November 1, 2017 - Jaffe Staff

Don’t Be a Legal Rankings Zombie

RankingsForLawyers®

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The *Chambers* season can leave even the most-experienced legal marketers feeling a little zombie-like – not completely brainless, but definitely weary. To save yourself the time and energy next year, you can now capitalize on the wealth of information you collected as part of the rankings season. During this time, you can review what worked and what didn’t, and get started on building a data repository from which to pull for future submissions and to help with developing marketing plans.

Planning Future Ranking Initiatives

While the rankings process is still fresh in your minds, take a few minutes to make notes about what you found worked with your attorneys. We all know people have different work styles, and figuring out the unique characteristics of each attorney can go a long way to getting the information you need from them.

For instance, when pulling together the information for the submission, do they prefer to be interviewed or would they rather answer some questions in writing? Understanding this can save you a great deal of time on chasing down information. Also, think about what was really frustrating or stressful, and make a note of how you could prepare for those situations in the future. I’m not recommending a step-by-step action plan, but a little preparation will be a major step toward overcoming future frustrations.

Furthermore, you now have a firm understanding of the bench strength within the group, which can prove helpful when determining whom to nominate for other awards, such as Rising Stars and associate awards.

Building a Practice Area Case Database

With these submissions, you have a great start for building a repository to pull from to use for future submissions. Information gathered includes details related to the firm, its competitors and its attorneys. For *Chambers*, you should have information about 20 cases that includes the importance of the matter, the outcome, who was involved and how the attorney’s efforts led to the success of the case. This information can be used for future press releases, writing submissions for legal rankings, and fodder for articles and speaking engagements.

Find a method that works for you to quickly locate where the information is stored. For many, this is an Excel spreadsheet. You may consider using Google Docs so others can access and update the experience list collaboratively. Your firm can also customize various software solutions for just this purpose.

The second piece of *Chambers* submissions is the referee (reference) documents. During the submission process, you should have at least three opportunities to speak with your clients, which are opportunities to strengthen the relationship. The first is when you contact the referee to ask their permission to be used as a reference. This provides a chance to reinforce to the client the great work you have done for them. While the submission is being researched, you should send a note to the reference letting them know when to expect contact from the publication and who will be contacting them. This is also the opportunity to highlight the cases you included to once again remind them of the work you've done together. And finally, after the research is completed, you can follow up to see how the interview went.

One word of caution on references: Make sure you build a large database over time of clients who are willing to talk about the work you have done with them. One mistake I've seen firms make is to overuse the same few referees. Many more legal award nominations require a few references to be included. By having a large database, you eliminate the risk of overburdening clients.

Building Marketing and Business Development Strategies

In completing these submissions, you have pulled together information that can be helpful in branding, competitive analysis and business development for both the firm and individual attorneys. You have just spent weeks cultivating input from the practice group leaders and lead attorneys on the various practice areas' strengths. They have also provided information about what is unique about the practice groups and what sets their groups apart from the competition. This information is invaluable for legal marketers when pulling together a marketing plan or planning any sort of business development initiative.

While you recover from your zombie-like state, take this precious time to put together an experience repository and note any aspects of the process to change the next time rankings season comes around. Should you need any help with these or other aspects of legal rankings, contact rankings@jaffepr.com.