

# Website Focus Group Report

3 diverse profiles exploring real needs, questions, and reactions when visiting <https://trysmallclaims.com>

Name	Age	Dispute Type	Amount
Maria Santos	28	Security Deposit	\$925
Derek Thompson	45	Unpaid Invoice	\$2,847
Patricia Kim-Williams	52	Contractor Work	\$7,500

## Persona 1: Maria Santos, 28

Security Deposit -- Phoenix, AZ

### Personal Description

Maria works two part-time jobs to support her 6-year-old daughter and sends money to her mother in El Salvador monthly. She's very careful with her finances and keeps detailed records of all her expenses in a small notebook. She primarily uses her smartphone for everything online and gets frustrated when websites are confusing or have too many steps. Maria is incredibly resourceful and determined, but legal terminology intimidates her and she worries about making mistakes that could cost her money.

### Situation

Maria rented a one-bedroom apartment from landlord Robert Chen for \$950/month and paid a \$1,200 security deposit in January 2024. When she moved out in August after finding a cheaper place, Chen only returned \$275, claiming \$925 in damages including \$400 for 'excessive cleaning,' \$350 for carpet replacement, and \$175 for wall touch-ups. Maria had thoroughly cleaned the apartment and taken photos, and the carpet was already worn when she moved in. She tried calling Chen multiple times but he stopped answering her calls after telling her the deductions were 'standard wear and tear costs.'

### Key Questions

- What if Mr. Chen doesn't speak English well in court - will that help or hurt my case?

- I have photos on my phone from move-in day - is that enough proof or do I need something official?
- Can the landlord charge me for cleaning if I spent a whole weekend scrubbing everything?
- What happens if I file this case and then can't afford to pay more fees later?
- Do I have to take time off work to go to court and will I lose pay?
- What if the judge doesn't believe me because I'm not good at explaining things in English?
- Can Mr. Chen try to charge me for more things after I file the case?
- Is there a payment plan if I can't pay the \$299 all at once right now?

### **What They Need**

Maria needs simple, step-by-step explanations in plain English with visual examples of what documents look like. She needs reassurance about costs upfront and wants to understand exactly what she's committing to before spending money she can't afford to lose. Phone support would be ideal since typing long explanations on her phone is difficult.

### **Visit Experience**

When I first got to this website, I felt overwhelmed by all the information but also hopeful when I saw they help with small claims cases. The page looked professional with lots of good reviews, which made me feel like maybe this could actually help me get my deposit back from Mr. Chen. I tried clicking on a button to learn what's included in the \$299 fee, but it didn't work properly - that was frustrating because I'm already stressed about money and when websites don't work on my phone, it makes me worry the company isn't reliable. When I clicked on the pricing link, it took me to a section that explained the \$299 covers all the paperwork and filing, plus there would be extra court fees of \$50-\$100. What really gave me hope was seeing the success stories, especially Maria Santos (same name as me!) who won her security deposit case and got back \$2,800. That made me think maybe I could win too. The website says they handle everything and prepare you for court, which sounds good because I'm nervous about speaking in court. I decided to fill out their free case evaluation form because I need to know if they can answer my specific questions and maybe work out a payment plan since \$299 is a lot of money for me right now.

### **Questions Answered by the Site**

The website answered some basic questions about the process and costs, but didn't address most of my specific concerns about my situation. I found out that the service costs \$299 plus court fees, they prepare all documents, and the process takes about 30-70 days total. The success story about another security deposit case gave me some confidence. However, the site didn't answer any of my detailed questions about language barriers in court, what types of evidence I need, whether landlords can charge for cleaning after I cleaned thoroughly, payment plans, taking time off work, or what happens if I can't afford additional fees. I was hoping for more specific guidance about tenant rights and court procedures, but the website was more focused on selling their service than providing detailed legal information.

## Reaction

I felt both hopeful and frustrated while browsing this site. The success story with the same name as me made me feel like maybe I could actually win my case, and the professional look with good reviews made me trust them more than I expected. But I was frustrated that the website didn't answer any of my specific questions about my situation - it felt more like a sales pitch than actual help. When the button didn't work on my phone, it made me worry about whether they're really as professional as they claim to be. The \$299 fee is scary for me financially, but seeing that one person got back \$2,800 makes me think it might be worth the risk.

## Decision & Next Steps

I'm going to fill out their free case evaluation form to see if they can answer my specific questions and maybe offer a payment plan. If they can't help with payments or don't give me good answers about my concerns, I'll probably ask my coworker Sofia for advice since she's been through something similar. I might also try calling the courthouse directly to ask about filing on my own, even though it seems complicated. I don't want to give up on getting my deposit back, but I need to make sure I can afford whatever option I choose.

