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And So It Begins . . . Avvo Launches Its Beta . . .

Sitting here at my computer writing the inaugural post of the Avvo Blog is an interesting endeavor. After keeping Avvo (www.avvo.com) in “stealth” mode for over a year, there is so much I want to share that I’m not sure where to begin.

So, let me start by introducing myself. I’m Mark Britton, the CEO and President of Avvo. You can read my [bio](#) here, but the short story is that I have been involved in the legal and e-commerce industries for some time. I’m a 15 year lawyer, and since the first time I committed the then-perceived heresy of emailing legal documents rather than overnighting hard copies around the country (circa 1997), I have been obsessed with the idea of how technology – especially the Internet – can make the legal marketplace more efficient.

With that as a backdrop, I am very happy to introduce Avvo’s beta website – a service that takes a giant step toward making the legal marketplace a more efficient place for everyone. For consumers, Avvo’s mission is to give them the information and guidance they need to choose the right lawyer – for free. Sounds pretty simple – right? Well, the problem is that it’s not. The reality is that, when it comes to evaluating and selecting lawyers, consumers have no idea where to begin. A recent IPSOS survey showed that, over the last two years, 25 million consumers did not hire a lawyer because, even though they thought they needed one, they had no idea how to choose the right one. 25 MILLION – a tragic number when you think that these are 25 million Americans that did not get the legal help they needed.

To combat statistics such as these, we have purposefully tried to create a site that does not confuse consumers, but rather keeps them on task of choosing the right lawyer. As you will see, the site is clean, uncluttered and in plain-English. We also offer unique information and guidance that comes in the form of our [Avvo Rating](#), which is our assessment of how well a lawyer can represent you, as well as disciplinary histories, client ratings and peer ratings for every lawyer in the states that we currently cover.* We also have our [3-Step Guide to Choosing a Lawyer](#), which walks the less-experienced consumer through each step of the lawyer selection process.

For lawyers, Avvo gives them a free profile to set themselves apart and show prospective clients that they are the right lawyer. Lawyers can update their profiles with as much information as they want, as often as they want. Put simply, Avvo lets the truly great lawyers shine. We’ve all heard the lawyer jokes and, in my experience, these jokes are the result of a couple of bad apples spoiling the whole bunch. Why shouldn’t there be a place where the great lawyers can show their incredible bodies of work and how that work solves our problems – rather than creates them – every day. Well, Avvo is that place and I am proud to have had a hand in building it.

An unsung hero of Avvo’s service is our technology. If it does what it’s supposed to do, you shouldn’t even know it’s there. However, you might have noticed that we are launching Avvo in its “beta” form, and in plain-English that means that we are still working out the kinks (known in tech parlance as “bugs”). Our challenge in bringing together information for over 650,000 attorneys in one easily searchable place is that it is not humanly possible for us to test every page and process in our system. Every day we find a new bug or two and, even though we put our heel to them as quickly as we can, there will always be ones that we miss. So, if you find a bug, please [report it to us](#) and, in the meantime, we appreciate your patience.

Another reason that Avvo’s “beta” moniker makes sense is that our search technology and processes continue to collect information on roughly 3500 new attorneys every day. So, with each day that Avvo is up and running, our entire system continues to gain breadth and depth. Still, we will never be able to find all of the information for every lawyer,

so if you are a lawyer and find that your profile is missing information, please claim your profile and update it with anything we are missing. Ultimately, Avvo is a community and the more that the community participates, the better.

And finally, even though Avvo is the product of input from hundreds of lawyers, thousands of consumers and some of the best legal minds in the business, we would still like input from you. So, whatever you think about Avvo, good or bad, I would like to hear from you. Feel free to post a response to this post or email me directly at mb@avvo.com.

And so it begins . . . Avvo - Ratings. Guidance. The Right Lawyer.

I look forward to chatting with you in the future.

*Avvo is launching in Arizona, California, District of Columbia, Georgia, Illinois, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington

This entry was posted on Tuesday, June 5th, 2007 at 5:46 am and is filed under [Avvo News](#), [Mark Britton Posts](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.

