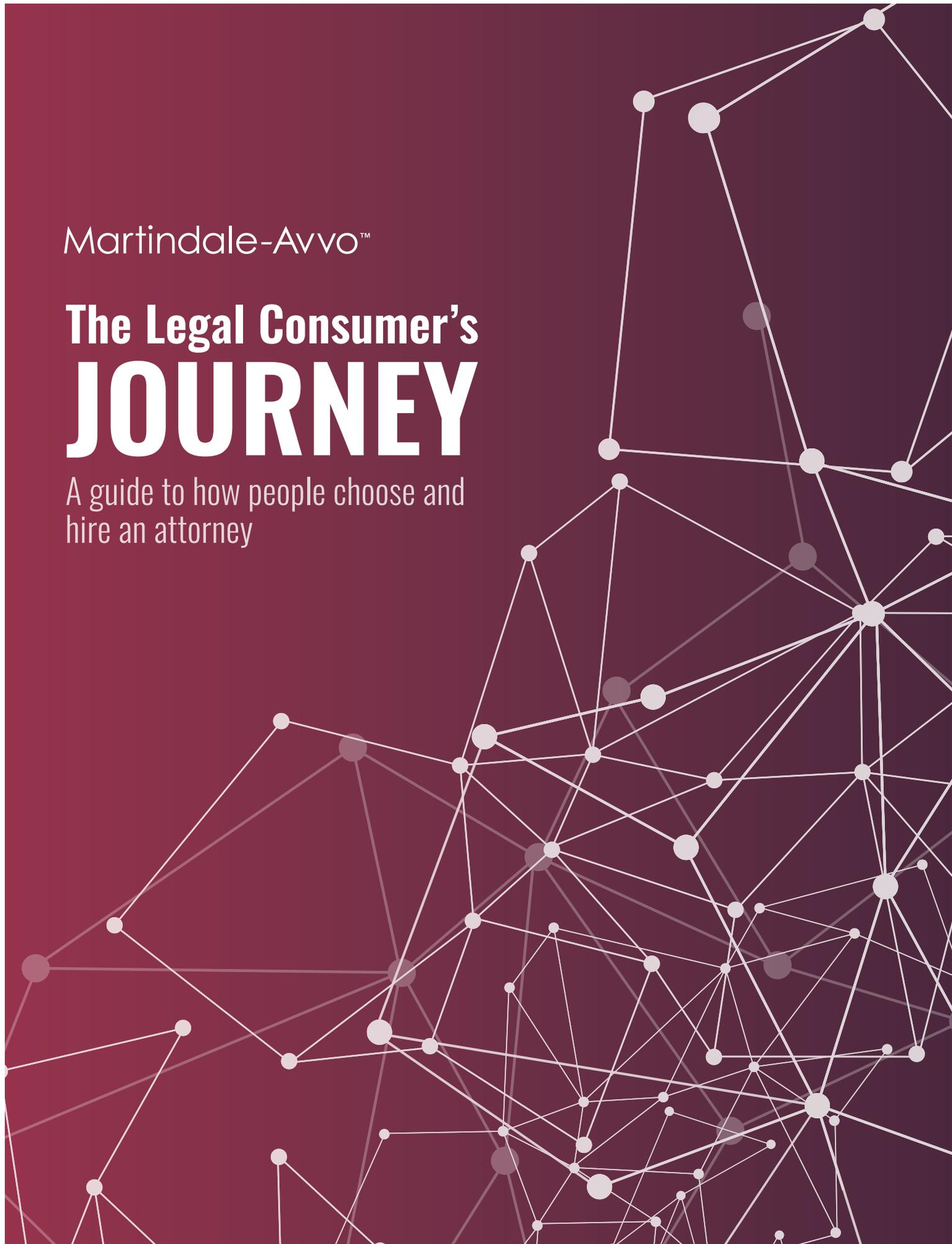


Martindale-Avvo™

# The Legal Consumer's **JOURNEY**

A guide to how people choose and  
hire an attorney



The background is a dark navy blue. It features several abstract white and light blue lines and circles. A prominent dashed white line starts from the top right, curves down, then left, then down again, ending in a solid light blue circle. Another dashed white line starts from the bottom left, curves up, then right, then up, ending in a solid light blue circle. A solid white line starts from the top left, curves down, then right, then down, ending in a solid light blue circle. There are also several other solid light blue circles scattered throughout the design, some connected to lines and others not.

