

Taproot Law: Enhancing Access to Legal Services

Taproot Law, based in Marquette, Michigan, aims to provide affordable and accessible legal support, particularly for older populations and those with limited internet access. From January to May 2024, I collaborated with a team to improve Taproot Law's digital and physical outreach. This project focused on identifying core user segments, testing outreach methods, and creating solutions tailored to a diverse range of clients. My roles included UX Researcher, Data Interpreter, Collaboration Lead, and the main point of contact between the law firm and our team.

 **by Christopher Emerson**



The Challenge: Expanding Reach in Northern Michigan

Taproot Law sought to broaden its reach in northern Michigan, but faced challenges. Many potential clients, often older adults, had unreliable internet access, making online solutions difficult to use. Additionally, there was hesitation in sharing confidential information digitally, emphasizing the need for trust and security. Early research highlighted a preference for paper documents and in-person interactions.



Stakeholder feedback confirmed the importance of printed materials in libraries and community spaces, underscoring the need for low-tech outreach. The initial plan to develop a mobile app conflicted with these preferences, necessitating a shift in strategy.

Identifying Key User Segments



Older Adults with Limited Internet

This group relies on traditional methods such as paper documents and in-person communication due to unreliable internet access.



Younger Adults Cautious About Data Security

This segment is wary of sharing personal information online and seeks secure, trustworthy ways to access legal services.



Local Community Members

These individuals depend on public spaces like libraries for information and resources, making these locations key for outreach.



Two-Phase Research Approach

Phase 1: Quantitative Data

We surveyed younger university students to gather insights on demographics, internet reliability, and awareness of legal services. The survey revealed that most respondents were 18-24 years old, used platforms like Google or Reddit for informal legal advice, and were concerned about sharing personal data online.

Phase 2: Qualitative Feedback

We created and tested a printed flyer to assess clarity, design, and user comfort with a QR code. Participants provided feedback on readability, trust signals, and contact methods, emphasizing the need for clear fonts, a prominent logo, and easy ways to build trust.

Process and Iterations

1

Discovery and Initial Research

Interviews with Erika confirmed the focus on low-tech solutions. Reviewed how other law firms blend print and digital outreach.

2

Quantitative Survey

Collected data on demographics, internet reliability, and preferred legal advice sources.

3

Flyer Creation and Testing

Shifted from app planning to flyer design. Tested initial layouts in person and via Qualtrics. Enlarged the logo, chose darker fonts, and moved contact information.

4

Addressing User Preferences

Recognized the preference for physical materials among older or rural users, gathering feedback from library staff.



Key Deliverables for Taproot Law

Services

- LLC Formation (Wills, Trust, and More)
- Estate Planning
- Filing Legal Documents
- Transfer/Sell Real Estate.
and much more!



Informational Flyer

Highlighted real estate and probate services with clear fonts, strong color contrast, and a QR code to a mobile-friendly site.

Strategic Outreach Plan

Provided advice on flyer placement in libraries and community centers, with methods for gathering user feedback.

Usability Test Report

Pinpointed design issues like logo size and color choices, paired with actionable recommendations.

Addressing Security Concerns



Social Media

Expand reach through social media platforms.



Library-Based Flyers

Distribute flyers in local libraries.



SEO-Friendly Website

Create an easily discoverable website.



Clear Language and Security

Communicate clearly and prioritize security.



Key Takeaways and Impact

This project underscored the importance of user-centered design. Effective user research guided a shift from an app-based solution to a more inclusive, low-tech approach. By listening to users and stakeholders, we delivered data-backed solutions—flyers, outreach plans, and recommendations—that better serve Taproot Law’s audience.

This experience demonstrated the value of adapting UX strategies based on user insights, ensuring that solutions are relevant and accessible to the target demographic. The focus on accessibility and trust-building was crucial in creating a meaningful impact for Taproot Law and its clients.

