Best Virtual Receptionist & Legal Answering Services for Lawyers

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Today's legal landscape is fast-paced, which is why law firms are increasingly turning to virtual receptionists to enhance their efficiency and client service. Remote receptionists–professionals who are not employees of your law firm, but who take on reception duties–handle everything from answering calls and scheduling appointments to client intake. This allows attorneys to focus on core legal work.

As a cost-effective, flexible, and scalable solution, virtual receptionist services can be an invaluable asset to law firms looking to streamline their processes.

Clio Grow is also a cost-effective, flexible, and scalable solution that streamlines your processes. With Clio Grow, you can track and manage clients as they move through your intake process, enable easier booking, and save hours drafting documents. Book a demo to see how Clio Grow can work for your firm.

What is a virtual receptionist?

A virtual receptionist is an off-site receptionist who ensures all client calls are answered and resolved based on their needs. They also often manage email communications and other basic customer service tasks. A virtual receptionist can take care of issues such as scheduling appointments, providing account information, and routing calls to the appropriate individual. All your client calls will be answered, without you paying for a full-time receptionist.

What does a virtual receptionist do?

A virtual receptionist takes on many of the same tasks as an in-house receptionist but uses digital communications tools to manage those tasks remotely. Mainly, they're focused on activities such as answering all incoming calls, screening calls, routing calls, managing the firm's appointment calendar, handling client intake processes, and providing after-hours support.

The best legal answering services for lawyers

There are hundreds of different virtual receptionists for law firms, so it's not always easy to choose the right provider. For this reason, we put together a list of some of the most popular legal answering services, including a brief review of each.

The following reviews come from publicly available information about these legal answering services and our informed opinions. Always do your research before signing up for any service.

Ruby Receptionists review (Call Ruby review)

Ruby is one of the most widely used virtual receptionist services for small law firms. They provide exceptional customer service and are known for having very friendly and well-trained staff answering their phone calls.

When you sign up for a Ruby account, you receive a customized local business phone number. You can transfer this number to different lines if more than one person interacts with clients over the phone. You explain what you'd like the virtual receptionists to say and how you would like them to handle the calls (e.g., transfer, take a message, leave a voicemail). They'll manage the rest, including notifying you of new calls via email or text message if you're unavailable.

Ruby is one of the better options for receptionist availability, they offer 24/7 legal answering services and live chat services. They also answer on weekends, which some other virtual receptionist services do not, and they have Spanish-speaking receptionists available should you have any Spanish-speaking clients.

Another great feature that sets them apart from the competition is their mobile app. The app allows you to manage your standard availability, set up "away" times when you do not wish to receive calls, place outbound calls from your business phone number, keep track of your call log, and more. You can do all of this from anywhere using your smartphone.

Finally, Ruby has integrated its answering service with popular law firm solutions including Clio Manage and Clio Grow. These integrations can save you time and make your life easier by eliminating data entry, making Ruby one of the overall best virtual receptionists for law firms.

Services offered

- Call answering

- Call routing
- Bilingual receptionists
- Taking messages
- Integrations with other software
- Outbound calling on your behalf
- Mobile app

Pricing information

- $235/month – $1,640/month (50 call minutes – 500 call minutes, respectively)
- Overage fees for any additional minutes beyond your plan
- 21 day money back guarantee
- View pricing page

Back Office Betties review

Back Office Betties is another popular phone answering service for law firms. The company is not as large as Ruby, but their basic virtual receptionist service offering is similar, with friendly receptionists and a custom phone number that can be transferred to any phone number you'd like.

Back Office Betties provides some additional services in addition to what Ruby has to offer. This includes things like scheduling appointments/managing your calendar, processing payments, creating work orders, and even making outbound calls to follow up with clients. They also have bilingual receptionists to answer phone calls in Spanish if you have Spanish-speaking clients.

Back Office Betties does not offer a virtual receptionist mobile app, whereas Ruby does, but their receptionist services do integrate with Clio Grow, and the additional services on offer can be a huge plus for certain firms, depending on the nature of the practice. Back Office Betties' virtual receptionist services are available Monday – Friday from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST (8 a.m. – 8 p.m. EST), which is somewhat limited, and they do not answer on weekends.

