

Significant Change To U.S. News/Best Lawyers Law Firm Rankings

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US News & World Report has [announced](#) that the publication will drop their controversial effort to rank law firms and will instead **adopt an alphabetical listing in a "tiered" rating system instead**. The "best law firms rankings will be published alphabetically within tiers rather than as a numerical ranking.

"They finally reached the conclusion that the validity in such a **ranking system is flawed**: "firms were often separated by small or insignificant differences in the overall score." This was just one of the major concerns with the proposed ranking system," said Hilary Guthrie, Director of Planning and Business Development at Harris Beach PLLC in Pittsford, NY.

Nearly 2,000 law firm marketing directors and administrators fell prey to the latest in a series of meaningless rankings, by feeding information to the magazine. It's too bad. They should have read [Only 3% of Legal Work is Influenced by Directories](#). See also [Do Chambers Ratings Matter? NO](#). "Only private practitioners refer to these directories. **Business leaders/owners and in-house counsel are not influenced by them**," Guthrie said.

The American Bar Association voted to examine any efforts to publish national, state, territorial, and local rankings of law firms and law schools. A measure sparked by the New York State Bar Association to the ABA's House of Delegates state, "we know, based upon the experience of the U.S. News & World Report's ranking of law schools, that there will be significant issues regarding the validity of the rankings."

Here's the catch: to be considered in the US News ratings, a law firm must be included in yet another directory: to be eligible for a metropolitan area rating, **a firm has to have at least one lawyer listed in**



Best Lawyers.

So how do you get into Best Lawyers? Pathway No. 1 is to be in it already. Every lawyer in the previous edition is nominated for inclusion in the next edition. It's not different from a self-perpetuating club. The public can "nominate" lawyers, but [they don't count very much](#), according to the Best Lawyers FAQ.

Pathway No. 2 is to have a lawyer nominate you. However, the voters for existing lawyer categories consists of all lawyers *who are currently listed*. As a result, many "best lawyers" are members of the older generation.

The *US News* effort is basically a clumsy ploy to sell ads, magazines and directories. Described most generously, **it is a cross-marketing effort between two directories trying to survive in a market where directories don't matter.**

The U.S. News-Best Lawyers Best Law Firms rankings, are scheduled to be released on its website in mid-September. Everyone who loves a popularity contest will be sure to read it.

For more on this topic, call:

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