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Advice from the Chambers USA Editors

RankingsForLawyers®

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Good communication goes a long way. Telling your side of the story can ease people's minds and help correct a narrative that can run rampant on social media. It's like the game of Telephone that we played as kids: What starts as a funny sentence can quickly turn into something terribly wrong.

The editors at *Chambers USA* know this all too well. What recently started as a normal Monday quickly turned into anything but — a simple misunderstanding about a comment a client made to a legal marketer turned everything on its ear. Someone posted a question in a private social media group and the next thing the editors know, they received numerous emails questioning the use of the references law firms send to them. The integrity of their research process was being questioned. Luckily, the editors were able to determine that it was a misunderstanding and clarified the issue, as you will see in the interview below.

Recently, I met with *Chambers* editors Toby Eccleshall, Jane Pasquali and Peter Whitfield in New York for a discussion about how they use referees, suggestions for completing submission forms and about their new financial partner.

Protecting our law firms' clients is rule #1. It is why they hire us. When we ask our law firms' clients to serve as references for our work, it is not taken lightly. How does *Chambers USA* use the referees firms provide? Is that list used for anything other than vetting the attorneys or firms?

As most people familiar with our rankings will know, client feedback is a key factor we consider when deciding to rank a law firm or attorney in the *Chambers* guides, and we ensure that our team of researchers treats the process of contacting referees with the sensitivity that is required. Since firms entrust us with access to their clients, it is imperative that we are always respectful of the clients' time and wishes. We have internal guidelines to limit the number of times we contact individuals during the research period. This is to ensure they (the clients) do not feel overwhelmed by requests for feedback. When the guide is published, we will contact them as a courtesy to thank them for either participating in our research or making themselves available for an interview.

The integrity of our research underpins all aspects of the procedures we have in place, so we will never disclose which referees we have spoken with or publish any identifiable quotations in our editorial. They are informed of our commitment to anonymity before any interview takes place. We use client referees to inform our research and not for sales purposes, nor are their details shared with third parties.

Referees always have the option to opt out of the research process or from receiving any future correspondence from *Chambers*. Earlier this year, we conducted an extensive review of our procedures to ensure that we are GDPR-compliant and updated our privacy policy accordingly, which can be found on the *Chambers*' website.

The submission packet that firms are asked to complete is quite long and can be daunting to complete. Is it necessary to provide a submission and referee spreadsheet to be ranked?

Our aim is to provide consumers of legal services with a comprehensive view of the market. This means that if the market is telling us a firm is good enough to be ranked, we will not ignore them because the firm hasn't submitted the nomination packet.

However, firms that provide both a submission and referee form are at an advantage over those that don't. The submission provides firms with the chance to tell us their story and help us understand what makes their practice unique. The research team spends a lot of time scrutinizing these documents to benchmark firms against their competitors. Without the information requested, we do not get the complete picture. The referee spreadsheet gives firms the chance to provide us with sources whom they feel understand their practices best and are able to talk to us about the excellent client service received — which is part of what we are trying to reflect in our rankings. Without it, [we have to] rely on receiving sufficient external feedback from our other market commentators.

The *Chambers* rankings are highly competitive, and we expect excellence from the firms and lawyers we rank. Alongside market commentary, the submissions and feedback provided by referees shape our rankings, so we would always recommend that firms submit if they want to be ranked in *Chambers*.

I saw the newly launched website. What would you like us to know about the redesign?

Since our new financial partners came on board earlier this year, our management has made expanding our digital footprint one of their main priorities. Last week, we launched the first phase of our website redesign to improve our interactive online platform, and we are excited about the new features to be introduced over the coming months. Our aim is to improve user experience and ensure that consumers of *Chambers* have the means to access the information they need. One example will be the launch of an advanced search function to allow our clients to tailor the results to fit their needs. There are many more features in the pipeline, and we will continue to invest heavily in the areas our users value most.

To learn more about legal rankings on the Jaffe website, see How to Navigate the *Chambers USA* Submission Process or What to Do After You Submit. And if you have any questions about the *Chambers USA* submissions or need help with completing your law firm's submissions, contact rankings@jaffepr.com.