

tuitive

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**Delivering a better
out-of-hours service
is now a strategic
imperative**





From research it is clear that UK law firms continue to face the loss of potential clients due to poor out-of-hours engagement and delayed responses to enquiries, which undoubtedly impact their revenue and market standing.

Estimates indicate that inefficient handling of new business enquiries can cost millions in lost fees. The effect is amplified by prospective clients now being used to the 'always-on' service model they experience in other industries that deliver immediate, accessible, relevant and personalised communication.

The financial impact of missed opportunities

Whilst it is always difficult to quantify the cost of poor engagement strategies, given the value of missed opportunities to any single firm will never be known, it is clear from other industries that a poor experience through initial contact and follow-up will lead to significant annual losses - one study revealed poor inquiry handling can cost a firm over £1 million each year.



Silent killer effect - The lack of comprehensive lead tracking and analytics, especially for interactions outside normal business hours and through digital channels, creates a 'silent killer' effect on revenue, as firms lack a clear understanding of lost opportunities.

Unanswered calls received after hours are often not recorded, leading to skewed data and a false belief that most callers adhere to contact within office hours.



Consequences of delay - a delay of merely five minutes results in a 10% reduction in lead response rates. Waiting 30 minutes or longer drastically diminishes the potential for securing a new client. Approximately 30% of consumers will seek a competitor if a firm fails to respond at all.

The average lead response time across industries is about 42 hours, which is particularly detrimental for legal services where individuals often seek assistance in distress.



Lack of follow-up - Many firms fail to follow up on initial enquiries, leaving substantial potential revenue uncaptured, which is particularly pronounced for web enquiries, where only 8% receive a follow-up and telephone enquiries, where only 14% receive subsequent contact.



The five-minute rule - responding to phone calls within five minutes or less increases the likelihood of converting potential new clients by a factor of 10 compared to waiting just 10 minutes.

Engaging within an hour makes businesses nearly seven times more likely to have meaningful conversations with decision-makers.

A one-minute response time can boost conversions by 391%, significantly outperforming a two-minute response, which yields a 160% improvement.



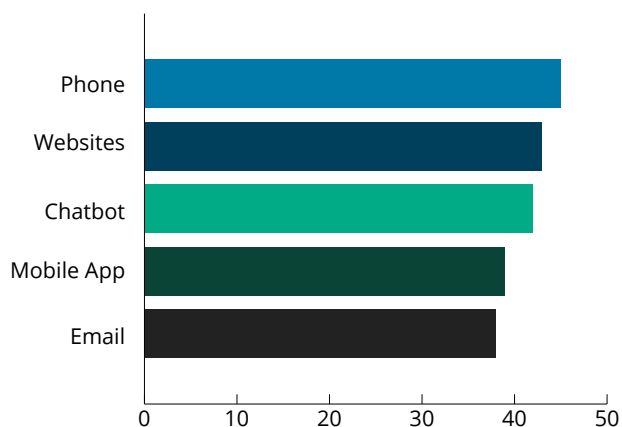
The link between response speed and conversion - the speed of response is crucial for converting prospective clients, with firms delivering client experience scores below 80% around 30% less likely to convert an opportunity.



