

# The Value of Legal Rankings

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Legal marketers frequently discuss the value of legal rankings, and rightfully so. Not all rankings are equal in their credibility and prestige. And beyond that, many legal marketers believe completing legal submissions is forced upon them by attorneys who do not understand the true value of the ranking. What is more daunting to a legal marketer than legal rankings?

There is nothing more overwhelming and often undervalued as planning for legal rankings. However, many challenges will arise to thwart your success, not the least of which is the sheer number of rankings to consider. And beyond that, the value of each ranking varies from firm to firm. You must consider many factors when deciding whether to devote time and resources to completing a submission.

## The Value of Legal Rankings

In 2016, the Legal Marketing Association (LMA) and Law Firm Media Professionals (LFMP) published the results of their research on the [“ROI of Law Firm Submissions.”](#) While I am sure many marketers were looking for clear-cut ROI for legal rankings, it is just not that easy. The study concluded that firms must establish their own unique criteria to determine the value of each ranking.

Specifically, the study concludes a ranking’s value can be evaluated based on:

- Effectiveness of stated goal
- Cost to prepare submission
- Effectiveness of publication

When determining whether to craft a rankings submission, firms should understand what their business development goals are and how the submission fits into that goal. They also should evaluate the cost to the firm (including attorney’s time). And finally, firms should ask themselves: Does this publication resonate with clients?

## Start with Business Development Goals

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Jaffe currently tracks more than 1,200 rankings on an annual basis. So where to begin? Your best starting point is with the firm's business development goals for the year. Is the firm focused on growing certain practice areas? Are you looking to increase the headcount in a particular practice area? These are a few of the questions to consider when developing a legal rankings plan. By analyzing these goals and comparing them to the available rankings, you will be able to zero in on what makes sense for your law firm.

## **Focus on the Good**

Internal business goals are as important as external ones. Did one practice group or attorney have an amazing year? Did the firm do some spectacular pro bono work, or develop and implement a diversity program? Then highlight it! With more than 1,200 legal rankings available, you can find the right opportunities to publicize these successes.

Never underestimate the positive impact of being nominated. Even if the firm doesn't win, the recognition a nomination provides is a powerful reinforcement. Being nominated is a powerful stamp of approval, creating positive morale. It's a great motivator.

## **Get Buy-In**

Once you have researched and determined the rankings that are right for your firm, it is time to get buy-in. This can be incredibly challenging and is a step that is often overlooked. You will need to defend the rankings you have selected and provide information to support the value. Understanding the submission process, methodology and time involved in crafting the submission will help with backing up your decisions. By taking the time to get the support of key decision-makers, it is much easier to say no to rankings that are brought to your attention throughout the year that do not fit the plan you designed.

## **Have a Contingency Plan**

Even if you have your legal rankings strategy laid out for the year, there will always be surprises. Make a plan now to address rankings that are brought to your attention throughout the year. Resist the urge to say yes without first researching an award. Now is the time to map out what criteria you will use to evaluate if ranking is of value. There are several factors that raise a red flag and warrant further review. The top three criteria to watch for are:

- Pay to play
- No nomination forms
- Everyone Wins

## **Success Can Be Yours**

Like all worthwhile goals, success in developing a rankings strategy may not be easy, but it is definitely worth the effort. Having a plan and sticking to it are key. At the end of the year, you will be able to look back and see how you tamed the legal rankings beast.

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