

HOW TO FIND A LAWYER

By Attorney Michael H. Wald

You've got a funny feeling. Those phone calls from the customer just get more demanding and you know the customer has a legitimate gripe.

Something tells you that you're going to need some extra support.

You think you should call your lawyer.

But you don't have a lawyer. You knew people who went to law school after college, but you haven't heard from them recently. You know there are a great many law firms downtown, but you live and work in Dallas. Where do you go?

You're not under the poverty line. But if you were, you'd probably be able to get a lawyer free, from the legal aid group in your area. In Dallas, it's North Central Texas Legal Services.

You can rely on word-of-mouth referrals from your neighbors, friends and relatives. This is a good method of getting the name of a lawyer but, remember, a lawyer may be very good, but your friend lost a case to him, so he's not referred to you. Or the lawyer referred may be very poor, but your friend's problem wasn't difficult to solve. It may be difficult for a non-lawyer to recognize a skilled lawyer.

You can read about local lawyers in published accounts -- in newspapers, magazines, or trade journals.

The Yellow Pages provides an extensive list of lawyers and sometimes the ads list areas of practice.

Or you may try a bar association referral service. These services frequently have no quality

control -- any lawyer who volunteers will have his name listed, and referrals are made by going down the list. Finding the name of a lawyer is easy. But it's another thing to find the right lawyer for you. Perhaps you want a lawyer who specializes in a particular field or has some other special qualifications.

The Texas Bar has certain specialization areas -- In order to advertise as specialized in one of them a lawyer must pass a written exam, and have a certain number of years of experience, including certain specific types of experience, in his special area. Some of the specialization areas are Civil Trial Law, Family Law, Criminal Law, Real Estate Law, etc. If a lawyer is a specialist who has passed the tests in his area, he can call himself "Board Certified" in that area.

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