

# Criminal Defense Websites Are Neurologically Hostile to People in Crisis

A landmark study of 7,600 law firm websites finds that fewer than 1 in 200 are designed for the nervous system of a person in legal emergency.

# 36

out of ~7,600 websites qualified as "Trust-Optimized."

## WHY IT MATTERS

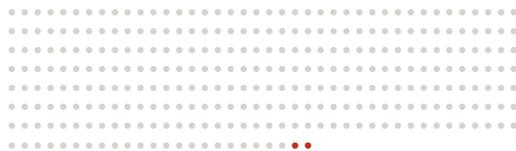
The brain makes trust decisions in under 50 milliseconds. In that window, the amygdala—not the rational mind—renders a survival verdict: safe or unsafe. Most sites fail this test before a single word is read.

Under acute stress, the prefrontal cortex (reasoning, logic, deliberate choice) shuts down. Cortisol floods the system. The visitor is not comparing firms. They are scanning for one signal: that they are safe.

*Amsten (2009), Nature Reviews Neuroscience*

## SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Each dot = ~25 websites. ● = Trust-Optimized sites



## THE THREE DIMENSIONS THAT PREDICT TRUST Machine learning feature importance



*The crisis brain asks three questions: Am I understood? What happens next? Will this bankrupt me?*

## TRAFFIC ≠ TRUST

Monthly website traffic showed **zero correlation** with trust architecture quality. High-traffic firms were no more likely to be trust-optimized than low-traffic firms.

**“Traffic without trust architecture is paying to traumatize people at scale.”**

## THE CRISIS DECISION WINDOW

### 0–50 ms THREAT DETECTION

Amygdala scans for safety.

### 50–500 ms EMOTIONAL RESONANCE

Brain pattern-matches with trauma.

### 500 ms–3s COGNITIVE OVERRIDE

Survival verdict already rendered.