ABOUT OUR LEGAL DIRECTORY SUBMISSION APPROACH

Directory sumbissions... it's an annual question… do they really matter? Do clients really care? And why do you need to start thinking about them again, already?

An essential part of the legal sector's yearly calendar, directory submissions like Chambers & Partners and Legal 500 are used by clients but particularly by referrers and press, looking for a particular service or expert. Like it or not, rankings are important and provide valuable collateral for marketing, tenders and bids and even PR. They're global and, particularly if you're an overseas firm, provide a valuable insight into your key personnel and approach to work.

ELEPHANT CREATIVE DOES EVERYTHING FOR YOU

THE SUBMISSION PROCESS USUALLY CONSISTS OF THREE PARTS: THE SUBMISSION ITSELF, CLIENT REFERENCES AND (SOMETIMES) AN INTERVIEW WITH THE RESEARCHER COMPILING THE DIRECTORY. **FOLLOW OUR TIPS BELOW TO MAKE YOUR SUBMISSION SUCCESSFUL:**

- **Meet the deadlines.** The sooner the researcher receives all of your material the easier it will be to deal with any issues or omissions that could crop up during processing. This is especially necessary with the referee spreadsheet as the researcher could begin contacting your clients before they speak to you. You want to make sure there is enough time to correct any contact details and guarantee that glowing quote. You can find the deadlines on the directory websites.
- **Do your homework.** The days of cloak and dagger researchers are long gone, with publications making it clear who will be editing each directory. In the case of Chambers & Partners you can even see them in action with a video. Learn as much as you can about the key individuals, how they work and if necessary ring them up and ask them what they like best in terms of format and approach. At the very least make sure you've read through their methodology and information pages. Both publications provide help and guidance… there's really no excuse for not reading up. These are important and can be used as a checklist to make sure you've included everything.
- **Plan your references.** You'll need to provide references in a clear format. Once again, Chambers & Partners provides a handy spreadsheet for you.
- **Select a sponsor.** Each submission usually has a lot of contributors which can become confusing and time consuming. Assigning a sponsor to coordinate each submission individually can make things simpler, as they become the main point of contact for any enquiries regarding the submission. The sponsor should be somebody who has a good overview of things taking place in the department and is knowledgeable about the submission process.
- **Keep it short.** Researchers have a lot of information to process so keep your submission short and sweet! Ideally, no more than two A4 pages per practice area should be sufficient to get across your key messages and examples without bombarding the researcher with irrelevant information.

- **Clearly structure your submission.** Each legal directory will require the same information from your submission. Chambers & Partners very kindly publishes a pro-forma template for this, that you need to use. This is a great place to start for any submission (although you'll need to format it differently for Legal 500, so as to demonstrate that you've put the same effort in to theirs, rather than just duplicated it. As a basic rule you need to plan to include:

    * Basic information about the firm/set and contacts.
    * Department information including contacts, head count, hires and fires etc.
    * Feedback on your ranking in the current edition (as well as an opportunity to comment on other firms).
    * Practice area overview and selling points.
    * Key achievements within that practice area in the last 12 months.
    * List of key individuals already ranked by the publication you are working on (by order of year of call or PQE) and l* ist of specialists seeking rankings by that publication (again, ordered by year of call or PQE).
    * Specific reference to overseas experience or 'foreign desks'.
    * Information on each specialist (in order as above), including (in addition to what they do and when they started) USPs – what makes them different? Niche expertise, relevant past experience outside their practice, landmark cases in the last 12 months they have participated in – what role did they play? Why was the case important?
    * Work highlights – include up to five noteworthy cases handled in the last 12 months – what was the barrister's or solicitor's role (2 sentences)? Dates (and case reference if applicable). Who else was involved in the case? Who were they against? How is the case significant? Was it high profile, complex, unique, commercially important? Include any press links. Confidentiality – is the case confidential or publishable?
    * Any supporting information, for example awards, league tables, press etc.
    * List of publishable clients (as well as any that must remain confidential), including new client and panel wins over the last 12 months and key clients that you've had for over three years.
    * Details of industry specialisation, within that practice area.

- **Be helpful.** The researcher will have the tough task of condensing the information about your practice into one or two sentences. Why not help them and try to write it yourself, this way you can convey the key message of your practice.

- **Choose reliable referees.** Ensure the referees you put forward can easily be contacted and are happy to give you a glowing reference. If the researchers are unable to contact your chosen referees they will give up and this could harm your submission. Referees can be clients or anyone that has worked with the individuals listed.

- **Request an interview.** Although interviews are becoming less common, if you request an interview with the researcher it is unlikely to be declined. The interview is a brilliant opportunity to make sure that the key messages about your practice have been communicated correctly to the researcher, so it is wise to assign this task to those who will best represent the practice area and the firm.

- **Give it to someone unconnected to check.** Getting a spare pair of eyes to review your submission is crucial. They won't be involved so may well pick up areas of confusion or conflict that you can improve (as well as the random typos you'll have missed by draft 43).

- **Don't think it doesn't include you, if you're a smaller firm.** Chambers & Partners specifically mentions their commitment to smaller firms:

"At Chambers we are committed to identifying the best law firms globally, whether they consist of 1 lawyer or 100. We are very aware that boutiques and smaller law firms contain some of the best lawyers, and generate some of the best legal work in the market. Consequently, our processes have evolved over time to accommodate as many excellent small firms and boutiques for ranking consideration as possible. And these firms have felt the benefit of being ranked by Chambers. We are therefore keen to encourage still greater numbers of specialist and boutique law firms to make submissions to us. We know that the excellence is there, and we wish to highlight it to our global audience of in-house counsel."

WE REALLY DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU

And, of course, never underestimate the value of involving a professional expert in this process. Particularly if you wish to provide feedback on (as you perceive it) an unfair ranking in the previous edition, using a third-party to write your submissions for you could give you the upper edge in terms of addressing areas that need improvement.

Here at Elephant Creative our team of experts has been writing (successfully, we might add) directory submissions for chambers and firms for more years than we care to remember. Involving us might just take your headache away.

We'll handle everything from building links with the directories through to internal (and external) research, interviews, drafting (and polishing) submissions as well as advising on the best approach.

TEN REASONS TO USE ELEPHANT CREATIVE

1. We speak Plain English. Enough said.
2. We are experts, not only in different sectors, but different disciplines. Need an expert in thought-leadership PR for your new media practice? We have one. Need an expert in tendering to the public sector? We have one. We don’t believe in ‘all-rounders’.
3. We won’t waste your time with fancy diagrams and long-winded data reports. You ask us the question – we’ll give you the answer.
4. We can become part of your team. We integrate and communicate. We want to understand you and your business and work closely with you to achieve the goals you set out.
5. We tailor our approach to your organisation. We don’t have a template of documents to fit all firms. We start from scratch with every client, understanding you and your organisation.
6. We believe in fees going on expertise – not fancy offices. Our rates reflect our expert associates, not some beautiful glass high-rise office block and posh coffee.
7. We are honest. If we think something is a bad idea or is going in the wrong direction, we’ll tell you.
8. We believe in starting at the beginning, not half-way through. Any marketing or business development idea needs a strategy and a plan. That doesn’t mean airy-fairy words and theory – it means researching and planning the best tactical approach to any problem or project and then setting out how to deliver it.
9. We want you to succeed and grow. We all have a passion for our areas of expertise and the clients and projects we work on.
10. Our founder, Helen Hammond, is involved at every level, with every client and has worked with law firms for years. So you can rest assured that you’ll always get the same level of plain speaking, common-sense advice that made Elephant Creative special when it was first founded.