Services offered

- Call answering
- Call routing

- Bilingual receptionists
- Taking messages
- Integrations with other software
- Scheduling appointments
- Processing payments
- Generating work orders and estimates
- Outbound calling on your behalf

Pricing information

- $360/month – $1,400/month (100 call minutes – 500 minutes, respectively)
- Overage fees for any additional minutes beyond your plan
- 1-week free trial available
- View pricing page

Alert Communications review

Alert Communications has been in business since 1965 and have worked with thousands of attorneys. In fact, they work exclusively in the legal industry, and they use more of a client intake call center approach compared to other virtual receptionists (who typically pick up the phone and transfer it to you).

Alert Communications offers 24/7 services, bilingual virtual receptionists, and large call centers for high-volume law firms fielding hundreds of calls per day. Because they focus exclusively on the legal industry, they also train their receptionists in legal terminology and provide other hands-on services for attorneys.

The add-on services they offer include outbound calls to website leads, taking down client intake information, processing retainers via e-signature, scheduling consultations, delivering documents, scheduling appointments, and more. They also integrate their service with Clio Grow and several other popular software programs to ease the burden of data entry.

Services offered

- Call answering
- Call routing
- Bilingual receptionists

- Taking messages
- Conducting client intake interviews
- Integrations with other software
- Scheduling appointments
- Processing retainers via e-signature
- Delivering documents
- Outbound calling for website leads
- 24/7 availability

Pricing information

- Not publicly available. A refundable deposit is also required upfront (equal to the monthly payment amount)

Gabbyville review

Gabbyville is a popular virtual answering service targeting small and medium businesses of all kinds. They are not exclusive to law firms, but law firms appear to make up one of their most important customer segments (it's shown first on their list of industries).

The virtual receptionist services they offer are slightly more robust than Ruby Receptionist but not as in-depth as Alert Communications. On top of just answering phone calls and routing them, they can place outbound calls to clients (e.g., appointment reminders), set up bridge lines for conference calls, and schedule appointments on your calendar.

They offer text messaging between you and your team of receptionists to streamline communications, and you can also get text alerts for new calls when you're unavailable to take them. Although Gabbyville does not currently have a mobile app, it has indicated that it's in development and coming soon.

Potential downsides of Gabbyville are a lack of software integrations, and that their availability is not 24/7, instead limited to 8 a.m. – 11 p.m. EST.

Services offered

- Call answering
- Call routing
- Setting up conference calls

- Taking messages
- Scheduling appointments
- Outbound calling on your behalf

Pricing information

- $300/month – $2,000/month (40 calls – 400 calls, respectively)
- $99 one-time setup fee (this is waived for the top two most expensive pricing plans)
- 14-day free trial available
- View pricing page

Answering Legal review

Answering Legal is another virtual receptionist and phone answering service that is exclusive to the legal industry. They only work with law firms, so they train their staff to understand how law firms operate and they provide additional hands-on services related to client intake.

Answering Legal appears to be somewhat of a hybrid between Alert Communications and Ruby Receptionists. They operate more like a call center for high-volume firms similar to Alert Communications. But answering phone calls, routing them, and taking messages is still their primary focus, more like Ruby.

One interesting feature about Answering Legal is their advanced call forwarding logic. For example, you can set it up to call you directly at first, but if you don't pick up within the first few rings, redirect the call to Answering Legal. Giving you exceptional control and flexibility to best configure the call handling process for your office and your clients.

Answering Legal also integrates with many of the top legal software platforms, including Clio Grow. Every new client message taken by an Answering Legal receptionist will immediately be available in your Clio Grow Leads Inbox so you can easily add new leads to your pipeline–making it a great addition to your tech stack.

Services offered

- Call answering
- Call routing
- Advanced call forwarding
- Taking messages

- Scheduling appointments
- Outbound calling on your behalf for follow-ups or appointment reminders

Pricing information

- 100 call minutes for $330 and 200 call minutes for $616
- Custom price quotes for firms with higher call volume
- 14-day free trial available
- View pricing page

Nexa review

Nexa is yet another popular virtual receptionist service that is aimed at businesses of any kind and any size. Their differentiating factor seems to be their technology, as they boast about their software infrastructure which is developed in house and promises reliability with greater than 99.98% uptime.

