

How Canberra Judges Its Accountants, Lawyers, Brokers and Advisers

We read every written Google review left in the five years to 18 September 2026 for Canberra and Queanbeyan accountants, tax agents, bookkeepers, law firms, conveyancers, financial advisers and mortgage brokers: 13,702 reviews of 535 listings. This is what clients write once the work is done, and what separates the firms they praise from the ones they warn others off.

Give me ten minutes of your attention and you will know two things: the types of things your clients are most likely to write about you, and which of the things they hardly ever write about could be the reason a new client picks you.

The one thing to know

Clients write about two things more than anything else: how they were treated, and whether the work was good. Six in ten positive reviews (62 per cent) say the firm was professional and courteous. Four in ten (40 per cent) talk about the quality of the work. Nearly every firm has both: 424 of 476 have at least one review about how clients were treated, and 405 have one about the work.

Then there's getting back to people. It comes up in a quarter of positive reviews (26 per cent) and a quarter of one- and two-star reviews (25 per cent). Clients who got a call back write about it. Clients who didn't write about that instead.

Almost everything else hardly gets a mention. Being kept up to date comes up in about one positive review in ten. A quick turnaround comes up in about one in eleven. A firm spotting something the client hadn't asked about, and a deadline met, each come up in fewer than three in a hundred.

What we reckon. "Professional and friendly" is the bare minimum here, the same way "good work, nice bloke" is for tradies. Nearly every firm's reviews say it, so when someone puts two firms side by side, it tells them nothing. The things that hardly get mentioned are where you can stand out, and most of them come down to one habit: telling the client what's happening before they have to ask.

Five things you want, and what the reviews say about each

Our research points to five things a firm needs to get right. Each section below takes one, shows what Canberra's reviews say about it, and ends with a quick check you can run on your own firm.

The checks work best with three things in front of you: your last twenty Google reviews, yesterday's missed calls and emails, and your last complaint. What to do about what you find comes after the five sections.

1. You want to be the firm that calls back.

Getting back to people comes up in 3,396 of 13,098 positive reviews, about one in four, across 306 of 476 firms. It also comes up in 96 of 379 one- and two-star reviews, again about one in four, across 65 firms. Clients notice when you call back, and they notice when you don't.

It varies by profession. It comes up in about a third of positive reviews of mortgage brokers (32 per cent), about a quarter for law firms (24 per cent), about one in five for financial advisers (19 per cent) and about one in seven for accountants (14 per cent).

A broker's client wrote that she always had time for their questions and fitted meetings around their work. A tax client wrote that they'd rung four times over several months, been told each time that someone would call back within half an hour, and were still waiting.

What we reckon. Those two reviews describe the same moment: a client with a question. One firm answered it. Calling back costs less than anything else on this list, and it shows up in the praise and the complaints alike.

Check yours. Look at yesterday's missed calls and emails. How many were answered by the end of the day, and by whom? If nobody can tell you, nobody owns it.

What this can't tell you: how quickly any firm actually gets back to people. Clients only mention it when they think to.

2. You want clients to know where their matter is up to.

Being kept up to date comes up in 1,416 positive reviews, about one in ten, across 211 firms. Having things explained, or feeling the firm understood their situation, comes up in 3,943, nearly a third, across 331 firms.

On the complaint side, how long things took comes up in 79 of 379 one- and two-star reviews, about one in five, and slow work specifically in 60, about one in six.

What we reckon. Most clients have no idea how long a tax return, a settlement or a loan approval should take. What they know is whether anyone told them. A client who hears "we're waiting on the bank, I'll update you Friday" has something to write about, even if the matter took exactly as long.

Check yours. Pick three open matters. When did each client last hear from you without having to ask? Write the next update date on the file.

What this can't tell you: whether those matters were actually slow. A client who says it took too long may have been waiting on a bank or a court the whole time.

3. You want the result to speak for itself.

A result the client could point to (a refund, a loan approved, a matter settled, money saved) comes up in 2,432 positive reviews, nearly one in five, across 289 firms. A firm spotting something the client hadn't asked about comes up in 385, and a deadline met in 330. Each is fewer than three in a hundred.

One broker's client wrote that the broker rang to say they could get a better rate by refinancing, something they wouldn't have chased themselves. Another wrote that the broker worked late to get the application in on time.

On the complaint side, mistakes and rework come up in 64 of 379 one- and two-star reviews, about one in six, across 44 firms. One small-business owner wrote that their new accountant had to fix a lot of the previous firm's work, and they were left with a large bill.

What we reckon. Getting in first is one of the rarest things clients praise, and one of the most specific. A call that starts "I noticed your rate's higher than it needs to be" gives the client something to tell their friends. Fewer than three positive reviews in a hundred describe one.

Check yours. Go through your client list for one thing you could raise before the client does: a rate, a deadline, a deduction, a document about to expire. Make one call this week.

What this can't tell you: whether the advice or the result was right. A client can be happy with advice that was wrong, and unhappy with advice that was right.

4. You want clients to come back to you, and to the same person.

Clients saying they've used the same adviser for years, or more than once, come up in 1,572 positive reviews, about one in eight, across 287 firms. It's higher for accountants (one in five) and tax agents (more than one in four), where the work comes back every year.

One client wrote that the same tax accountant had looked after them for more than three years.

