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DIGITAL ROCKET · WHITE PAPER

Why lead-form tracking *fails immigration firms.*

A white paper on how immigration law firms should measure marketing. The industry default, cost per lead, is structurally misleading for this practice area. Here is why, what to measure instead, and the evidence from a three-year engagement.

ABSTRACT

Immigration retainers close weeks after the click, case types differ in value by a factor of seven, and the ads run under a Meta rule most agencies do not know exists. Each of these breaks cost per lead as a measure of success. **The governing metric should be cost per signed case,** read by case type and tracked across the real close cycle.

In a three-year engagement built this way, cost per signed case fell **55%** while spend scaled, signed cases per year grew **8.0x**, and blended return reached **6.39x**. Growth rates verified; absolute figures withheld at the client's request.

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SEE THE EVIDENCE ↓

WHITE PAPER · REAL DATA ONLY · 2026 · BY IVAN JANKU

PUBLISHED BY DIGITAL ROCKET · SIGNED-CASE ACQUISITION FOR IMMIGRATION LAW FIRMS · 4.9 ON CLUTCH · META BUSINESS PARTNER · GOOGLE PARTNER

Immigration firms measure marketing by *the wrong number.*

Almost every immigration law firm judges its marketing on cost per lead. It is the number the ad dashboard shows, and it is the number most agencies report. It is also the number most likely to hide whether the marketing is working at all.

A signed retainer in immigration law closes weeks after the click, not the same day. Different case types are worth wildly different amounts. And the ads run under an advertising rule most agencies do not know exists. Each of those three facts breaks cost per lead as a measure of success. Together they make it actively misleading. This paper sets out why, what to measure instead, and what changed for one firm that made the switch.

THE ONE-LINE THESIS

Cost per lead measures how cheaply you can buy an inquiry. **Cost per signed case measures what it actually costs to acquire a paying client.** In immigration law the gap between the two is large, structural, and where most marketing budgets quietly leak.

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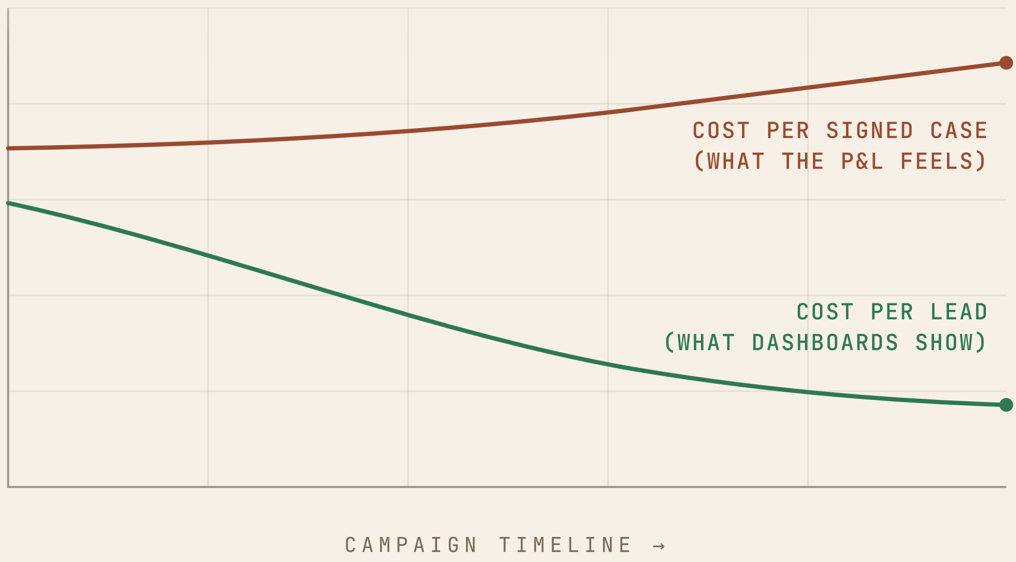

FIGURE 1 · ILLUSTRATIVE, NOT CLIENT DATA

Why cost per lead *fails an immigration firm.*

Three features of immigration law each defeat cost-per-lead measurement. A firm running standard tracking is fighting all three at once.

01 The close cycle outruns the tracking window

An immigration retainer typically signs two to six weeks after the first click, and an EB-5 investor can take four to eight. Default ad-platform attribution windows and same-day conversion tracking record the form fill and miss the signed retainer. The platform then optimizes toward whatever happens quickly, which is cheap inquiries, not clients.

02 Case types have completely different economics

A marriage green card retainer is commonly around $3,500. An NIW runs roughly $8,000 to $12,000. An EB-5 starts at $25,000 and up. Pooling them into one campaign tunes the whole account to the cheapest inquiry, caps the budget on the most valuable case type, and floods intake with mismatched prospects. Cost per lead looks fine on the dashboard while the case mix quietly degrades.

03 **Meta treats immigration ads as a special ad category**

Immigration law advertising falls under Meta's Legal Services Special Ad Category, which removes detailed demographic, interest, and lookalike targeting. Most agencies do not know it exists, run standard targeting anyway, and get the account flagged or suspended. Cost per lead cannot tell you your account is one policy review away from going dark.

None of these is a creative problem or a budget problem. They are measurement and structure problems, and they are specific to how immigration law actually converts.

The framework: *measure the signed case.*

The fix is a framework we call **the Signed-Case Method**: replace cost per lead with cost per signed case as the governing metric, and rebuild the account around the three facts above. Four moves, in order.

