



CASE STUDY:
**THE LAW OFFICE
OF STEPHEN P.
SHEPARD, LLC**

INTERVIEW:
STEPHEN P. SHEPARD

**VALUES
DRIVEN LAW
FIRM MAKES
CRIMINAL**

Defense More
Affordable

answer1



All clients deserve quality client-centered representation and attorney Stephen P. Shepard has built an entire criminal defense career around that principal. After serving as a public defender, Stephen opened The Law Office of Stephen P. Shepard, LLC in 2013 to offer affordable and quality legal services to anyone facing criminal charges. And everything he does focuses providing client-centered legal services that are aligned with the core values of his law firm.

“What I sought to do when I started my firm was to basically privatize what the public defender does,” Stephen said. “So the mission of my firm is to provide superior representation based on four core values: client centered representation, affordable representation, resourceful advocacy, and comprehensive service.”

Stephen accomplishes those goals by using powerful tools designed for lawyers and by assessing client finances and the costs of the case so that he can provide a price that is both affordable and fair to him as an attorney.

“The prospective client tells me about their financial situation—their debts, assets, necessary expenses,” Stephen said. “Then I subtract the necessary expenses from their income to find out where they are financially. I also think about how much work is involved in this case. Once I come up with an affordable price, I give them a number that’s not set in stone but that I think is fair to both of us.”

When Stephen first launched his law firm and his firm’s client-centered and affordable business model, there were many naysayers who told him it simply couldn’t work. But he didn’t let that stop him.

“So many people told me, ‘Oh that’s not going to work, you’re not going to make any money’ but I decided to do it anyway,” Stephen said. “I know that if people can get an attorney to represent them at an affordable cost and the attorney can afford to run a practice at that cost, it’s a win-win for everyone.”

But Stephen also knows that he can’t keep his legal services affordable without the right tools. He uses many legal industry focused tools that make it possible to save time, energy and money so that he can pass on the cost savings to his clients in the form of lower fees. One of those tools is Answer1 a law firm virtual receptionist service specifically designed for the special needs of the legal industry.

LEAD QUALIFICATION

Stephen's reputation for excellence and compassionate service means that his schedule is busy. So when he's in the courtroom or in a meeting he needs a real human being to qualify leads and ask the type of questions that will help him understand the issues facing the potential client.

"Answer 1 helps me tremendously because they get me the information I need and they get it to me immediately," Stephen said. "They know how to take calls from a jail so they help me out a great deal when someone is calling and they need help right away."

This is especially important to Stephen as a criminal defense attorney because getting the right information to him quickly is critical when a potential client is sitting in jail and the clock is ticking. And since Answer1 provides their virtual receptionists a four week training that's specific to law firms, the people answering the phone are equipped to ask the right questions and handle clients in a way that is appropriate and professional.

"I was with a different virtual reception service before and they were inexpensive but I learned that you get what you pay for," Stephen said. "I had multiple complaints about them. They would often get me the wrong information. It got to a point where I was seriously concerned about how my calls were being handled."

24/7 COVERAGE

As a criminal defense attorney, Stephen knows that anyone facing a criminal charge needs help in a timely manner. The last thing they want to do is talk to a voicemail machine. And because a machine can't ask questions or answer them, many potential clients will simply hang up.

"From all the research I've read, when a real human voice answers the phone you're more likely to get a positive response," Stephen said. "If it's a potential client, you're more likely to get their information. If it's a client with an emergency, you're more likely to get their information too. But with voicemail, people hang up on it. It's just not as effective as getting information for the attorney as a virtual receptionist."

Making sure that clients and potential clients can contact a real person is paramount to Stephen's core value of customer-centered representation. He makes sure that each client has the number that will redirect to Answer1 when he's unavailable and he shares his mobile phone just in case a client has an emergency.

"Since I have a team of 24/7 law firm receptionists, that means that the person who gets a DUI at three in morning is going to get a real human being on the phone," Stephen said. "For me, using a law firm virtual receptionist is a no-brainer. Any law firm that is not doing it is kind of living in the past. I think it's what clients expect today. If you're not doing it, you need to rethink that decision."

MORE CLIENTS

Using a law firm virtual receptionist has not only made it easier for potential clients and existing clients to get the right information to Stephen so that he can help them, it has increased the number of people eager to do business with him.

"I've gotten more clients," Stephen said. "I would also say that more people are looking to hire me when I tell them that if I'm not in the office I have a 24/7 team of receptionists who can help them."

BEST COST

And while Stephen said that the cost of using Answer1 is more than the previous service he had, he finds that the value delivered is far superior to any service he's worked with in the past.

"When I look at cost per minute, I've compared that to so-called industry leaders and I've found that Answer1 is competitive in terms of the value you get," Stephen said.

FINAL THOUGHTS

By using Answer1, attorney Stephen Shepard has been able to provide quality, client-centered service that is in line with his core values. He also has increased the number of clients he gets and the services has ensured that he can get the information he needs when new clients call to inquire about his legal services.