

Google Ranks, AI Recommends: New Study of 38,000 AI Searches Reveals Which Law Firms Actually Get Named

Forward Push analyzed 38,000 AI searches across ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, and Claude, finding law firm AI visibility looks nothing like Google rankings.

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, July 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Forward Push [Law Firm Marketing](#), an agency that works exclusively with law firms, today released the findings of an original research study built on 38,000 AI searches. The study set out to answer a question more law firm owners are asking every month: when someone asks ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini, or Claude for the best lawyer in their city, does their firm get named?

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REPORT //

Google Ranks. AI Recommends.

**Inside a 38,000 Law Firm
Search Study**

What AI search is naming — and why it matters.

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38,000 AI Searches, What Law Firm Wins?

Over roughly six weeks between late April and early June 2026, researchers asked all four AI tools the same questions a real client would type, across 25 practice areas and 15 U.S. cities including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. The study captured 44,411 total answers. After removing 6,238 responses lost to platform errors and quota limits, 38,173 clean answers remained for analysis, containing 96,988 individual mentions of more than 15,000 different law firms.

The findings challenge how most law firms have approached online visibility for the last two decades.

Google Ranks. AI Recommends. Those Are Different Games.

Google hands a searcher ten blue links and lets them choose. AI tools do the choosing for them, returning a short list of names with no page two to scroll. A firm that sits comfortably on page one of Google can be completely absent from the answer an AI tool gives the same searcher



Being named by an AI tool is not the same as being the better lawyer. It means the machine found you somewhere it trusts. A lot of firms we talk to have a strong record & no idea they're invisible."

Marc Apple

minutes later.

No Two AI Tools Agree

Researchers found that ChatGPT and Perplexity, asked the identical question in the identical city and practice area, produced lists of named firms that overlapped only about 6%. A firm can dominate one platform and be a complete stranger to another. There is no single "AI result" to win. There are four, each built from a different set of sources.

A Few Names Take Most of the Attention

Within any single city and practice area, the top three firms named captured about 34% of all mentions, while a long tail of roughly 64 other firms split the remainder, most named only once or twice.

Gemini Rarely Names Anyone

ChatGPT and Claude named an actual law firm in about 99% of their answers. Perplexity named a firm about 96% of the time. Gemini named a specific firm in only about 12% of its answers, defaulting instead to generic advice like "check reviews" and "schedule consultations."

Directories Are Writing the Answer

Because Perplexity shows its sources, researchers were able to read all of them. Across more than 30,000 citations, Super Lawyers appeared in 15.6% of all citations and Justia in 13.2%, with Best Law Firms, Best Lawyers, BCG Attorney Search, and Chambers rounding out the top six sources. Ninety-six percent of Perplexity's answers cited at least one legal directory. Only 68% cited the law firm's own website.

"Being named by an AI tool is not the same as being the better lawyer," said Marc Apple, Founder and Partner of Forward Push Law Firm Marketing. "It means the machine found you somewhere it trusts. A lot of firms we talk to have a strong case record and no idea they're invisible to the tools their next client is already using."

The full study, including city-by-city and practice-area breakdowns, is available at forwardpush.com. Forward Push also published a companion video walking through the methodology and findings.

Forward Push Law Firm Marketing works exclusively with law firms, building marketing systems around Case Gravity, its proprietary approach to AI-era client discovery, intake, and retention.

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