

Leveraging Professional Rankings and Awards to Enhance Business Development

The competitive landscape for lawyers trying to establish their practice and make themselves a known quantity in the market grows more and more enormous each day. Lawyers must differentiate themselves to not only be competitive but also position themselves to be hired. Rankings are just one of the many tools in the proverbial marketing toolbox available to lawyers to establish and elevate their brands. While raising awareness about yourself and your practice is important, it is just as vital to understand the "how" and "why" rankings can complement your business development efforts.

All marketing activities point to business development

Professional rankings and awards can enhance a lawyer's [business development efforts](#) by serving as credible third-party endorsements of their knowledge of and success in their field. These recognitions can increase visibility and credibility, helping to attract new clients and referral sources, and differentiating the lawyer from competitors. They can also demonstrate a commitment to professional excellence and a high level of achievement, which can increase the lawyer's perceived value and enhance their reputation within their industry.

By leveraging these recognitions in their marketing and business development efforts, lawyers can position themselves as trusted and experienced professionals, thereby boosting their business development efforts. Rankings and awards can be an integral aspect of building a [personal brand](#) when combined with other marketing and business development strategies.

But is it the "chicken before the egg" conundrum?

Remember when you first entered the job market? You applied for a job to get the experience, only to be told you needed experience to get the job? The idea and process of getting "ranked" may feel the same way. But never fear: Here are steps you can take to pursue professional rankings and awards.

1. Research: Identify the most reputable and relevant ranking and award programs in your field and understand the criteria for selection.
2. Network: Build and maintain professional relationships with key industry players, including clients, peers and industry experts, as these relationships can often play a significant role in the selection process.
3. Demonstrate Excellence: Continuously strive for excellence in your legal practice,



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maintain a high level of ethical standards and stay current on the latest developments in your field.

4. Prepare Materials: Assemble a well-prepared, comprehensive submission package that highlights your achievements, experience and qualifications, in accordance with the requirements of the ranking or award program.
5. Apply: Submit your application and materials in a timely manner and follow up with the organization to ensure your submission has been received and is being considered.
6. Use Recognition: Once having been recognized, leverage the ranking or award by promoting it in your marketing materials, website and professional networks to increase visibility and credibility.
7. Jaffe can assist you with all these steps and more, increasing your chances of being recognized in professional rankings and awards, which can enhance your business development efforts.

How do I know which legal ranking is right for me and my practice?

It is important to note that rankings and awards may vary by region, practice area and other factors. Lawyers should carefully consider which rankings and awards are relevant to their practice and target audience. For instance, a rankings strategy for a family law lawyer is designed differently than for a business M&A lawyer because the hiring decision-maker for each is (most often) completely different.

There are several professional rankings and awards that lawyers can pursue, [including](#) these.

- [Super Lawyers](#): a rating service that recognizes the top 5% of lawyers in each state based on a thorough evaluation of their professional achievements.
- [Best Lawyers](#): a peer-review-based publication that recognizes the top lawyers in each practice area.
- [Chambers and Partners](#): a research-based directory that ranks lawyers and law firms based on their reputations and experience.
- [Legal 500](#): an annual guide that ranks law firms and lawyers based on their experience and ability to handle complex legal issues.

Lawyers should work with their marketing advisors to assess strengths and identify practice and awareness goals to determine which rankings are relevant opportunities to pursue.

What sort of time commitment are we talking about?

If we're talking about building a solid legal rankings [program](#), the time it takes can vary depending on various factors such as the size of the firm, complexity of the program, resources available, etc. On average, it may take anywhere from several months to over a year to develop a comprehensive and effective rankings program. This includes conducting market research, setting goals and objectives, selecting the appropriate metrics, implementing a tracking system, analyzing data, and making necessary adjustments – and all of that comes before writing a submission has even begun.

If we're talking about an individual lawyer, they can experience rapid ROI for time and effort and in some cases, get ranked rather quickly. A compelling, relevant and thorough submission is crucial, so lean heavily on your marketing advisor. My colleague Eryan O'Keefe offers [tips](#) on how to maximize the value of the entire process by establishing a deliberate strategy, participating in the planning process, and getting your mind and goals in the right place. If you're looking for even more ROI for your time (aren't we all?), imagine the vast amount of content that's been generated and available for future submissions, RFPs and pitch materials!

So I get ranked, now what do I do?

You can promote your rankings and awards by incorporating them into your marketing and branding efforts, including:

- Website – Display the rankings and awards prominently in your website biography, along with a brief description of the recognition and the organization that presented it.
- Social Media – Share the news of the ranking or award on your social media platforms, along with a link to the recognition or the organization's website.
- Networking – Mention the recognition during professional networking events, such as conferences or seminars, and include it in your professional introductions.
- Marketing Materials – Include the recognition in brochures, business cards and other marketing materials that promote your services.

These are just a few examples, and the most effective strategies may vary depending on your specific circumstances and target audience. I should point out that some [state bar advertising rules](#) prohibit you from listing the ranking or award on your marketing channels or restrict the format of your listing. Check with your marketing advisor to confirm if and how you can promote your recognitions.

Tell me again how this helps me with business development

You can leverage your rankings and awards to enhance your business development efforts by using them to:

- Attract New Clients – The recognition can help attract new clients and increase your credibility, especially for those who are unfamiliar with your work.
- Build Trust – Rankings and awards can help build trust with potential clients, because they demonstrate that you are recognized as a top performer in your field.
- Differentiate from Competitors – The recognition can set you apart from competitors, highlighting your experience.
- Increase Visibility – Rankings and awards can increase your visibility in your practice area and in the legal community, helping to raise your profile and establish a reputation as a thought leader.
- Establish Credibility – The recognition can demonstrate that you are well-respected by your peers and knowledgeable in your field, which can increase your credibility with clients and in the legal community.
- Enhance Referral Network – Rankings and awards can help build relationships with

other lawyers and professionals who may refer business to you in the future.

- Improve Negotiating Power – Being recognized as a top performer can give you leverage in negotiations, thanks to establishing a reputation as a skilled and successful professional.

Is this legit?

Rankings and awards for lawyers can be legitimate, but it's important to consider the methodology and criteria used to determine the rankings or awards. Some organizations conduct thorough research and analysis to determine the rankings, while others may rely on subjective opinions or self-reported data.

It's also important to understand the reputation and credibility of the organization presenting the ranking or award, as well as the criteria used to determine the recognition. Lawyers should also be cautious of awards or rankings that require payment or membership fees – this may suggest a bias or a lack of impartiality. The most reputable rankings and awards consider a range of factors, such as client feedback, case results and peer referrals, when evaluating your qualifications.

If you need help leveraging rankings and other tools from the marketing toolbox to enhance your business development efforts, reach out to Glennie Green at ggreen@jaffepr.com.