# Understanding the legal consumer's experience is critical for succeeding at the business of law.

Developing empathy for potential clients, along with identifying ways to optimize your practice, requires awareness of where a prospect is in their legal journey and what they might be thinking.

The Avvo research team set out to map how people choose and hire an attorney. Our goal was to learn more about what consumers were actually experiencing, and where sites like ours fit into their journey.

# BUT HOW DOES THIS MAP BENEFIT YOU, THE ATTORNEY?

---

Let's start by examining the key takeaways from the map on the following pages, then think about how attorneys can use this information to their advantage.

## **Each legal journey is different.**

A person researching a legal issue and reaching out to you is always at the very beginning of their journey, even if they have worked with a lawyer before, and you should proceed accordingly.

Look at what we found consumers are feeling when their issue arises. Certain words jump out: worried, confused, stressed, failure. Understanding this stage of the consumer journey underscores how important soft skills are to someone experiencing a legal issue.

---

## **Research includes personal recommendations.**

It's important to remember that word-of-mouth is a powerful tool. A robust online presence is critical, but people also put a lot of weight into recommendations from trusted sources, both positive and negative.

Think about how you can make every contact into an advocate, even if they don't actually end up hiring you. For example, it doesn't matter how many cases you've won if a potential client's cousin says you were mean to them on the phone.

---

## **Consumers seek specific criteria.**

People want to know more than whether you're a criminal defense attorney or a family lawyer. A person dealing with a child custody issue wants to know that you've addressed similar issues before, especially if you can demonstrate favorable results.

Are you too general in the way you present your expertise? Providing more detailed information about the kinds of cases you're passionate about will not only help consumers with those legal issues connect with you—it can help you land more of those cases.

---

## **Tools can help narrow the list.**

How can we share enough information about ourselves, and our law practices, to help the right legal consumers find us? Nothing shows what other consumers have experienced with your firm or practice more effectively than client reviews.

If you're not requesting online reviews at the conclusion of a case, you're missing opportunities to build your brand. Reviews provide the body of evidence that engages consumers seeking to make a decision.

---

## **Soft skills matter.**

In a way, this entire document has been building to this point: empathy. People want to know that you care about not only their case but what they are going through, and they need you to listen to their questions.

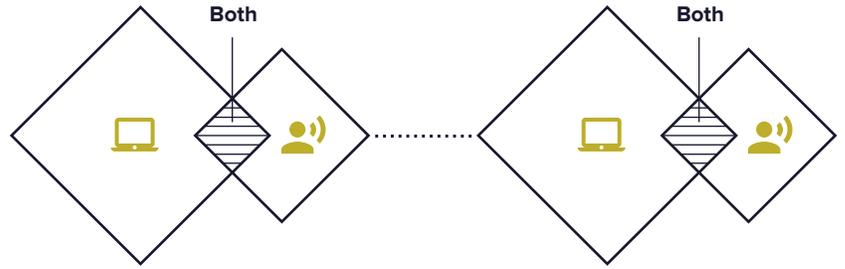
Legal consumers hire attorneys to fix a problem. It's only sensible that they often choose the attorney who appears to care about that problem.

# Consumer Journey Map: Hire an Attorney



DOING

- Incident-initiated  
"I need legal help"
- OR
- User-initiated  
"I want legal help"



Something happens to you that forces your hand to solve a problem

Google search  
Q&A forums

Seeking advice from people they know and trust  
Talk to government services

Google search  
Research referred lawyers

Seeking referrals from people they know and trust

Legal journey starts with one or more triggers above

Researching legal issue throughout journey

THINK

- Why is this happening to me?
- Who can I trust to get advice?
- Who can I talk with about a private matter like this?
- I don't even know what I want, or how to find someone to help

- I need to understand - ask a lot of questions and do a lot of research to understand my issue
- I wish I didn't need to do so much research
- I need to arm myself with the right info and protect myself
- Where do I start? There are so many options
- I don't want any hassle

- I should hire a lawyer so this issue can be resolved and won't keep coming up
- Is there anything I can do to save money?
- I'm sifting and sifting through information
- I want to do this as painlessly as possible
- I need this done as soon as possible
- I don't know where to look
- I trust my friend's recommendation