## Interaction Log

#	Action	Target	Result
1	button	What's included in the \$299 fee?	button clicked, no visible change
2	link	Pricing	scrolled to section: pricing

#	Action	Target	Result
3	form	Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, textarea (in Free Case Evaluation)	decided to fill out Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, textarea (in Free Case Evaluation) (visit ended)

## Questions Resolved

Question	?	How
What if Mr. Chen doesn't speak English well in court - will that help or hurt my case?	<b>No</b>	The website didn't address language barriers in court at all. I couldn't find any information about how communication issues might affect my case or what accommodations might be available.
I have photos on my phone from move-in day - is that enough proof or do I need something official?	<b>No</b>	The site mentioned they help with 'evidence organization' but didn't specify what types of evidence are acceptable or whether phone photos would be sufficient proof for my case.
Can the landlord charge me for cleaning if I spent a whole weekend scrubbing everything?	<b>No</b>	There was no information about tenant rights or what landlords can legally charge for. The success story mentioned someone winning a security deposit case but didn't give details about cleaning charges.
What happens if I file this case and then can't afford to pay more fees later?	<b>No</b>	While they mentioned court fees of \$50-\$100 and said 'no hidden fees,' they didn't explain what happens if you can't afford these additional costs after signing up.
Do I have to take time off work to go to court and will I lose pay?	<b>No</b>	The timeline showed court happens 30-70 days after filing, but there was no information about work accommodations or whether courts have evening/ weekend hours.
What if the judge doesn't believe me because I'm not good at explaining things in English?	<b>No</b>	They mentioned 'court coaching' and preparation, but didn't specifically address language confidence issues or what support they provide for non-native English speakers in court.
Can Mr. Chen try to charge me for more things after I file the case?	<b>No</b>	The website didn't explain whether landlords can file counter-claims or add additional charges once a case is filed. This legal procedural question wasn't addressed.
Is there a payment plan if I can't pay the \$299 all at once right now?	<b>No</b>	The pricing section only showed the flat \$299 fee but didn't mention any payment plan options or financial assistance programs for people who can't pay upfront.

# Persona 2: Derek Thompson, 45

Unpaid Invoice -- Toledo, OH

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## Personal Description

Derek owns Thompson's Auto Repair, a small garage he inherited from his father, and employs three mechanics. He's practical and straightforward, preferring phone calls over emails and still keeping customer records in physical files alongside a basic computer system his nephew set up. Derek takes pride in honest work and gets genuinely angry when people try to take advantage of him. He's not comfortable with legal processes and tends to avoid conflict, but he's reached his breaking point with a customer who won't pay.

## Situation

In September 2024, Derek performed \$2,847 worth of transmission work on a 2018 Ford F-150 for customer Jennifer Walsh, including parts and 18 hours of labor. Walsh approved the estimate in writing and picked up her truck, saying she'd pay within a week. It's now December and despite multiple calls, texts, and a certified letter, Walsh hasn't paid a dime. She initially claimed the truck was 'making noises' but Derek inspected it again and found no issues. Walsh has been avoiding his calls and her truck is clearly being driven daily as Derek sees it around town.

## Key Questions

- Can Jennifer claim the work was bad even though she drove the truck for three months?
- I have her signature on the work order - is that enough to prove she agreed to pay?
- What if she says she never got my bill, even though I have the certified mail receipt?
- Can I put a lien on her truck or is it too late since she already took it?
- Will the judge understand that transmission work always involves some risk?
- What happens if Jennifer files bankruptcy before I can collect the money?
- Should I include the late fees I mentioned in my original invoice?
- Can she drag this out for months and cost me more money in the process?

## What They Need

Derek needs straightforward, business-focused guidance that acknowledges his time constraints and validates his frustration. He wants to understand the process quickly without getting bogged down in legal jargon, and he needs confidence that his documentation will hold up in court. Clear timelines and expectations about what comes next are crucial.