Evolving client expectations and the demand for 24/7 responsiveness

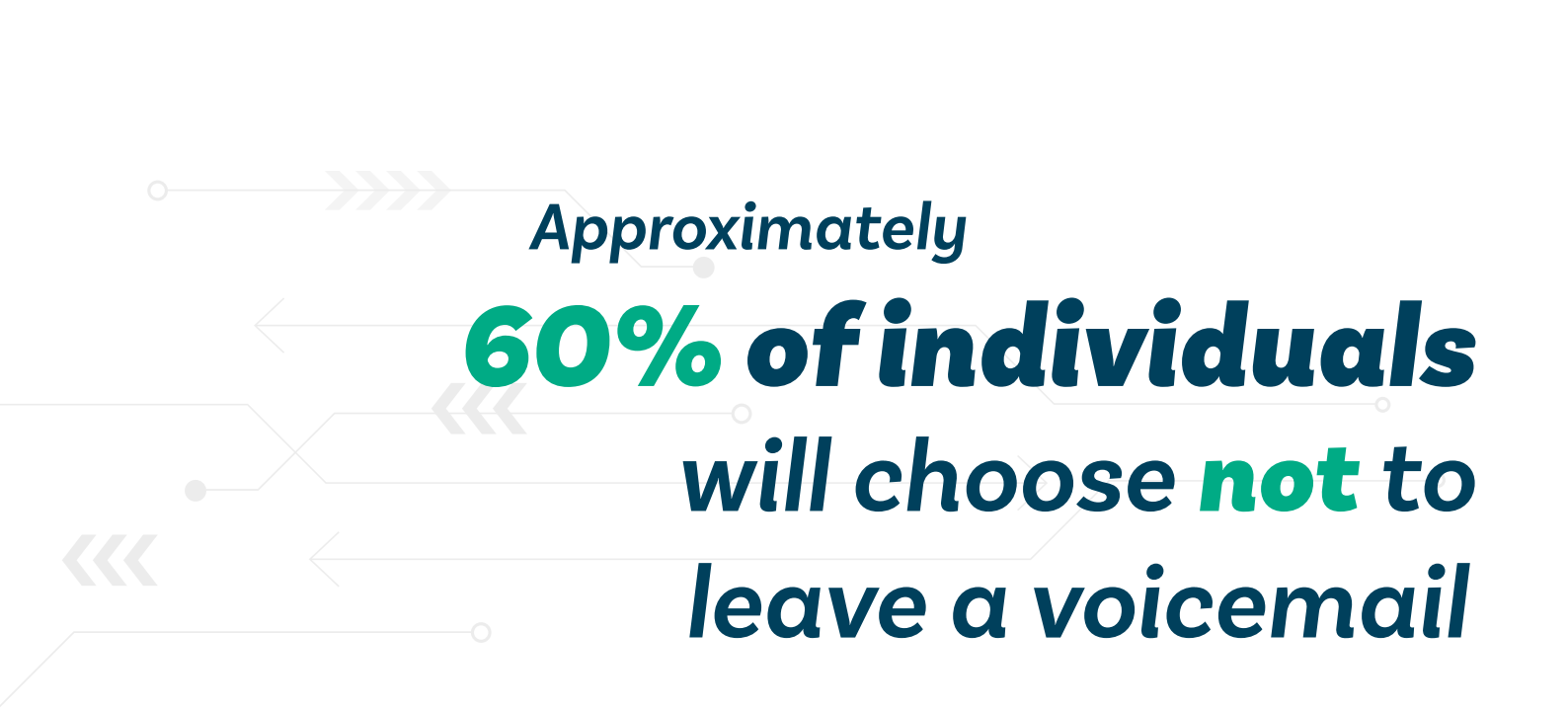
Modern clients seeking legal advice expect immediate, accessible, relevant and personalised communication outside traditional office hours. This 'Amazon Generation' effect means consumers expect the same instant interaction with their chosen law firm that they receive from the e-commerce and tech companies in their lives.

Clients prioritise fast and efficient communication, with 82% of consumers considering response times of 10 minutes or less to be pivotal for new enquiries.



Whilst phone calls are preferred by 45% of clients, digital alternatives like websites (43%), chatbots (42%), mobile apps (39%) and email (38%) are rapidly gaining traction. Firms need to offer a comprehensive suite of communication options and offer choice to their prospective clients.

Transparency and predictability are key drivers for engagement. Clients prioritise clear information about costs (60%) and the legal process (48%), which firms often underestimate, with unclear or unpredictable fees a frequent source of complaint.



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Root causes of shortcomings

A range of factors contribute to UK law firms falling short in client engagement, with the traditional operating model being the most readily identified culprit.

Adherence to outdated 9 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday working practices is incompatible with modern client expectations. And reliance on voicemail for after-hours calls is problematic, as approximately 60% of individuals will choose not to leave a voicemail.

Staffing limitations also play a part, with fee-earners focussed on billable matters, leaving support staff resources stretched thin. Recruitment difficulties also intensify staffing limitations for 24/7 coverage, unless overseas solutions are sought, which can also pose new challenges.

The demanding nature of legal work and constant need to maximise billable hours often pushes client engagement to being a secondary consideration.

Overworked staff cannot adequately handle new enquiries, which creates a cycle of missed sales and increased pressure on existing work. Burnout is prevalent, with 56% of lawyers reporting disrupted sleep and 55% experiencing anxiety.

Inconsistent communication and follow-up deficiencies create problems, with many firms lacking the necessary structured lead handling processes, which leads to inconsistent quality of communication and missed follow-up opportunities.

Hesitation towards AI adoption and the cost of implementing advanced technologies are significant hurdles, with many firms still believing, if it's not broken, why fix it?

Many firms operate with disconnected systems, which creates inefficiencies and makes integrated client relationship management challenging. Cybersecurity concerns also deter adoption of new online solutions, activities and data handling processes.

