



KIDD AITKEN

LEGAL MARKETING

Are Legal Directories Worth the Investment?

All your questions answered about the inner workings of legal directory submissions and whether to embark on your own rankings journey.

Pursuing a ranking in a legal directory can be a time-consuming and resource-intensive process. It involves writing a lawyer bio. Compiling work highlights. Composing narrative pitches. Creating lists of reliable, responsive client and peer referees.

Kidd Aitken knows how exhausting firms can find this process and we understand why. Especially when the chances of improved or new rankings are hard to achieve – particularly for firms who have never submitted before.

The cost versus benefit question might lead to hesitation about embarking on your own legal directory submissions journey. Or lead to other questions about whether scaling-up and aiming for higher rankings for Partners and practice areas is worth the investment.

But the outcomes of being ranked in a prestigious legal directory are powerful for law firms and your Partners. An increased chance of work awarded. An enhanced reputation in the legal market. A high calibre of talent attraction and retention.

Throughout our experience as legal directory and marketing experts, one question has consistently been asked by prospective clients and inquisitive legal professionals - “Are legal directories worth the investment?”.

We have created this guide, following on from our webinar of the same name in 2021, to help law firms evaluate whether legal directory submissions offer benefits. To your Partners, practice areas and the firm as a whole.

During the webinar, co-founders and former Chambers & Partners editors, Daniel Kidd and Jacob Aitken, were joined by Gary Manning, a legal marketing and business development consultant. Together they discussed the efforts required to compile a legal directory submission to reach the desired outcome: a coveted ranking in a prestigious legal directory.

In this guide, we cover some of our most frequently asked questions from clients and industry colleagues alike within three categories:

- **The intricacies of legal directory submissions**
- **The benefits of being ranked in a directory**
- **Legal directory logistics**

43% of webinar attendees reported that their team spent 10-30% of their time and resources on legal directories. A further 43% reported 30-50%.



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The Intricacies of Legal Directory Submissions

Q: “Legal directory submissions require time and attention from both Partners and in-house legal marketers. Ultimately, are they worth the investment?”

A: It will be no shock to read that the answer is “Yes, it is worth it”. However, your law firm should only embark on the process if you put steps in place to maximise the return:

I. Ensure your submissions are strong

Each element of the submission must reflect the level of effort deployed in the process. Your lawyer bios, narrative pitch, work highlights and client feedback all need to be strong.

II. Solid project management and stress-free processes

Streamlined, seamless procedures must be in place to avoid any project difficulties or barriers, such as case tracking and continual information gathering.

III. Use legal directory rankings in a wider marketing strategy

Too often we encounter firms who receive excellent legal directory rankings and then fail to publicise them. This is a key consideration in whether a law firm will find value in the submissions process: if they include any ranking outcomes in a wider legal marketing and communications strategy. Legal directories are one of the only third-party evaluations of a firm or individual Partner’s capabilities and as such, should be publicised widely and included across multiple marketing collateral and communications.

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Q: “Are firms able to submit less frequently, i.e., not every year?”

A: If a practice area is experiencing a quiet period, it is understandable that a firm may be tempted not to submit to a legal directory for a single research cycle. Believing that their submission and all included information would not be reflective of the normal quality and quantity of work.

However, current methodologies and research processes in the major directories are built around consistent submissions and cumulative research over a number of years. For this reason, we strongly recommend that firms continue to submit, especially for those who are relatively new in the market. Also, your competitors will continue to submit, increasing their chances of a new or improved ranking, which could be detrimental to your firm.

There are ways of framing quieter periods in a submission felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

Theoretically, a market-leading Partner or firm could maintain rankings if they have years of previous submissions, even if they skip one research cycle. Indeed, if an

individual is a high-ranking practitioner in their field, it may even be a strategic decision to not submit as frequently, as this provides opportunities for the firm’s younger, up-and-coming lawyers and Partners to be ranked.

Q: “How can I increase Partner buy-in for the legal directory submissions process?”

A: Partner buy-in is essential to compiling effective and persuasive submissions. For some firms whose Partners do not recognise the benefits of legal directory rankings, it can be tricky to begin the journey without their full involvement and support. In this case, it is important to emphasise the positive outcomes of the process and the advantages that a high ranking can bring.

For firms who are submitting for the first time, it is worth focussing solely on one or two directories that will make the most impact. Once you have been successful for one guide, you can evaluate the value of expanding the submissions programme for the firm.

Q: “For smaller and younger firms, is it worth submitting when the same firms consistently appear in directory ranking tables?”