Nexa trains its virtual receptionists by industry, and they provide 24/7, bilingual service across a variety of channels, not just phone calls. This virtual receptionist service will also communicate with clients via email, web chat, text message, etc., giving you a more robust service offering and enabling your law firm to interact with clients however they feel most comfortable.

Their client portal comes with native integrations to several prominent CRMs, as well as a Zapier integration to allow you to connect to hundreds of other software programs, which is a huge plus. They also provide more hands-on services for their customers, such as appointment scheduling, lead qualification, basic IT support, and ticketing/help desk management.

While some of these features may not be useful for a law practice, it's always nice to work with technically savvy vendors and business partners, as technology plays a key role in running any type of modern business.

Services offered

- Call answering
- Call routing
- Bilingual receptionists
- Taking messages

- Live chat/email/text message communication options
- Lead qualification
- Integrations with other software
- Scheduling appointments
- Technical support/help desk management
- 24/7 availability

Pricing information

- $200/month – $900/month (100 call minutes – 500 call minutes, respectively)
- $90 one-time setup fee
- Additional fees (amounts undisclosed) for CRM admin support, calendar scheduling, and text messaging
- 21 day money day back guarantee
- View pricing page

Smith.ai review

Smith.ai is a 24/7 virtual receptionist service that specializes in converting new potential clients who contact you by phone, text, chat, or Facebook message.They have expertise in solo and boutique law firms, as well as other small and medium businesses. Their North America-based receptionists do much more than answer calls and take messages—they screen potential clients based on your criteria, schedule appointments on your calendar, take payments for consultations and services, and make outbound calls to follow-up quickly with online leads. Their pay-per-call pricing is also favorable.

Smart technology features include the ability to set your availability by simply sending a text message command which is automatically handled by Smith.ai, and the ability to set up call priorities so that calls from certain phone numbers are automatically handled in a particular way.

Smith.ai also has some great software integrations with Clio Manage and Clio Grow. Other integrations include Zapier, Calendly, Acuity, and many more.

Services offered

- 24/7 answering
- Outbound calls to leads and clients

- Lead qualification and intake form completion
- Appointment scheduling
- Payment collection
- Bilingual services (English & Spanish)
- CRM & Zapier integrations
- Options to answer all calls, after-hours, or overflow
- Free spam and sales call blocking
- Client dashboard with activity details
- Text and email follow-up messages after calls
- Conflict checks
- Google Analytics & Tag Manager integration
- Chat API & funnel performance tracker

Pricing information

- Pay-per-call model, for more predictable billing than per-minute
- Standard plans are $285/month – $1,950/month (30 calls – 150 calls, respectively), but custom plans are available for call volume over 300 calls/month
- No charge for spam, sales calls, wrong numbers, etc.
- Works with every VoIP and landline phone service, or get a free number to set up a new dedicated business line.
- 14-day money-back guarantee
- View pricing page

LEX Reception review

LEX Reception is a virtual answering service designed for the legal industry. They only work with law firms, train their staff accordingly, and provide hands-on services for law firms beyond call answering and routing.

Understanding the unique needs of law firm clients is crucial when providing legal services. LEX Reception receptionists train specifically to handle legal calls. They also offer 24/7 legal intake, scheduling, and lead qualification, generating business for your law firm while you focus on your practice.

Other reviews of LEX Reception note their easy onboarding process and excellent customer service, making them a great option for law firms looking for an attorney answering service that understands their business and clients.

Services offered

- Call answering
- Call routing
- Bilingual receptionists
- Taking messages
- Client intake
- Lead qualification
- Integrations with other software, including Clio Manage and Clio Grow
- Scheduling appointments
- Technical support/help desk management
- 24/7 availability

Pricing information

- $425/month – $775/month (150 call minutes – 500 call minutes, respectively) for standard plans
- $1.95/minute – $2.25/minute for extra minutes, depending on the plan
- $75 one-time setup fee for the Entry plan
- No fees for setup on non-entry plans, CRM integration, or appointment setting
- View pricing page

Features to look for in a virtual receptionist

Even though they are remote, a virtual receptionist represents your law firm. It's crucial they provide friendly, professional, and competent client service. Though your specific needs may vary, there are some important factors to keep in mind when selecting the best legal answering service:

- Industry experience
- Professionalism and communication skills
- Availability and flexibility

- Technology and integration
- Cost and value

How much does a virtual receptionist cost?