Strategic solutions for enhanced client acquisition and retention

To overcome these challenges, UK law firms should adopt a multi-faceted strategic approach that leverages new technology to drive seamless out-of-hours engagement:

Virtual receptionists - offer 24/7 availability to ensure no calls are missed and client satisfaction is enhanced. They are cost-effective, project a professional image, handle call screening, accept, schedule and direct qualified leads to lawyers. They can also ensure legal compliance and offer greater confidentiality for matters discussed.

AI-powered chatbots - provide instant 24/7 assistance, handle typical questions and can capture leads outside business hours, accelerating client intake and pre-qualifying leads. They offer substantial cost-efficiency and can deliver a personalised service. One firm reported a 40% increase in case retention by reducing response times to under 30 seconds through AI-driven intake.

Optimise client intake and lead nurturing processes

The strategic approach should also consider structured lead handling, with a well-defined process that includes clear lead qualification criteria and mechanisms to prevent missed follow-ups. It is also important to prioritise the speed of follow-up.

Firms are 100 times more likely to reach a prospect and 21 times more likely to convert them if they follow up within 5 minutes of their initial contact. Automated nurturing systems exist to enhance engagement, sending progress updates, reminders, or confirmations to clients.

A major consideration is empowering the support staff tasked with increasing engagement with prospective clients – their salary is rarely affected by how many new clients the business attracts. Train and incentivise support staff to handle initial enquiries effectively.

The final step is to ensure processes are implemented to monitor and analyse the results of the new strategic approach. Regularly track average response times and identify bottlenecks to develop a programme of continuous improvement.

The image displays three sequential screenshots of a chatbot interface titled 'Tuitive by Quiss Law Firm Demo'. The first screenshot shows the initial greeting: 'Need legal help? Answer 5 quick questions and we'll connect you with best suited lawyer'. It features two buttons: 'Talk to Us' and 'Chat With Us'. A disclaimer at the bottom states: 'We'll collect your contact information so we can follow up after the conversation'. The second screenshot shows the 'Case Review' screen with a progress bar. It asks the user to 'Briefly describe your legal matter' and provides a text input field with the placeholder 'I need help with...'. A 'Next >' button is at the bottom. The third screenshot shows the 'Case Review' screen with a progress bar. It asks the user to 'Share a few details, our assistant will ask quick follow-up questions and connect you with our team.' and provides three input fields: 'Full Name' (with 'John Smith' entered), 'Email' (with 'your@email.com' entered), and 'Phone Number (optional)' (with '07412345678' entered). At the bottom, there are '< Back' and 'Get Case Review >' buttons. All three screenshots are powered by Lexidesk.

Develop an integrated communication ecosystem

An integrated communication ecosystem helps law firms cultivate meaningful relationships with prospective clients from their very first interaction. By seamlessly connecting every touchpoint, from initial website visits and social media engagements to email outreach and direct consultations, you can deliver a consistent, coherent and personalised experience.

- **Client relationship management (CRM) systems:** Organise and automate communication, track case progress and ensure regular client updates, improving satisfaction and retention. They improve personalised communication and tailored legal advice for every client.
- **Secure messaging platforms and client portals:** Allow clients to securely access case files, upload documents, and track progress 24/7, enhancing data security and privacy.
- **Automated routine updates:** Send progress updates, reminders, or confirmations, reducing administrative burden and enhancing response times. This transparency builds trust.
- **Omnichannel communication:** Offer multiple communication options (phone, email, chat, mobile apps, websites) to cater to diverse client preferences.
- **Virtual consultations:** Provide flexibility for remote interactions.
- **AI-driven meeting recorders:** Record, transcribe and summarise web meetings to ensure accurate records.

Cultivating a client-centric culture

The strategic approach to deliver a better out-of-hours service helps prioritise the client experience throughout the firm, recognising that every inquiry is an opportunity. Continuous training will equip all your people with best practices to ensure they are confident delivering prompt, empathetic and professional communication.

Measurement is always critical, with client surveys, feedback and review monitoring increasingly important. You should gather insights, identify pain points and refine client experiences by actively soliciting and responding to client feedback.

Overcome the innovation adoption gap

Evaluate and adopt relevant legal technologies, including AI in all its forms, as strategic enablers rather than adopting a 'wait and see' approach – progress is fast and there is unlikely to be a long plateau to indicate the right time to make your decisions.

Recognising most firms have limited resources, it is important to focus on integrated systems over single, unconnected tools to eliminate data silos and ensure a unified view of client interactions.

By implementing these strategic solutions, UK law firms can transform their client engagement model from a source of missed opportunities into a powerful driver of sustainable growth and enhanced reputation.