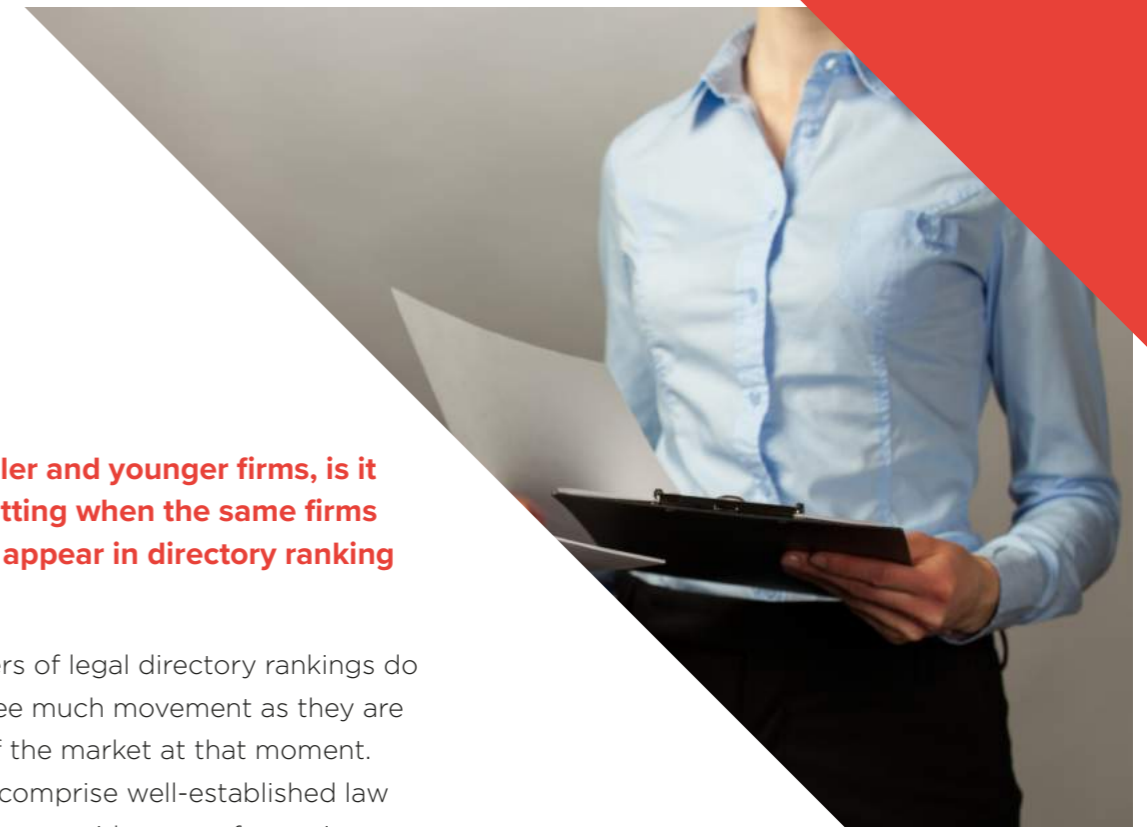
A: The top tiers of legal directory rankings do not tend to see much movement as they are a snapshot of the market at that moment. Equally, they comprise well-established law firms and Partners with years of experience – and submissions – behind them.

However, that does not mean that newer and younger firms should be discouraged from taking part in the process. Even if a practice area or Partner has less experience, we strongly recommend submitting. Ranking efforts can take up to three research cycles to come to fruition and so submitting earlier takes advantage of the cumulative research process while a firm continues to build its reputation.

Firms should aim to include these elements when beginning their legal directory submissions journey:

- A dedicated strategy and resource allocation
- Planning for at least three years of legal directory submissions
- A list of responsive and trusted client and peer referees
- A selection of citable casework
- Buy-in from everyone in the firm, practice area and other necessary stakeholders

Directories are keen to represent the reality of the legal market so if a firm provides their information correctly, supported by solid client work and great referees, rankings will follow.



¹<https://www.kiddaitken.com/covid-19-pandemic-affect-legal-directory-submissions/>



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The Benefits of Legal Directory Rankings

Q: “Do legal directory rankings really help attract new clients?”

A: A ranking in a legal directory does not guarantee new clients. However, legal directory rankings will contribute to the decision-making process, when selecting a firm to award work to. It is often the case with larger, international organisations that they consult the most established legal directories, such as Chambers and The Legal 500, in order to narrow down their selection of prospective law firms to choose from. In this case, rankings are beneficial, increasing a firm's chances of shortlist inclusion.

It is not only potential clients who consult the directories, but other law firms. Indeed, legal professionals are actually the largest consumers of directories. Partners and peers use the guides to source highly ranked counsel in a certain practice area to assist on cases. In this regard, having a legal directory ranking is extremely useful for referrals for highly ranked Partners in a particular jurisdiction or practice area.

Q: “How do pay-to-play directories integrate into a wider legal directory submission strategy?”

A: Pay-to-play directories offer different opportunities to independent legal directories. They can be thought of as paid PR opportunities rather than third-party objective analysis of a firm and its practice areas or Partners. In this instance, working with widely distributed pay-to-play directories or those with a large readership could be beneficial as an advertising opportunity but they should not be considered as serious alternatives to Chambers or The Legal 500.

Q: “Legal directories require an investment of time. Could those resources be better deployed in other marketing activities?”