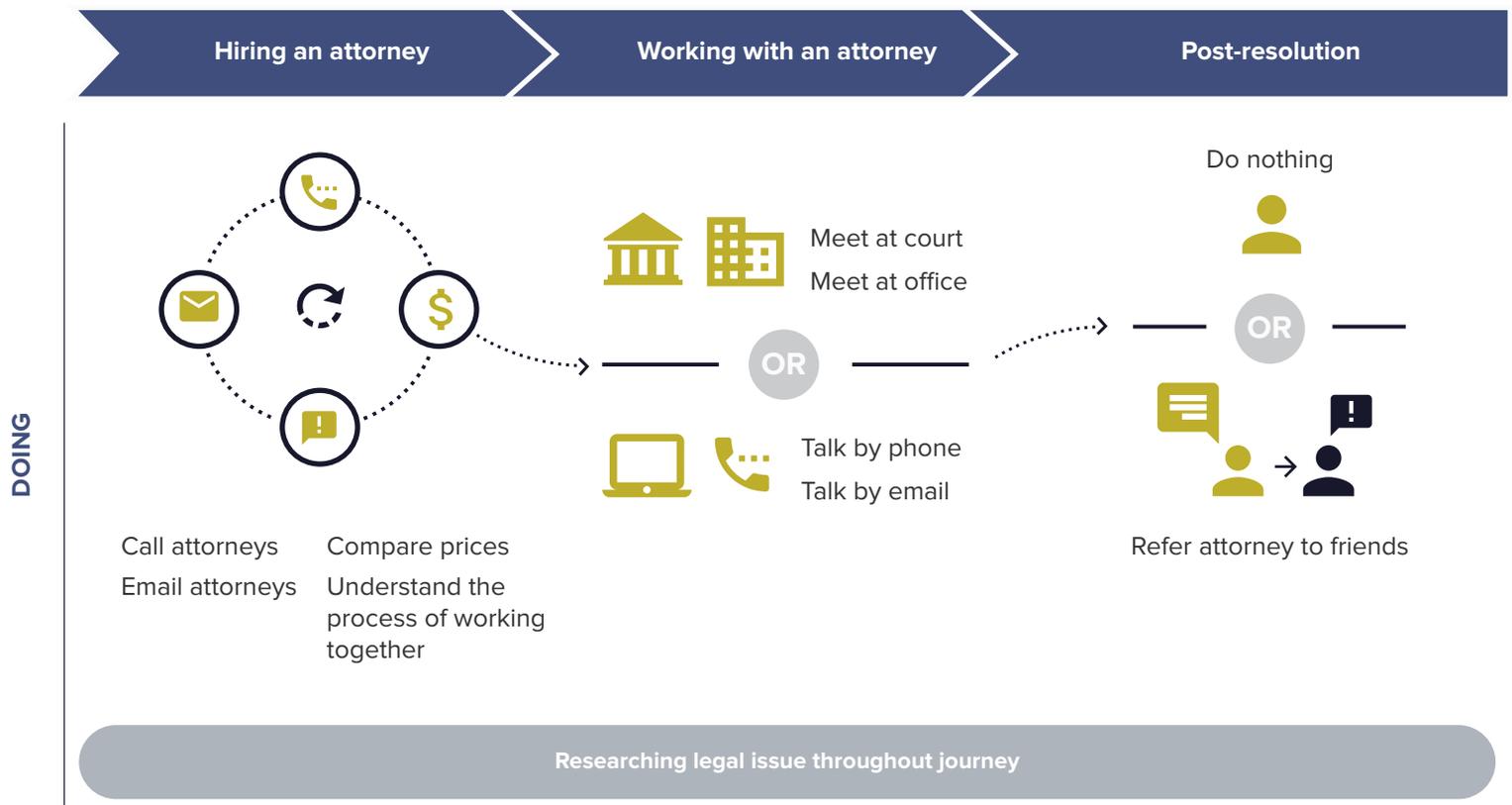
FEEL

- I'm worried about family
- I am confused about my rights, why this is happening, and what my legal issue means
- I feel like a failure
- I feel stressed being put through this process I didn't even want to be a part of

- I'm smart, I can do this
- I feel hopeless because I don't know where to start
- I feel defiant, because they say the situation is hopeless but I'll find a way
- Now that I am learning, I'm feeling more secure about where this is heading
- I'm scared because my research showed me the worst case scenario

