



ILFS Guide to the International Legal Media – Part 2

International Law Firm Solutions (ILFS) specialises in helping independent law firms develop the international part of their business. It has a client base of independent law firms in more than 100 jurisdictions.

Nearly all of our clients want to raise their international profile and recognise that one way to do this is in the international legal media. However, there are an overwhelming number of opportunities to consider - legal directories, handbooks, comparative guides, monthly and weekly publications and more.

Part 1 of this Guide looked at the challenges that firms face using the legal media to build a profile and makes some suggestions about how they should approach those challenges. Part 2 looks at the different types of product on the market.

Contact:

Alex Kaminsky

Tel: +44(0)7935 344795

Email: ak@ilfs.net

Alex Holtum

Tel +44 (0)7769 640959

E-mail: ajh@ilfs.net



Website: www.ilfs.net

ILFS Guide to the International Legal Media – Part 2

[Product Type 1 – Directories with listings and rankings](#)

[Product Type 2 – Directories with listings only](#)

[Product Type 3 – Online Banner Adverts](#)

[Product Type 4 – Expert Guides](#)

[Product Type 5 – Comparative guides / Cross-border handbooks](#)

[Product Type 6 – Distribution services and databases](#)

[Product Type 7 – Periodicals](#)

Introduction

We wrote the first version of this Guide 10 years ago when we launched our media buying and support service. We did so because our clients asked us to. We were, and still are, frequently being told by law firms that although they recognise the importance of raising their profile in the international legal media, they are often overwhelmed by the dazzling array of opportunities to do so. In particular, they repeatedly say how difficult, time consuming and expensive it is to decide which opportunities to pursue when there are so many legal directories, handbooks, comparative guides, monthly and weekly publications to consider.

Part 1 of this Guide looked at the challenges that firms face using the legal media to build a profile and made some suggestions about how they should approach those challenges. Part 2 looks at the different types of product on the market.

Product Type 1 – Directories with listings and rankings

Key Points

Directories with listings and rankings generally consist of:

- Independently researched rankings and editorial
- Paid for profiles of a) Firms and b) Individual lawyers

As they are not purchased products, rankings and editorial are slightly beyond the scope of this exercise. However, any firm that wants to build its international practice should ensure it has the best possible rankings in directories. They really are used by in-house counsel and international law firms, both when trying to find firms in unfamiliar jurisdictions and as a means of checking out firms that have been suggested to them. Clients also use the directories to benchmark current advisers, providing them with reassurance that they are independently judged to be among the leading firms.

The principal purpose of buying a profile is to build and reinforce awareness of the firm/its brand. As one of our clients said, “if someone is looking for a law firm in my jurisdiction, I want ours to be one of the first firms they find”.

It is also worth bearing in mind that the main source of income for directories are the profiles they sell. Accordingly, if you think the editorial in the directories provides positive benefits to your firm then by buying profiles you are supporting their continued existence.

Products

- The core product is a firm profile
- All also offer individual profiles. In some cases all or part of the cost of these are included in the price of the firm profile
- Most also offer online/banner adverts – see [Online Banner Adverts](#)
- Some of the directories offer other products, notably the opportunity to write country chapters and article distribution services

Suggested Approach

- Get the best coverage you can in the editorial
- Seriously consider including the firm profile and other products as part of your media budget especially if:
 - a) your strategy is to build and reinforce awareness of the firm/its brand (see ‘Have a strategy’ in Part 1)
 - b) you believe the editorial provides a positive benefit to your firm which the profile will support
- With regard to the actual profiles, make sure that they are well written in good business English and deliver a message that is consistent with your website and other marketing materials.
- Understand the non-core products. Sometimes these are included at no additional cost and can be very good value. Others can be quite expensive, but are of peripheral value. Spend a little bit of time understanding how much these products cost and how they work. Get maximum value out of them.

Product Type 2 – Directories with listings only

Key Points

- Directory listings are made up of firm and individual lawyer profiles
- The principal purpose of buying a listing is to build and reinforce awareness of the firm/its brand
- A key factor when considering these products is how well they do on search engines and “hits” received on the online sites. Although both of these can be quite difficult to evaluate, these directories tend to receive more internet hits than those with editorial coverage. That said, it is likely that a higher proportion of these hits are from a less targeted audience
- The distribution database element of these products can add significant value
- Whereas the directories that include editorial coverage tend to be founded in the UK/Europe and have their more historic following in UK/Europe, listings only directories tend to originate in USA and have their strongest followings in USA/Americas
- Costs vary significantly

Products

- Firm profiles
- Individual Profiles
- The directories also offer other products most notably distribution services which both of the main directories of this type have developed

Suggested Approach

- Most of the same points as apply as for [Directories with listings and rankings](#)
- These products are a particularly important part of your plan if the USA/Americas are important markets for your firm
- If producing or contributing to a number of publications is a central part of your marketing plan the distribution services offered by these products can also offer significant value
- Get a clear quote on cost and do not spend a disproportionate amount of your budget on these items

