

Six “Ps” to Reduce the Stress of Lawyer Rankings

It’s officially the last month of the year and time for the seasonal hustle and bustle. This can also be a time when your inbox seems a little more subdued than usual, allowing you to reflect on the past year and start planning for the one ahead.

One thing I always give myself this time of year is a new planner. Yes – I get excited about new office supplies. There’s something about the blank pages and the clean slate. I love putting pen to paper, filling out lists, and identifying personal and professional goals for the new year.

Obviously, resolutions are notorious for not sticking around (what gym membership?), but lawyer rankings aren’t going anywhere. Before your inbox starts filling up again, sit down with your calendar and think through your comprehensive legal rankings strategy. Here are the six “Ps” to set yourself up for rankings success as you enter 2022.

Step 1 – Prepare

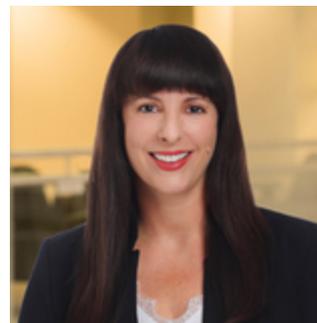
One of the most overwhelming things about lawyer rankings is the sheer volume. Start by making a list of the initiatives in which you currently participate, as well as any new ones you’ve been considering. Not all firms are the same, so [determining the right rankings for your firm](#) is an important first step.

Don’t forget to think about attorneys who would be good candidates for individual ranking opportunities. Several of the large national publications have individual recognitions that are competitive, so now is a great time to identify superstars in the firm and start laying the groundwork for those submissions. In addition, consider the local publications in your market(s) that recognize leading lawyers, women in business, diverse leaders, rising stars and any others who could be a good fit.

It is also a good time to weed out any of the opportunities that are no longer a strategic use of resources for your marketing team or for the attorneys. If your budget discussions are happening now, use that opportunity to recommend paring down and reallocating that money or time for more strategic support.

Step 2 – Plan

Now that you have your list of opportunities, start using your calendar. Most of the larger rankings set their schedules far in advance. Local publications will start putting out editorial calendars that include their various lists. For any opportunities that don’t have specific dates, several often follow a similar schedule year-over-year, so use placeholders to help you visualize the ebbs and flows of deadlines throughout the year.



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Make sure to note all relevant dates. It's helpful to schedule reminders (see – digital calendars are fun, too) a few weeks in advance for any necessary nudging or just to allow yourself some time to prepare. This includes when nominations open, the final deadlines for submissions, when honorees will be notified and any relevant embargo dates for publication.

This method will give you a comprehensive view of busy times to ensure you have the proper support that you need to get all the moving pieces together and submitted on time, while continuing to manage the day-to-day. There are a lot of moving pieces, so taking the time to [determine how to plan your legal rankings strategy](#) early can pay off later in the year.

Step 3 – Process

Once your slate of rankings is (tentatively) set, it's good to review the process for each one:

- Who is eligible – are only partners considered or is there an age or “years in practice” element?
- Is the recognition for an individual or a group, or both?
- Is there a narrative component to write? If so, can it be drafted for review or does the attorney have to provide the bulk of the information?
- Are letters or support or references needed?
- If representative matters are required, can confidential elements be included, or does that penalize the nominee(s)?
- Will there be any follow-up requirements, such as an interview or a profile to fill out?

These are important criteria to know up front as you consider nominees or you are asking for firm leadership to weigh in, because it gives you a sense of the time each submission may take. Go ahead and draft language for your outreach if warranted, and keep the emails in your draft folder so you are prepared when the date inevitably sneaks up on you.

Step 4 – Prioritize

Another step that's helpful to take as you're laying out the year ahead is to prioritize any of the submissions that may need extra TLC. You know which attorneys I'm talking about – notorious for ignoring emails and missing deadlines; great practices to highlight but they need a few calls to get the matters into writing. Or you might have an engaged group leader who wants positive results for their group, which can warrant additional research and outreach.

It's helpful to highlight these opportunities for yourself, as well as others on your team who may be able to assist. Knowing you have five submissions in a month but that two of them are a heavier lift will allow you to start earlier and give yourself the time you'll need. There may still be frantic emails, but sometimes just being prepared for the flurry can alleviate some stress.

Step 5 – Participate

Now that you have your guardrails in place, you can focus on the work that has to be done and dig into the submission process to make sure you meet the deadlines and put forward quality materials.

For narrative submissions that require heavy input from attorneys, it's best to start at least two months out from the deadline to allow time for reminders, questions and review. Other narrative submissions can be drafted closer to the deadline, based on information found in a bio, allowing the attorney to review and add anything not included in their bio (which also lends itself to updating their bio to keep it current!).

A busy attorney is a good thing, but the process of sending reminders can be tedious. Make sure to build in a safety net for yourself in case you don't receive a response – either the submission will not be completed or the draft you sent will be submitted as is. This helps manage expectations and allows you to move forward, as well as let the attorney know if nothing further is required from them, so they aren't circling back to you with updates three weeks after a submission portal has closed.

Step 6 – Promote

A rankings submission doesn't end with hitting the submit button. During Step 2, it's important to note that the calendar should not just reflect an embargo or publication date, but also build in time to draft press releases or client announcements and update attorney bios to [promote the firm's recognitions](#).

For any publications that include client commentary, try to capture that in a database. Not all comments are compelling, but if you can review them all together, it will be easier to identify which ones jump out and add it to a practice group write-up, attorney bio, or even a pitch or RFP. Your team did a lot of work on the rankings – let the rankings work for you!

If you find yourself needing assistance or support in the rankings process, consider outsourcing. Our [RankingsForLawyers® team](#) can help through any step outlined above and can help you get organized, identify nominees, strategize about improvements, manage the submissions and promote the results. Reach out to me, Mary Smith, at mbsmith@jaffepr.com with questions or comments.