What we reckon. A review saying they've had the same accountant for more than three years tells a stranger more than "great service" ever will. It says the firm keeps its people and keeps its clients. When an adviser leaves, the handover is where that's kept or lost.

Check yours. When someone leaves your firm, what happens to their clients? If the answer is "they find out when they call", fix that first.

What this can't tell you: how many clients leave. Reviews come from people who stayed long enough to write one.

5. You don't want the complaint that nobody owns.

One- and two-star reviews are rare: 379 of 13,451, fewer than three in a hundred, from 159 firms. They aren't spread evenly. They make up 6.3 per cent of reviews of accountants, 5.6 per cent for law firms and 5.0 per cent for tax agents, against 0.5 per cent for financial advisers and 0.4 per cent for mortgage brokers.

Apart from general unhappiness, the complaints are about the work (152 of 379, four in ten), how the client was treated (142, nearly four in ten) and not being called back (96, one in four). Honesty comes up in 56, nobody following up or fixing the problem in 52, and a bill that didn't match the quote in 27. One client wrote that they were charged thousands more than they'd been quoted.

What we reckon. Three of those (not being called back, nobody following up, a bill that didn't match the quote) have nothing to do with expertise. They're about who owns the job. You can't guarantee every outcome, but you can make sure every call, file and invoice has someone responsible for it. That part starts at the front desk.

Check yours. Take your last complaint. Who owned it, what was the next step, and who checked it was closed? If you can't name all three, the next one will go the same way.

What this can't tell you: how often things go wrong. Reviews only show the complaints people chose to write.

Choose one change

Write down one thing you found, what you'll do about it and who's doing it. Pick something you can check next month: whether yesterday's calls got returned, whether every open matter has an update date, whether the handover list exists. Then read your next twenty reviews and see if it shows up.

Where Well Handled comes in

Some of what's in this report is yours alone to fix: the quality of the work, how a handover runs, what goes on the invoice. Well Handled doesn't touch those.

Where we come in is the bit between the phone ringing and the client hearing back, and what a stranger sees before they ever ring.

The call you didn't hear. Getting back to people shows up in the praise and the complaints alike. When a call goes unanswered because you're with a client, Well Handled's missed-call service texts the caller back straight away, so the enquiry doesn't go to the next firm on the list.

The quote that went quiet. Follow-up messages keep an enquiry or an unsigned quote moving, so the client hears from you before they have to chase.

What a stranger reads before they ring. The things in sections 1 to 4 that hardly get mentioned are exactly what your website and Google profile can say plainly: how fast you call back, who looks after the file, what the fee covers, which deadlines you hold. We build and look after both.

The reviews themselves. Asking every client for a review, the same way, with no incentive and no picking, means that over time your reviews say more than "professional and friendly".

What do your own reviews say?

This report tells you what Canberra writes about firms like yours. It can't tell you what your clients write about you.

Text a link to your Google listing to **0495 032 269**, or email it to **kai@wellhandled.au**. You'll get one page on your own reviews: which of the five things above your clients already mention, which they never do, how that compares with the firms around you, and one change worth trying. If you haven't got enough reviews to say anything honest, we'll tell you.

Front-desk checklist

For whoever answers your phones and inbox.

Calls and emails

Every call and email gets a reply the same business day, even if the reply is "I'll have an answer by Thursday".

Every open matter has one named owner and a next update date on the file.

Don't promise a call-back time you can't keep.

When people change

When an adviser leaves or goes on leave, their clients hear it from you, with the name of the person now looking after them.

The new person reads the file before the first call.

Fees

The quote says what's included, what isn't, and what would change the price.

If the price is going to change, the client hears before the invoice arrives.

Reviews

Never offer anything in return for a review, and never remove or hide a genuine negative one. Consumer law covers every profession in this report.

Some professions have their own rules on using client testimonials in advertising. Check yours before you reuse a review.

Complaints

Every complaint gets an owner, a next step and a check that it closed.

How we did this

What we read. Every written Google review left between 18 September 2021 and 18 September 2026 for accountants, tax agents, bookkeepers, law firms, conveyancers, financial advisers and mortgage brokers serving Canberra and Queanbeyan: 13,702 reviews of 535 listings. Where listings shared a phone number or website, we counted them as one firm, which gave 504. Of those reviews, 13,451 describe a client's own experience of the firm's service, and those are behind every figure here. Star-only reviews, enquiries that never became work, and reviews about something other than the firm's service were left out.

How we sorted them. We sorted every review into topics from a fixed list we use for every edition of How Canberra Judges, with each one tied to the reviewer's own words. The one- and two-star reviews were checked a second time, and only topics that passed our accuracy checks have numbers here.

How solid the numbers are. The five firms with the most reviews make up nearly a fifth of them. Take those five out and no figure here moves by more than two in a hundred. Counting every firm equally, instead of every review, moves none by more than about three and a half in a hundred. Bookkeepers and conveyancers have too few reviews or firms to report on their own, so they only appear in the totals.

What reviews can't show. People choose whether to write a review, and we can't confirm every reviewer was a client. We don't know which firms ask for reviews, or how. A mention isn't the same as a happy client, and nothing here can judge whether advice was sound or a legal result was right. Names are left out of every example.

Checking our work. The full technical method and every check are written up. Think a figure's wrong? Tell us which section through wellhandled.au and we'll look at it.

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