Product Type 3 – Online Banner Adverts



Key Points

- These are advertisements seen on the internet, often in the form of a rectangle at the top of an internet page
- Law firm online adverts almost invariably click through to the law firm's website
- The popularity of online adverts varies widely in different jurisdictions. In some they are very popular whilst in others firms regard them as too blatant a form of advertising and in some instances are in breach of specific bar regulations. For reasons already stated we would always suggest that firms that have doubts about the concept think carefully before buying
- However, for firms which do not have any such objections online adverts can be a very powerful way to build and reinforce awareness of a firm/its brand and can achieve much higher levels of penetration than many other products
- Also note that the exposure online ads get on the main legal websites varies significantly and this will clearly have a significant impact on how many people see them. Some only appear on one, or a very small number of pages. Others appear on a much wider number of pages
- Prices vary widely for banner adverts. Also some publishers do not regard them as core products and are often willing to include them as part of a package with other products at no significant additional cost

Suggested Approach

- Seriously consider if you have no objection to the concept and your strategy is to build and reinforce awareness of the firm/its brand
- If you do decide you want to promote your brand, bear in mind the following:
- Consider whether you are looking for maximum or targeted exposure i.e. who is likely to read the webpage.
- If you are looking for maximum exposure make sure that the online advert you are buying provides it
- Consider the format and message delivered by the banner
- Periodically check the links

Product Type 4 – Expert Guides

Key Points

- These are similar to the directories, but with the main product being individual lawyer profiles rather than firm profiles
- Nearly all the main publishers do some sort of Expert Guide. Some are pure Expert Guides. Others have a more hybrid approach including expert recommendations as part of their directories
- Most of the Expert Guides also produce rankings and you can usually only buy a lawyer profile if your lawyers are recommended. As with the rankings in the firm directories, getting the best recommendations you can is highly beneficial as these are frequently used as a means of identifying lawyers to refer work to or of checking out those that have been suggested to them
- The benefit of Expert Guides is that they build a firm's profile and brand by "star billing" (i.e. building the profile and awareness) of individual lawyers
- The main drawback is that although individually they are not that expensive, accumulatively they can be and we have known firms spend very large sums indeed on this sort of product. The problem is compounded by the fact that the publishers often approach the individual lawyers who will "sign up" direct and there is no central control on the cost. In recognition of this some publishers will consider a bulk discount – if you have a number of ranked lawyers and buy a number of profiles.
- All of the general points about quality control apply

Products

Generally the core, and only product, for this type of publication are Individual profiles

Suggested Approach

- Get your lawyers ranked if you can
- These can be an important part of a firm's media plan so we would suggest that firms that are concerned about budget take a controlled approach to them. Some firms stipulate that lawyers that order these profiles themselves pay for them themselves.
- Consider buying profiles on a wide basis as part of a brand recognition strategy, or on a limited basis in specific practice areas as part of a targeted strategy
- If you are buying several profiles from the same publisher see if there is any scope for a bulk discount particularly if you are increasing your overall spend

Product Type 5 – Comparative guides / Cross-border handbooks

Key Points

- Various descriptions as “Comparative Legal Guides” and “Cross-border Handbooks” each of the main publications of this type has a series of titles covering different practice areas or industry sectors
- Each title compares the law across a number of jurisdictions with a separate chapter for each jurisdiction
- Each separate chapter broadly follows a standard Question & Answer framework
- The publications are produced under a “co-publishing” arrangement i.e. the firms writing the chapters effectively pay/contribute to the publishers for editing the content, publishing and distributing the guide, and raising the profile of the firm in question. This payment often takes the form of an agreement to buy a fixed number of the books upon publication
- Most of these publications are produced annually and the co-publishing fee is an annual rather than a one-off fee
- For most firms comparative guides probably represent an, at least partial, alternative to a firm producing its own publications. The main benefits are:
 - The distribution process. A firm may spend many hours producing its own publication and then only distribute it to a small number of clients and contacts. These publications are distributed/accessed online by a relevant audience of several thousand including lawyers at international firms and in-house lawyers at international companies
 - As the publishers edit the content, other advantages include a) less lawyer-time to produce b) higher quality content
 - Very often the chapters in the largest jurisdictions are written by some of the world’s leading firms, and although it is intangible there can be a benefit by association of being a co-author with these firms
- The main disadvantage is the co-publishing fee. Cost varies significantly depending on the jurisdiction and practice area concerned and is effectively determined by supply and demand. Some firms fundamentally object to the idea of paying for their work to be published
- There is no guarantee that you can write a chapter of a guide if you wish to. There is only one author for each jurisdictional chapter for each guide. The publishers also have certain criteria about which firms can write the guides. These vary between publications/jurisdictions so it is hard to provide general guidelines
- Also do not underestimate the amount of time it will take for you to produce a chapter. We get very different estimates on the time involved ranging from several hours to much longer. Related to this make sure you know the deadline for your copy before you buy and that you have time to meet it