A: With any marketing activity, there is always a cost-benefit question involved. The same can be said for legal directory submissions. As we have already discussed, compiling legal directory submissions requires additional resource from a firm but considerable value can be derived from a ranking.

To maximise your investment, collect the data that would be included in submissions throughout the year and integrate it into other marketing activities such as case studies, blogs, and press releases.



Legal Directory Logistics 3

Q: “What other benefits are there to being ranked, apart from the rankings themselves?”

A: There is a wealth of additional benefits to be derived from legal directory rankings. Recruitment and talent retention for example.

Frequently, law students and trainees consult directories to research firms, their market presence and work culture, to ascertain if your firm would be a good job fit for them. Being well-ranked often helps attract a corresponding level of talent.

Another benefit is diversity and inclusion. A growing topic in legal directories and the wider legal sector, rankings help firms accurately represent the talent of their diverse workforces to the wider legal industry. While boosting a firm’s reputation for being progressive and inclusive to both prospective employees and clients.

For a full look at gender diversity in legal directories, our white paper² provides a full view of the current landscape and how firms can continue to facilitate progress.

² <https://www.kiddaitken.com/white-paper-gender-diversity-in-legal-directories/>

Q: “Why do new rankings results take so long to come to fruition?”

A: The research cycles behind legal directory rankings take a long time to complete. Editors and researchers review thousands of submissions, speaking to hundreds of referees (both client and peer) and conduct analysis to show how the rankings reflect the current legal market. And that is just for directory.

Additionally, some directories use a cumulative research process rather than create new rankings year-on-year. Chambers is one such directory. This means that the information that influences a final ranking is predicated on previous years’ submissions, as well as the current year.

This ensures a comprehensive outlook of a firm or Partner’s body of work and provides a better overall representation than a single research cycle.



As such, there is value in the rankings, and it is worth investing time in submissions to ensure the best possible outcome.

Firms do not need to spend a disproportionate amount of time on their legal directory submissions compared to other legal marketing activities. Breaking internal procedures down into smaller, more manageable pieces creates a more seamless procedure and increases stakeholder buy-in.

Q: “Do some jurisdictions value rankings higher than others?”

A: The external perceptions and reputations of legal directories differ around the world. This should be accounted for when strategising legal directory submissions.

For example, the 1989 Chambers UK guide was the first Chambers guide to be published. It is the most established guide in the Chambers repertoire and in the wider legal industry. In contrast, the Latin American guide was launched in 2008 (by Kidd Aitken’s co-founder, Jacob

Aitken). As a relatively new guide, its annual publication generates considerable interest in Latin America, as firms and Partners consolidate new and improved rankings.

Perceptions also differ between regions. The Asia-Pacific region considers The Legal 500’s rankings at least on par with those of Chambers, whereas Chambers is considered the dominant directory in the US market.

Some jurisdictions even utilise legal directory rankings to maintain impressive local reputations in response to larger, international firms expanding into new regions. This is a major theme in the Nordics, for example. Therefore, having a high ranking in a specific jurisdiction is beneficial to smaller, independent firms who look to win instructions in their own jurisdictions.

It is always worthwhile researching which directory to apply to, so that the outcome of any effort to be ranked will be beneficial to your firm.

Conclusion

Understanding how to navigate the process of legal directory rankings and their submissions is crucial to law firms and legal marketing professionals.

Particularly when it comes to the complexity of the submissions, the benefits from legal directory rankings, and the inner workings of the directories themselves.

We hope this guide has been informative and addressed the question of ‘Are Legal Directories Worth It?’. Giving insight into the complex inner workings of legal directories and the benefits that can be derived for larger

well-established law firms and Partners looking to scale up submissions, and for smaller, newly established firms seeking to build and enhance their reputation.

If you have a specific question that you would like to raise, do contact us directly for personalised advice or a free 30-minute consultation.

To watch the related webinar recording in full, “Are Legal Directories Worth It?”, is available on-demand³ and free. Kidd Aitken also has a library of additional online resources⁴ that will help law firms and legal marketing professionals navigate a number of subjects within legal directories, including our Best Practice Guide to Chambers and Partners Submissions.⁵

³<https://www.kiddaitken.com/are-legal-directories-worth-the-investment/>

⁴<https://www.kiddaitken.com/resources/>

⁵<https://www.kiddaitken.com/best-practice-guide-to-chambers-and-partners-submissions/>



About Kidd Aitken

Kidd Aitken is the world's largest legal directories and awards consultancy. We believe that appearing in the top tiers of legal directory rankings is the best form of marketing any law firm can have. Our international team comprises former editors and researchers from Chambers, Legal 500 and other major legal directories who operate in both US and UK time zones. We undertake the entire legal directory submission process, significantly easing the burden on firms

and ensuring in-house marketing teams and Partners are free to direct their time and resource to other projects. We deliver both first-time and improved rankings for firms of all sizes and sectors in all major directories. We have a wealth of other resources available online to help firms optimise and strategise for their submissions processes. Including our new Best Practice Guide to Chambers & Partners Submissions and our library of on-demand webinars.



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