The cost of virtual receptionist services varies, depending on the level of service and the pricing model. Virtual receptionists for law firms charge by the hour, monthly, per-call, or per-minute. There may also be setup fees, after-hours service fees, bilingual service fees, and script-writing fees.

What is the difference between a virtual receptionist and a virtual assistant?

The main difference between a virtual receptionist and a virtual assistant is their focus. The best virtual receptionist handles incoming calls and emails, specializing in customer service. A virtual assistant helps with tasks like invoicing, social media management, and data entry.

Benefits of using an answering service for lawyers

There are many benefits to using a law firm answering service.

Increased efficiency: A virtual receptionist manages all incoming calls and emails and screens calls to determine which needs immediate attention and which can be solved without an attorney. They can also manage the firm's calendar, remind clients about upcoming appointments to reduce the risks of no-shows and handle the client intake process.

Protecting the attorney's time: A virtual assistant takes care of calls that don't require an attorney's input, allowing the attorney to focus on their legal work. According to Clio's Legal Trends Report 2024, an increase in attorney billable hours typically signals an increase in productivity and financial success.

Improved client experience: With a virtual receptionist, clients receive immediate attention when they call. They don't have to wait for an attorney or paralegal to get back to them. They can also get help after-hours, addressing their urgent needs more quickly. If a call is urgent, the virtual receptionist can direct it to the proper person immediately.

Building strong relationships with clients is key to your law firm's success. Elevate your client relationships with Clio's Client Relationship Management Software.

Cons of using a legal answering service

Training Requirements: Even if a virtual receptionist service is experienced in the legal industry, you may still need to train them on your firm's specific needs and processes. This includes familiarizing them with your preferred communication style, systems, and any unique client requirements. This initial time investment can be a drawback for firms seeking immediate integration.

Lack of Physical Presence: Virtual receptionists can't handle tasks that require physical presence, such as greeting clients in person, receiving mail, or managing office supplies. This limitation can disadvantage firms that rely on these in-office tasks. A virtual receptionist might not fully meet your needs if your firm frequently needs someone onsite for such duties.

Integrating virtual receptionists into your legal practice

- It can be hugely beneficial to use a virtual receptionist in your legal practice. Here are some steps lawyers can take to make the onboarding process as smooth as possible:
- Define the remote receptionist's role and tasks.
- Determine active hours (business hours, after-hours, or both).
- Research the best virtual receptionist providers who are experienced with law firms for confidentiality and client sensitivity.
- Choose features that meet your firm's needs (e.g., bilingual support, 24/7 availability, software integration with your case management).
- Set up communication channels (phone, email, messaging).
- Train the receptionist: provide firm overview, scripts, FAQs, and call-handling instructions.
- Establish protocols for transferring requests to attorneys or staff.
- Ensure compliance with client confidentiality and relevant laws.

Final thoughts: Are virtual receptionists worth it?

Virtual receptionists are a cost-effective way for law firms to manage client service without hiring a full-time, in-house receptionist. They offer increased efficiency, after-hours availability, enhanced client service, and streamlined communication. By taking on incoming calls, scheduling, and basic inquiries, virtual receptionists free up attorneys, paralegals, and other law firm staff to focus on billable work. Check out Clio's partner directory and app directory, where you can find virtual receptionist services.

Take your law firm to the next level with Clio Grow. Streamline your client intake, automate follow-ups, and save hours that would otherwise be spent drafting documents. Sign for a Clio Grow demo today to see how it can transform your business.

About Clio

Clio is the global leader in legal AI, powering legal work across the profession, from law firms of every size to corporate legal teams, government agencies, and courts. Its Intelligent Legal Work Platform unites the business and practice of law, connecting the people, information, and processes behind legal work. Clio's AI brings the context together with legal sources drawn from Clio Library, a growing collection of more than one billion legal documents. Over 400,000 legal professionals in more than 130 countries rely on Clio to run their legal world. Learn more at www.clio.com.