

Chambers' Changes: Profiles, Submissions and Website

In March 2018, Mark Wyatt and his financial backers, Inflexion, acquired the legal rankings giant *Chambers and Partners*. Soon after the acquisition of *Chambers*, Wyatt and his team set out to understand who uses the *Chambers* rankings, how they use the rankings and what else they would like to see the business develop. Several clear themes arose: law firms would like more transparency between the research staff and the attorneys/firms; general counsel *are* using *Chambers* to validate the counsel they hire; and *Chambers* has an opportunity to deepen their data analytics and user access to its considerable information. *Chambers* understands its responsibility to firms to get rankings right and the role it plays in law firm client development and retention.

In response, *Chambers* is sending researchers into the field, opening three new offices around the world and updating their digital platforms to improve user experience. *Chambers* has made major changes to the delivery of their legal rankings and the information available to both general counsel and law firms. They have made several significant changes to their website and the backend process. The 2019 *Chambers USA* rankings will be released in April and the commercial department is busy securing profiles from law firms. Many firms are noticing a significant price increase and questioning the value of their attorney profiles, what are they getting for their investment and why there is such a significant increase. I recently sat down with Matt Phillips, Commercial Director at *Chambers*, to ask him about these concerns.

Matt confirmed that law firms are paying more for their firm and attorney profiles in 2019. However, he is quick to point out that many of these firms have only had modest increases in the prices of their profiles for years. *Chambers* feel justified in raising the cost for profiles based on the quality of their research, the robust enhancements to their platform and the guides and the value they bring to firms. Matt has spoken to many firms about the pricing to personally explain the reasons and answer questions.

Transparency of Research

Chambers employs more than 230 researchers and editors who speak more than 23 languages, but rarely did these folks leave their U.K.-based headquarters. Realizing the importance of having local access, *Chambers* is opening three new offices this year, in New York City, Hong Kong and Sao Paolo. They also plan to open more U.S. offices in the Midwest, South and West Coast. It is important to *Chambers* to have a visible presence to garner a better understanding of the fluidity of the market.

Researchers spend months conducting interviews with attorneys and their clients, and are working hard to understand the idiosyncrasies of each market and practice area. Local offices are expected to help with that effort.



Susan Holmes

Manager, LexSpeak &
RankingsForLawyersTM
203.913.2481
sholmes@jaffepr.com

Improving Referee Response Rates

No immediate changes in the *Chambers submission process* are currently planned, Matt said; the editorial and referee submission forms are the same as in past years. However, behind the scenes, *Chambers* has taken steps to improve the referee response rate by improving the interview booking system. Referees and attorneys will now have the ability to book their appointments online, and the system will flag referees who are recommended by multiple firms. What this means to law firms is that when the same referee is submitted by multiple firms, the researcher will be alerted and know to ask questions about all firms who submitted that referee. Both of these enhancements have the potential to improve the response rate significantly.

The research and commercial departments are separate – both organizationally and physically. Quite literally, a wall and locked doors separate the researchers from the sales force, Matt said. In fact, the commercial development professionals find out the rankings on the same day as everyone else. *Chambers* implemented these measures to ensure that firms do not have the ability to influence rankings and for general data protection regulation (GDPR) compliance.

Enhancing Technology and Security

Matt also said that *Chambers* has poured major investments into improvements of their technology. *Chambers* takes data information protection very seriously. They are very careful with the data that firms submit, and about the process of vetting the firms and attorneys. *Chambers* has never had a data breach; the information they store is safe. Currently, they are working to obtain the highest level of security certification. Attaining this seal of authority speaks to the sense of responsibility *Chambers* has about providing a secure platform for their research.

Recently, *Chambers* also rolled out a new [website](#) and changed their domain name. They have enhanced the way the rankings are displayed and the functionality of the site. Profiles are more prominent and it is easy for users to navigate the site to view the profiles. *Chambers* also added department profiles so firms can highlight the strengths of each ranked department.

Finally, *Chambers* is working to improve the analytics available from their systems.

Chambers Profile Costs and Uses

For many years, law firms purchased profiles from *Chambers* at a low cost with only small annual increases – a business model that was not sustainable, Matt explained. Legal marketers have to consider how purchasing these profiles fits into a firm's overall marketing strategy. The profiles can be quite robust and provide the opportunity for attorneys to highlight strengths that may not be evident from the editorial content that accompanies the rankings.

Some law firms have indicated that *Chambers* rankings have become part of the RFP process for government and corporations. Profiles put helpful information at general

counsel's fingertips.

Chambers realizes there is no room for mistakes in either their research or commercial departments. Matt confirmed that they want to improve the [submission process for legal marketers](#) and the experience for the end user, and this year's changes are reflecting exactly that.

If you need help with your *Chambers* submission or strategy to benefit from these changes, contact me at sholmes@jaffepr.com.