## **Visit Experience**

When I first landed on the trysmallclaims website, I was honestly skeptical - I've been burned by online services before. But seeing those customer reviews and the 18,000+ cases filed gave me some confidence. The comparison chart showing I'd save \$1,500+ compared to hiring a lawyer caught my attention since I'm already out nearly three grand on Jennifer's unpaid bill. I tried clicking on what types of cases they handle but the button didn't work, which was frustrating - made me wonder if their whole operation was amateur hour. But then I found the Business Solutions section and everything clicked. Seeing 'Auto Repair' specifically listed with examples like 'customers who pick up vehicles and never pay' - that's Jennifer Walsh in a nutshell! The page mentioned work orders and approvals creating strong evidence, and my \$2,847 case fits right in their typical range. By the time I got to their auto repair page talking about customers disputing charges after approving repairs, I felt like they really understood my situation. The 100% refund guarantee if they don't file made me feel like I had nothing to lose, so I decided to fill out their evaluation form.

## **Questions Answered by the Site**

The website gave me confidence about some aspects of my case but left most of my specific legal questions unanswered. They reassured me that work orders and customer approvals create strong evidence, which addresses my concerns about having Jennifer's signature. The auto repair section mentioned that judges understand these cases well and that I can recover the full amount including parts and labor. However, I couldn't find specific answers about time limits for liens, what happens if she claims the work was defective after driving for months, bankruptcy scenarios, late fees, or how long the process takes. The site focused more on selling their service than providing detailed legal information about auto repair disputes.

## **Reaction**

I went from skeptical to cautiously optimistic during my visit. The professional look and customer reviews helped build trust, and finding the specific auto repair section made me feel like they really understand my industry's problems. I was frustrated when that button didn't work, but the overall experience felt legitimate.

The flat fee pricing and no percentage of winnings policy impressed me - I've heard horror stories about lawyers taking huge chunks. The 100% refund guarantee sealed the deal for me.

## Decision & Next Steps

I'm going to fill out their evaluation form and see what they say about my specific case with Jennifer Walsh. For \$299 compared to \$2,000+ for a lawyer, it seems worth the risk, especially with their refund guarantee. If they can't help or their evaluation doesn't look promising, I'll probably try writing one more demand letter myself before giving up. I definitely don't want to tackle small claims court paperwork on my own - I'm better with wrenches than legal documents.

## Interaction Log

#	Action	Target	Result
1	link	Get Case Evaluation	scrolled to section: schedule-demo
2	button	What types of cases do you handle?	button clicked, no visible change
3	menu_toggle	Case Types	opened menu toggle
4	link	Business Solutions	navigated to Small Claims for Businesses / Industry-Specific Solutions / trysmallclaims
5	link	Auto Repair Small claims solutions for auto repair shops, mechanics, and automot	navigated to Small Claims for Auto Repair Shops / Collect Unpaid Bills / trysmallclaims
6	form	Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, textarea (in Free Case Evaluation)	decided to fill out Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, textarea (in Free Case Evaluation) (visit ended)

## Questions Resolved

Question	?	How
Can Jennifer claim the work was bad even though she drove the truck for three months?	<b>No</b>	The site mentioned customers disputing charges after approving repairs but didn't explain how driving the vehicle for months affects warranty dispute claims legally.

Question	?	How
I have her signature on the work order - is that enough to prove she agreed to pay?	Yes	The auto repair page specifically stated that work orders and customer approvals create strong evidence for document-based cases, which gave me confidence about my signed work order.
What if she says she never got my bill, even though I have the certified mail receipt?	No	The site didn't address billing disputes or how certified mail receipts are handled as evidence, focusing instead on work order documentation.
Can I put a lien on her truck or is it too late since she already took it?	No	There was no information about mechanic's liens, time limits for filing them, or what happens when vehicles are already released to customers.
Will the judge understand that transmission work always involves some risk?	Yes	The site stated that auto repair cases are straightforward cases that judges understand well, which suggests they're familiar with the complexities of mechanical work.
What happens if Jennifer files bankruptcy before I can collect the money?	No	The website didn't mention bankruptcy scenarios or what protections exist for creditors during collection efforts.
Should I include the late fees I mentioned in my original invoice?	Yes	The auto repair section mentioned recovering parts, labor, and storage fees, suggesting additional charges can be included in claims.
Can she drag this out for months and cost me more money in the process?	No	While they mentioned a 48-hour timeline for document preparation, there was no information about how long defendants can delay proceedings or additional costs.

## Persona 3: Patricia Kim-Williams, 52

Contractor Work -- Portland, OR

### Personal Description

Patricia is detail-oriented and research-driven, often spending hours reading reviews before making any purchase decision. She manages her elderly father's finances and healthcare decisions while raising two teenagers and maintaining her demanding career. She's comfortable with technology and prefers to handle

things online, but she's never dealt with legal issues beyond basic estate planning. Patricia values expertise and wants to understand all her options before committing to any course of action.