29 Responses to “And So It Begins . . . Avvo Launches Its Beta . . .”

1. [Spencer](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 8:49 am](#)

congratulations guys — the site looks great

2. [Leslie E. Tolzin](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 10:44 am](#)

I have read the article about you site in the Seattle P.I. browsed through your site, and claimed my profile. I think what you are trying to accomplish is a worthy goal but I am curious about how the rankings are determined. Especially at such an early start with little or no client or peer input. For example what is the difference between a 6.3 and 6.8 ranking? Aren't you in one sense endorsing the person with the higher ranking. This is troubling to me. There are some very good attorneys whom you have ranked fairly low merely because of a disciplinary actions, there are others whom I wouldn't pay to represent my worst enemy who are ranked fairly high. How is it you are coming up with these numbers? Again, I don't object to what you are doing, I just want to understand it.

3. [Lesley](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 11:47 am](#)

I have a serious problem with the fact that you claim you can claim one's own profile for free, yet require people to use a credit card. I realize you need to verify their identity in some way, but I personally don't feel comfortable providing said info to a company which has already admitted it will sell some personal information to third parties. Additionally, I searched lawyers whom I know have had disciplinary actions against them, and said actions did not even show up on their profile, so I feel the accuracy of this site is quite questionable.

4. [Lisa Solomon](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 12:50 pm](#)

From a usability perspective, it is unclear that a user can click on the small green “talk” bubble to view a lawyer's welcome message.

From the perspective of a listed lawyer, the site would be more valuable if at least part of the welcome message was displayed automatically or, at the least, if the purpose of the “talk” bubble were more obvious.

5. [David](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 1:04 pm](#)

Congrats! This looks like it will be a useful site for choosing a lawyer, and it looks more professional than lawyerratingz.com does. It looks like you guys have a lot more lawyers listed too.

6. [Sheila](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 1:36 pm](#)

I checked out your site. Are you going to do much marketing so the laypeople know you are out there? Why the credit card? It might be more productive for you to find another way to verify that the lawyer is who the lawyer said they were.

7. [Earl Morriss](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 1:43 pm](#)

If the web site is as successful as your PR campaign you guys are going to be mega-zillionaires! This morning our IT guy showed it to me, a legal list serve sent me a message about it, a non-lawyer friend asked me about it and at lunch I saw the front page story in the Seattle paper...who do y'all know and how much does that kind of coverage cost? I don't care much for these rating systems...but, I doubt many lawyers are going to ignore the site. Good luck.

8. [Justin](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 1:54 pm](#)

Hi, I'm one of the developers, and I can respond to some of your comments. Regarding the credit card, we're definitely looking at other ways to verify that you're really the lawyer.. stay tuned for future versions! It's just that because of resource constraints, we just felt that the best initial way to protect a lawyer's information was to require the credit card. We use it to verify identity. Nothing else — promise.

Also, regarding Lesley's comments about accuracy — we take those seriously too. Lesley, please feel free to submit what you think might be inaccurate or missing data using the web form, and we'll get to it when time permits.

9. [Frank Edens](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 4:53 pm](#)

Congratulations Mark, Welcome to the World Wide Web of Law. Wish you and your team much success. Frank Edens, CEO, USLegal, Inc.

10. [christopher parks](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 7:26 pm](#)

Guys,

Even though we are in the healthcare space (medbillmanager.com and findyourdoc.com) i am quite impressed with your launch, forethought, and consumer-friendly approach. Regardless of any initial feedback.. the fact that you are getting feedback is fantastic! Also, there is no "perfect" data set that exists nor has been created, so from what i can see... you've got a great start. All of this is coming from the voice of someone who is doing a similar thing in healthcare. I'm sure we'll end up learning from each other over time and i wish you and your team a wonderful beta launch.

christopher
co-founder/ceo
MedBillManager & FindYourDoc

11. [Warren Stickney](#) Says:
[June 5th, 2007 at 7:55 pm](#)