- I don't feel comfortable handling this case by myself
- I need to feel comfortable with the lawyer
- I need to feel that my lawyer is working for me and cares about my case
- I don't want to be treated like a criminal

# Consumer Journey Map: Hire an Attorney



- I need an attorney who is empathic, a good listener, personable, a good communicator, who cares about me, who cares less about the money, and who is an advocate
- I need an attorney with experience in my area of law, who has good reviews, a good reputation, a good win/loss record, and is affordable
- I want to know about the background (personal & professional) of my lawyer
- I want someone to keep things moving

- I want to hide from all this paperwork—there is so much
- I would rather talk with a person than use technology
- I don't want to spend too much time doing this
- I hope the attorney isn't screwing me over
- I consider my lawyer a resource (not a savior)

- I probably won't think about it again for a while now that it's over
- I don't think this legal issue will ever go away
- I think some attorneys care, but it's more about getting the most money than making me feel taken care of
- I think the legal system is unfair and overly complicated

- I feel normalized because attorneys have seen these cases before
- I am overwhelmed by the paperwork
- I am scared and feel like a failure
- I feel frustrated because no one can help

- I am skeptical about whether the lawyer is doing a good job
- The attorney takes care of everything (because, duh, it's their job)
- I feel satisfied because the lawyer is very helpful
- I feel relief because someone is finally here to help me

- I feel closure with the legal issue because the case is over and settled
- I don't feel like I'll ever have personal closure
- I feel like the attorney made me feel special

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

### **Each legal journey is different**

People often have multiple, discrete legal problems during their life. But each problem is different and requires starting anew every time.

2

### **Research includes personal recommendations**

Researching was more than just Google searches, as people talk to people they know for advice. Recommendations from family and friends continue to be a significant way to find a lawyer.

3

### **Consumers seek specific criteria**

People seek attorneys who have specific experience and expertise in their problem. They continually tune and retune their research—narrowing, broadening, and narrowing throughout.

4

### **Tools can help narrow the list**

Online tools can help facilitate connections between attorneys and consumers, by showing what others experienced and by helping to evaluate and narrow down to attorneys who meet specific criteria.

5

### **Soft skills matter**

Soft skills, such as empathy, are the final, deciding factor on whether to hire. It's important for attorneys to demonstrate those skills in any communication with a potential client, both online and in person.

# What do we actually know about how people hire an attorney?

At Martindale-Avvo, we pride ourselves on making legal easier and more transparent. Providing tools which achieve this requires ongoing research, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, and innovative thinking about the legal process itself. It also involves asking questions—lots of questions

For example, at what point in their journey do consumers typically hire a lawyer? Where do people go for legal information? What type of information are they looking for when they get there? How do people frame and evaluate their experience? What do they expect?

## WHY WE CHOSE THIS TECHNIQUE

A journey map visually tells the story a user goes through to experience a product or service from beginning to end. It defines and aligns the context of the user at every touchpoint and begins to establish empathy for the user.

Journey mapping achieves the following for Martindale-Avvo:

### **Identifies opportunities rooted in pain.**

The map allows teams to identify and solve real user problems, understand pain points throughout the legal process, and prioritize which solutions will have the highest or most immediate impact.

### **Creates usable insights.**

Produces understandable qualitative data that answers how a consumer navigates the platform—and why they are using it. This results in actionable information for improving tools and reaching more legal consumers.

### **Emphasizes user-centered design.**

With platforms like ours, it's all too easy to fall into the trap of solving product problems, not user problems. Journey maps help design systems for the consumer rather than the organization.

We used this map to improve our products and services, to tailor content and language to better match what consumers are thinking and feeling when they are selecting attorneys, and—as our tagline promises—to make legal easier.

To make this map, Avvo interviewed 16 people who had hired an attorney in the last 6 months, resulting in 200 pages of transcripts.

THE LARGEST LEGAL MARKETING NETWORK



Martindale-Avvo™

# INSIGHT, VISIBILITY, CONNECTION

Exposure to 25 million  
consumers monthly

Architects of more than  
40,000 law firm websites

Opportunities with 850,000  
leads per month

Double your website's  
conversion rates

**CONTACT US: [INFO@MARTINDALE.COM](mailto:INFO@MARTINDALE.COM)**

Copyright © 2019 MH Sub I, LLC dba Internet Brands. All rights reserved.