## **Situation**

Patricia hired Emerald City Home Improvements through Angie's List in October 2024 to remodel her kitchen for \$18,500. Contractor Mike Rodriguez took a \$7,500 deposit and started work but disappeared after two weeks, leaving her kitchen unusable with exposed electrical wires, no functioning sink, and cabinets half-installed. Rodriguez won't return calls and his business phone is disconnected. Patricia has been eating takeout for six weeks, and getting quotes to finish the work properly will cost an additional \$12,000-15,000 because Rodriguez damaged existing plumbing and electrical systems.

## **Key Questions**

- Since the damage Rodriguez caused exceeds small claims limits, should I file in regular court instead?
- Can I include consequential damages like my takeout costs and temporary kitchen rental expenses?
- What if Rodriguez dissolved his LLC after abandoning my project - can I still collect?
- Should I file against both Rodriguez personally and his business entity to maximize recovery?
- Can I use this service if I'm also filing complaints with the state contractor licensing board?
- What's the statute of limitations in Oregon and does it start from when he abandoned the job?
- If I win but can't locate Rodriguez to collect, what asset recovery options do I have?
- Should I wait until I get final estimates for completion costs before filing?

## **What They Need**

Patricia needs comprehensive, sophisticated information that treats her as an intelligent consumer capable of understanding legal nuances. She wants to compare this service against hiring an attorney and needs detailed explanations of strategic considerations. She values expert analysis and wants access to detailed resources and precedent cases.

## **Visit Experience**

I landed on [trysmallclaims.com](https://trysmallclaims.com) feeling cautiously hopeful - the homepage immediately caught my attention with its impressive reviews (4.9 stars on both Trustpilot and Google) and the promise to handle all the paperwork for just \$299. The comparison chart showing they could save me \$1,500+ versus hiring a lawyer was compelling, especially since I'm already facing thousands in repair costs from Rodriguez's botched job. I appreciated their transparency about keeping 100% of winnings and having no hidden fees - too many services try to take a cut of your recovery. However, as I read through their service offerings, I started worrying whether my case might be too complex for their model, given that my damages likely exceed small claims limits and involve a potentially dissolved LLC. The case evaluation page reassured me somewhat with promises of 'jurisdiction guidance' and 'strategic recommendations,' suggesting they might help me understand if small claims court is even the right path. When I reached the evaluation form, I felt a mix of relief and anxiety - finally, I could get expert guidance on my messy situation, but I was also nervous about sharing the details of Rodriguez's abandonment and the financial mess he left me in.

### **Questions Answered by the Site**

The site provided some general information but didn't answer most of my specific legal questions. I found broad guidance about their services including 'judgment collection' assistance and mentions of wage garnishment and liens, which partially addresses asset recovery concerns. The comparison charts showed they handle document preparation and defendant service, suggesting they might know how to serve dissolved entities, but no specific information was provided. The site emphasized they work within small claims court limits but didn't clearly explain what happens when damages exceed those limits - a critical gap for my situation. Most frustratingly, I found no state-specific information about Oregon's statute of limitations, what types of damages are recoverable, or how to handle cases involving dissolved business entities. The promise of 'jurisdiction guidance' in their case evaluation suggests they might answer these questions individually, but the public-facing content left me with more uncertainty than clarity about my specific legal situation.

### **Reaction**

I felt cautiously optimistic about their service - the strong reviews and transparent pricing gave me confidence they're legitimate, and the flat-fee structure is much more appealing than paying a lawyer by the hour when I'm already financially stressed from Rodriguez's mess. However, I was frustrated by the lack of specific legal information on their website, especially given my complex situation involving a potentially dissolved LLC and damages that might exceed small claims

limits. The promise of free case evaluation felt like a lifeline since I desperately need expert guidance, but I'm also worried they might just tell me my case is too complicated for their service. The professional presentation and money-back guarantee made me feel more trusting than I expected.

## Decision & Next Steps

I'm going to submit the case evaluation form because I need expert guidance on my complex situation, and their free assessment could save me from making costly mistakes. Even if they determine my case exceeds small claims limits, they might provide valuable strategic advice or refer me to appropriate resources. If their evaluation suggests small claims isn't the right path, I'll likely need to consult with a traditional attorney despite the higher cost, but at least I'll have a clearer understanding of my options first.

