

Finding a Good Lawyer

Article by Jo Roebuck, Manager at OSheaDyer

Solicitors Townsville

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Most of us will need a lawyer do so something for us at some stage in our life. Finding a lawyer is relatively easy. Finding a good lawyer requires a little more effort.

While you can ask for a recommendation from friends or family, you can also contact the Qld law society for a list of lawyers with specialty in the area you need assistance in. There are also Facebook groups where people ask for recommendations. All these are helpful.

Most people, of all ages, will also use google to find a lawyer.

For a straightforward matter

It's quick and easy to find a lawyer on google in about 10 seconds these days. Two or three clicks and you can call or email an enquiry straight through to a law firm.

If you need a lawyer to do something straightforward, where it is possible to obtain a 'fixed fee' (like a straightforward Will or a Conveyance), to be able to 'search and call' to book an appointment is fantastic and will certainly save you time.

If you have a few more minutes, it is definitely worth the effort to look at a few websites and to call a few law firms. If you do this, you can compare prices and get a feel for the people you are engaging to do your work, and the service you will likely receive.

For an ongoing/more involved matter

If your matter is likely to be time consuming and ongoing, it's likely you will be working with your lawyer for a substantial period of time. If this is the case, it's actually very important to spend some time finding the 'right lawyer for you'. In a more involved matter, **having an experienced lawyer you can trust and feel comfortable with, will be a great advantage to you.**

Family law

If you have any type of **Family Law Issues**, it can make all the difference to your future to obtain advice from the right lawyer (even if you have reached agreement with your former partner). And if you need to engage a lawyer to represent you, it is critical to find and engage an *experienced family lawyer*.

Compensation Claims

If you have a **compensation claim** (ie. You have been in a motor vehicle accident, work accident or have a public liability claim or any type of injury claim) it will make a *significant difference* to the outcome and your future if you find and engage an *experienced personal injury lawyer* you can trust.

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Doing the quick 'search and call' and making an appointment with your first google search result is not ideal. You might chance a great lawyer... and you might not. Taking a bit more time to do some basic 'looking around' is worth the effort.

Compensation Claim lawyers

Lawyers who do personal injury work are quite restricted in how they can advertise their work and how they solicit work.

Until a person 'finds them' by making a genuine enquiry, lawyers are not allowed to tell you about previous successes they have had, amounts they have obtained for past clients, their 'great reputation' or that they are an 'industry leader' etc.

Be very aware of lawyers who 'find you'. The Queensland Legal Services Commission is cracking down on unscrupulous lawyers who pay people for names of injured people (eg. tow truck operators, etc).

We hear of people receiving calls (or a visit at a hospital bed) days after an accident, from a lawyer wanting to make a claim for them. The person is left bewildered as to how they got their details. Clearly, someone who knows about your accident has given your name to the lawyer. This is highly inappropriate, insensitive, unprofessional and illegal!

A lawyer should not approach you about making a compensation claim for you. They should always wait to be invited in. You should be the one approaching the lawyer. This usually happens when a client calls the lawyer or law firm to chat or make an appointment to discuss their situation.

Websites: What should I look for?

Websites are usually a great reflection of the people who work at the law firm. Taking the time to look at a few websites is a great way to 'research' for a lawyer that will suit you.

A good website should give you information about your lawyer, their experience, and the service you can expect. The style of the website will also (usually) reflect the culture of the firm and work they do.

Lots of people do look around at websites.

*I would want to do my own research to find a lawyer. I would check out the websites of quite a few law firms and have a good look at them. I would look for a website that is authentic. I wouldn't like the look of something that is garish and a highly commercial looking website would not appeal to me either. **I'm looking for friendly and something that makes me feel like I am going to have a genuine 'human interaction' with this lawyer and the firm they work at.** Reading Google reviews that are the real deal (and you can spot them a mile off if they aren't) would also be something I would do.*

- Tyla Leo, 24 yrs, Townsville.

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What can you tell from a website?

Quite a lot! When you look at a law firms website notice these things:

Do they look like they really want to help you?

- Is the website easy to navigate?
- Are they trying to connect with you in an *authentic way*?
- Are there free products to help you (Articles, QnA Sheets, Brochures, etc)?
- Are there any special offers that seem genuine and helpful? For example:
 - 'First Family Law Appointments' for a low fixed fee;
 - Free Enduring Power Attorney with your Will;
 - No charge for First Appointments for Compensation Claims and No Win No Fee etc.
- Are they transparent with their pricing?

How long have they been in Practice?

If a firm has been operating for twenty or more years that is a good sign they have many clients who returned to them (because they did a great job), who have also referred friends and people they know to that firm.

Can you see the lawyers who work there? Can you see who 'owns' the firm?

- Are the partners or directors of the firm obvious?
- Is there a picture and bio of the lawyer you are looking for?
- Is the year they were admitted to practice noted somewhere in their bio/qualifications?
- Are details of their experience and qualifications noted?
- Is there a reference to any articles they have written?

Transparency with this type of information is important. You should know who owns the business as there may be times where you need to contact them rather than a generic email address. It should also be clear whether the lawyer acting for you has one, five or more years' experience.

Are there Testimonials from real people?

Clients who are happy to provide some words of praise to be published on a website are very happy customers indeed. Testimonials are great recommendations. Sometimes clients give a testimonial but wish to conceal their name or leave off their surname for personal reasons which is very reasonable.

Some websites contain 'made up' testimonials. If you are looking at the website to evaluate it carefully, you can usually tell if something is 'made up'.

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Be wary of websites:

- Where you can't find a lawyer on the page.
- That have awards, ribbons or certificates stamped on any of their pages. The only 'awards' that showcase a lawyer as a recognised expert in an area of law are Qld Law Society Accredited Specialist seals.
- Lawyers (or law firms) who call themselves 'experts' when they don't have the QLS 'Specialist' seal.
- If a lawyer is an accredited specialist with the Queensland Law Society, they are allowed to show this on their website/email footer/business cards. Bear in mind, some lawyers haven't obtained formal specialist accreditation but have many years (even decades) of experience in a particular area of law. It is always a good idea to find the lawyer's bio on their website and read about what they have done and see how long they have been practicing for.

Google Reviews

It's also worth looking at Google Reviews. Like testimonials, clients who go to the bother of leaving a great review are happy customers indeed.

Be on the lookout for reviews that are 'made up'. You can usually tell if they are 'real' or not. If a review is real, you usually get a sense it is authentic. Unfortunately, some businesses purchase reviews or manufacture customised reviews.

If the reviews are consistently good, that is usually an indicative of a law firm or lawyer who will do a great job. Occasionally a disappointed client may have an axe to grind and they will write a bad review. A good firm will respond to this appropriately and not shy away from it. The reality for every business, even a very good one, is that very occasionally, someone is dissatisfied

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Finding a good lawyer is easy. Good Luck!

Jo Roebuck is the Office Manager at OSheaDyer Solicitors Townsville. She was a lecturer in the Law School at James Cook University between 1994 – 2006 and has been the manager at OSheaDyer since 2013.

Wills or an Estate Matter, Family Law issue, or a Compensation Claim,
Finding a good lawyer is critical.

**OSheaDyer Solicitors Townsville recommend seeing an experienced lawyer
who gives value for money, good service and excellent outcomes.**

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