WHAT CHANGES WHEN THE METRIC CHANGES

MOVE	WHAT IT DOES
Track the signed retainer, not the form fill	Import the signed-case event from the CRM back to the original click, with an attribution window long enough for the close (60 days or more). The platforms start learning from real clients.
Separate every case type	One independent campaign per case type, each with its own creative, bid strategy, and cost ceiling, so the highest-value

MOVE	WHAT IT DOES
	cases are never averaged against the cheapest.
Grade intake on arrival	Score each inquiry the moment it lands, feed that quality signal back to the platforms, and point attorney time at the prospects who will actually retain.
Run compliant on both platforms	Google captures high-intent search; Meta builds awareness inside the special ad category. Neither move risks the account.

The measure of the whole system is one number: cost per signed case, watched against the firm's own baseline, read separately for each case type.

The underlying data is the DR Signed-Case Dataset: 1,391 signed cases across 2023 to 2025, verified against the firm's CRM. Quarterly readings from it are published in The Cost Per Signed Case Index.

The evidence: *a three-year engagement.*

The clearest test of the framework we can publish is a single multi-year engagement with a United States immigration firm running EB-5, NIW, and marriage green card, built exactly this way. It is one firm, stated plainly as one firm, not an industry survey.

VERIFIED CASE STUDY · ASHOORI LAW

Cost per signed case fell while spend scaled, over a three-year engagement.

55% 8.0x 8.6x 6.39x

Lower cost per signed case over three years	More signed cases per year	Marketing revenue growth	Blended return across Google and Meta

Ashoori Law (ashoorilaw.com), three-year engagement, paid-sourced signed cases attributed in the firm's CRM. **Growth rates unaltered; absolute figures withheld at the client's request.** The point is the direction: measuring signed cases let spend scale while the cost of each signed case came down.

The number that moved is the one the framework targets. Spend went up, and the cost of a signed case still fell, because the account was optimized toward retainers rather than inquiries.

How the number *actually moved.*

The result was not one clever campaign. It was a sequence of unglamorous fixes applied in order over the engagement, each tied to one of the three structural problems.

01 **Tracking rebuilt to count signed cases**

Click identifiers were added to the deal record so closed retainers could be attributed to the ads that produced them, a broken conversion path was found and fixed, and a qualified-lead signal was piped from the CRM back to the ad platforms for optimization.

02 **Case types split into their own tracks**

EB-5, NIW, EB-1A, E-2, and marriage green card were run as separate service lines, each with its own budget and creative, and spend was moved toward the case types in demand rather than pooled into one average.

03 **Creative driven by what signs**

Creator-led video, refreshed weekly and made per case type, became the most effective lever for scaling the newer service lines, all produced inside the special ad category's constraints without the account being flagged.

04 **Landing pages and intake tightened**

Dedicated per-service landing pages replaced a generic one, high-visibility social proof was placed above the fold next to the call to action, and intake began grading inquiries on arrival so attorney time went to genuine prospects.

Across the engagement the two platforms settled into distinct roles: Google as the high-intent volume driver, Meta as the efficient awareness layer. The cost of a signed case fell on both.

Where this *does not apply.*

An honest framework states its limits. Cost per signed case is the right governing metric for immigration firms, but it is not a cure-all, and the evidence here has boundaries worth naming.

THE LIMITS

The evidence is one firm. These are the results of a single multi-year engagement, not a survey of the industry, and they are presented as such. **Cost per lead still has a use** as an early diagnostic on a brand-new campaign, before enough signed cases exist to read. And **the metric does not decide the outcome by itself**: fit, capital, credibility, and the firm's own intake and closing still determine who signs. Marketing controls the quality and cost of the prospects reaching the door, not what happens after.

What the framework does claim is narrow and defensible: when an immigration firm optimizes toward signed retainers instead of inquiries, tracks the close cycle, separates case types, and stays compliant, its marketing spend follows real cases, and the cost of each one becomes something it can see and lower.

What a firm needs *to apply this.*

The framework is not exotic, but it requires four things most firms do not have wired together on day one.

A CRM that records the signed retainer as an event, not just the inquiry. An attribution setup that connects that event back to the ad, with a window long enough for the close. Campaigns structured one per case type rather than pooled. And an intake process willing to grade inquiries on arrival and feed that signal back. With those in place, cost per signed case stops being a number nobody can see and becomes the scoreboard the whole program is judged on. Most firms have the CRM and the spend already; what is missing is the wiring between them.

Cite this *paper.*

Immigration law firm marketing should be measured by cost per signed case, read by case type, tracked across the real close cycle, and run inside the Legal Services special ad category. Cost per lead, the industry default, is structurally misleading for this practice area.

Suggested citation: Digital Rocket, *Cost Per Signed Case: Why Lead-Form Tracking Fails Immigration Law Firms* (2026). digitalrocketads.com/research/. Based on a three-year immigration marketing engagement; growth rates verified, absolute figures withheld at the client's request.

Related: Cost per signed case, defined · Why case types must be separated · The Meta special ad category · CaseFlow

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The white paper, answered straight.

What is the main argument of this white paper?

Immigration law firms should measure marketing by **cost per signed case, not cost per lead.** The close cycle, the difference in value between case types, and Meta's special ad category all break cost per lead as a measure of success.

Why does cost per lead fail immigration firms?

What should immigration firms measure instead?

Is this based on real data?

What were the results?

Does cost per signed case guarantee more clients?

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