Products

- Jurisdictional Chapters as outlined above
- Some guides also include individual profiles and other joint publishing opportunities

Suggested Approach

- This type of publication is not right for every firm. In particular some firms do not produce many, if any, publications with legal content and do not see the value in doing so whilst other firms fundamentally object to the co-publishing model. However, if you do not fall into either of these categories we believe that used effectively these can be some of the best value products on the market and can represent an, at least partial, alternative to a firm producing its own publications
- If you are either a firm that produces publications, or would like to, there are two broad strategies:
 - o Seek to be the author of as many of the chapters in these guides in your jurisdiction as possible – see brand recognition in strategy section, Part 1 of this Guide. Note: this may be costly, but some of the publishers will give firms a better deal if you write a number of their guides
 - o Target specific practice areas that you want to promote – see also strategy section, Part 1 of this Guide.
- If you do write one or more guides make the most of them. Although the distribution services the publishers rely on are good do not just depend on them. Post the guide(s) on your website, distribute to your own clients and contacts - at least those that are likely to be interested - and post on other distribution databases.

Product Type 6 – Distribution services and databases

Key Points

- These services distribute law firm publications such as articles, alerts and newsletters to a wide and relevant audience of potential clients and international law firms
- The rationale is that firms write publications to demonstrate their expertise to current and prospective clients. But by the time these have been researched, written and reviewed they can take up many hours and thousands of Euros/US\$ fee-earning time. There is therefore huge value in distributing them as widely as possible
- These services ensure wider distribution by allowing firms to publish articles on a database. These are sometimes only accessed by specific subscribers – usually a targeted group such as Corporate Counsel. Others ensure that if, for example, you enter “M&A in [Jurisdiction]” to a search engine your article will feature prominently
- These services also help to prevent your mailshot newsletters/articles from having a negative impact on recipients who may not wish to receive them. Articles published through a distribution service are distributed to and accessed by subscribers who have made a positive decision to sign up. Publications are more likely to be of interest to the subscribers of the distribution service
- Some services will also provide feedback on who has been reading your publications
- Several of the directories also offer some form of distribution service either as an add-on, or as part of the integrated package that you get when you buy an entry
- Although the benefits are significant it can be quite time consuming to post publications, particularly if you are unfamiliar with the process. Some publishers undertake this work for you by constantly reviewing your website

Products

The product here is mainly the distribution service although some of these services do have firm profiles

Suggested approach

- For firms that produce a lot of publications this type of service can represent one of the best value products
- In deciding which service(s) to subscribe consider who they distribute to. As most of the services have different distribution channels if you like the idea you may decide to use more than one
- If you buy a firm profile in a directory check if there is a related distribution database
- Make the most of them. Many firms subscribe to these services and then fail to use them either at all, or to their full potential. In particular:
 - o Have in place a process for “capturing” all the publications being produced within your firm – many lawyers write publications about which other members of the firm are not aware
 - o Ensure that someone in the firm is responsible for posting the articles and understands the process. The nature of the taxonomy with some of the databases means that this person may require some legal knowledge

Product Type 7 – Periodicals

Key Points

- These are weekly, monthly and other periodical publications produced by the legal media. This is a far more general category than the others
- Category covers a very wide and diverse range of products
- Can be divided into a number of sub-categories including:
 - o General publications: these are generally focused on news and market analysis
 - o Regional publications: generally focusing on news and analysis in a particular continent
 - o Practice area publications: focusing on a particular practice area
 - o Specialist publications focused on a specific issue
- There are also a number of publications in other sectors, especially finance, that focus heavily on the law

Products

The diversity of the category is such that you can spend your money on almost anything. Probably the most frequent opportunities are:

- Printed Advertisements
- Sponsored Editorial
- Online Advertising

Suggested approach

- The rationale for taking coverage in periodicals is to raise your firm's profile amongst their readership. Done effectively it can be one of the best ways of raising your profile in a particular group. Done badly it can be money completely wasted
- In addition if the content you write is suitable, and the publisher will allow it, you can reproduce and distribute it elsewhere – see [Product Type 6 - Distribution services and databases](#)
- Avoid the temptation to buy randomly
- Do not buy just because it is cheap. As stated above a number of publications have started to sell a high volume of relatively low cost products. Some of these are very good, but others are not
- Be targeted. Review the readership and decide if they are your target audience. In particular:
 - o It may be better to have a campaign focused on one or two publications than taking one advert in ten
 - o Most periodicals' circulation figures should be audited by an independent 3rd party. If they are not ask why

- If you are buying an advert try and get editorial coverage as well. Very few reputable publications will guarantee you editorial coverage with an advert but it may buy you some goodwill

Contact:

Alex Kaminsky

Tel: +44(0)7935 344795

Email: ak@ifls.net

Alex Holtum

Tel +44 (0)7769 640959

E-mail: ajh@ifls.net



Website: www.ifls.net