## Interaction Log

#	Action	Target	Result
1	link	Case Evaluation	navigated to Free Case Evaluation / Small Claims Court Assessment / trysmallclaims
2	form	Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, textarea (in Free Case Evaluation)	decided to fill out Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, textarea (in Free Case Evaluation) (visit ended)

## Questions Resolved

Question	?	How
Since the damage Rodriguez caused exceeds small claims limits, should I file in regular court instead?	<b>No</b>	The site mentions they work within small claims court limits but provides no guidance on what to do when damages exceed those limits or how to decide between small claims and regular court.
Can I include consequential damages like my takeout costs and temporary kitchen rental expenses?	<b>No</b>	No specific information about what types of damages are recoverable in small claims court, though they mention helping with case strategy during evaluation.
What if Rodriguez dissolved his LLC after abandoning my project - can I still collect?	<b>No</b>	While they mention judgment collection assistance and finding defendants for service, there's no specific information about pursuing dissolved business entities.

Question	?	How
Should I file against both Rodriguez personally and his business entity to maximize recovery?	No	No guidance provided on naming multiple defendants or strategic decisions about who to sue, though this might be covered in their case evaluation.
Can I use this service if I'm also filing complaints with the state contractor licensing board?	No	No information about coordinating with regulatory complaints or whether their service conflicts with other legal actions.
What's the statute of limitations in Oregon and does it start from when he abandoned the job?	No	Despite mentioning 'legal research' and state-specific guidance, no specific statute of limitations information was provided for Oregon or any state.
If I win but can't locate Rodriguez to collect, what asset recovery options do I have?	Yes	They specifically mention judgment collection services including wage garnishment and liens, suggesting they help with post-judgment asset recovery even when defendants are hard to locate.
Should I wait until I get final estimates for completion costs before filing?	No	No guidance on timing of filing relative to damage assessment, though their case evaluation might address this strategic question.

## Findings and Recommendations

**Behavioral conversion:** 3 of 3 personas (100.0%) took a concrete engagement action (called, texted, or submitted a form).

**Stated intent:** 3 of 3 personas (100.0%) said they would use or learn more about the service.

On average, personas were able to answer **16.7%** of their questions using the website.

**Exploration depth:** Personas used an average of 3.7 of 12 available turns. Current max\_turns setting appears sufficient.

### Strengths

- Strong credibility indicators - all personas mentioned being reassured by professional appearance, high review scores (4.9 stars), and large case volume (18,000+ cases)

- Clear value proposition - comparison chart effectively communicated \$1,500+ savings versus hiring lawyers, which resonated across all comfort levels
- Transparent pricing - \$299 fee structure was clearly communicated and helped users understand costs upfront
- Broad appeal - website successfully converted users across different tech comfort levels and case types (security deposits, unpaid services, contractor fraud)
- Trust-building elements - reviews, testimonials, and case statistics helped overcome initial skepticism even for cautious users

### Weaknesses

- Critical functionality failures - multiple broken buttons/links mentioned by users trying to access key information about services and case types
- Mobile optimization issues - Maria specifically noted problems with website functionality on her phone, creating barriers for less tech-savvy users
- Incomplete user journeys - users wanted more detailed information about what's included in services but couldn't access it due to technical issues
- Information architecture problems - users struggled to find specific details about case types and service inclusions despite being interested
- Technical reliability concerns - broken functionality made users question overall service quality and professionalism

### Rating Averages

Category	Average
Ease Of Use	4.0/5
Informativeness	2.7/5
Overall Impression	3.7/5
Ease Of Understanding	3.7/5

### Most Used Interactions

Interaction	Type	Times Used
Submit — First name, Last name, Email, Phone, text	form	3
Business Solutions	link	1
Pricing	link	1

Interaction	Type	Times Used
Get Case Evaluation	link	1
Case Evaluation	link	1
Case Types	menu_toggle	1
What types of cases do you handle?	button	1
What's included in the \$299 fee?	button	1
Auto Repair Small claims solutions for auto repair	link	1

### Never discovered by any persona:

- Services (menu\_toggle)
- About (menu\_toggle)
- Resources (menu\_toggle)
- What if I lose my case? (button)
- Do I need a lawyer? (button)
- How long does the process take? (button)
- Do you take a percentage of my winnings? (button)
- Submit (in Free Case Evaluation) (button)
- Can I sue a large corporation in small claims court? (button)
- What about consumer protection laws? (button)
- Should I try to resolve it with the business first? (button)
- What if the business is in another state? (button)
- Can I sue for more than just a refund? (button)
- What do I need to prove for breach of contract? (button)
- Can I sue over a verbal agreement? (button)