THE LAW FIRM DIGITAL FOOTPRINT REPORT 2023

JUNE-NOV 2023

NEW ZEALAND

THE BD LADDER X commwiser

"Technology will be the main driver of this change. And, in the long run, we will neither need nor want professionals to work in the way that they did in the twentieth century and before."

Richard Susskind

The Future of the Professions: How Technology Will Transform the Work of Human Experts

Note from The BD Ladder

Ben Paul
CEO | The BD Ladder

The appetite for embracing digital platforms and technology has undoubtedly increased across the legal sector. The rise in acceptance of tools like ChatGPT, alongside the COVID years necessitating the use of technology to connect with clients, has meant that law firms across the globe have invested more in their digital platforms.

Looking at us here in Aotearoa, with stringent rules around lockdowns (particularly in Tāmaki Makaurau), the need to embrace technology was vital. This naturally flowed on to the use of digital marketing as law firms needed to remain present and visible and also have platforms to engage with their clients and target markets.

From pure observation and working in the sector, it is pretty apparent that a great deal of progress has been made in this space, with several major firms and indeed boutiques updating their websites and refreshing their brand look and feel. There has been an uptake in the use of social media platforms and a greater investment and focus on informative and educational content. Which is the type of content that truly resonates with audiences.

However, it is safe to say we are not world leaders in this space, and there is still room for improvement in law firm digital marketing. Of course, digital marketing is very much an evolving art, with new platforms emerging regularly.

With all the improvements going on in this space, I wanted to bring some data analysis to see what the main firms are doing well (and indeed not so well). We focused on a list of 10, to give a wide enough selection to our analysis and to avoid making this report too large. This is not our attempt at naming NZ top 10 firms, but rather putting together a report that should be helpful to all.

A huge thank you to the team at Commwiser, who carried out the analysis based on our sector knowledge and inputs. It's a great report, and there is a lot to take away!

Enjoy!

Note from Commwiser

Aman Abbas
Founder | Commwiser

We live in a boundaryless world particularly when it comes to business. The legal industry is one of the key enablers of global transactions and therefore, the need for them to showcase their credentials globally as well as locally always existed. Earlier, directories and business media played huge roles in showcasing law firms' capabilities and played a cupid between them and their clients.

But with the digital world we are in now, the firms have understood the importance of creating their digital properties and are expressing themselves a lot more than ever!

Their digital strategy is paying off in terms of creating more visibility and engagement with their potential clients bringing digital at the centre stage of their overall BD strategy. The idea behind this report is to present a competitive landscape of law firms' digital presence, doing deep analysis of critical parameters to create a scorecard, which enables the Firms to understand the industry standards and how they can calibrate their strategies to stay ahead in the game.

This report offers insights derived from comprehensive, in-depth research that provides an overview of how well law firms have adapted to the digital landscape. The report is more than just a researched analysis; it is a tool of action intended to spark conversations and inspire action.

The insights provided in the report can guide law firms in developing customised digital strategies and enhancing engagement and online visibility. I am certain that this report will catalyse change and help law firms grow their digital footprint strategically and sustainably.

Though we have taken utmost care in our data analysis, we may still have faltered somewhere. I welcome your feedback and comments on this report.
Wish you a happy digital journey!

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Introduction

Overview

The New Zealand Law Firm Digital Footprint Report is a focused project that aims to provide insights into the digital footprints of 10 leading law firms in New Zealand. The New Zealand market has seen a steady annual increase in the demand for legal services, with a sharp increase during the 2020-2022 period.

Traditionally, work has been won based on reputation and relationships - the staple of many law firms' growth over the last few decades. However, the need for digital marketing has increased to maintain brand and reputational presence, as well as to help grow revenue in an exceedingly competitive market.

We undertook this research to ascertain the current digital standing of the leading New Zealand law firms, and to provide insights for NZ's wider legal market.

We chose the 10 firms in our study based on their nomination for the Large Law Firm of the Year 2023 award at the recent NZ Law Awards. Some were omitted as we could not obtain enough concrete evidence to represent them accurately, and others have a global digital presence, rather than a locally focused one. We intend to create an insightful report, not ranking a list of the top 10 firms. We'll leave that to other organisations.

Objectives

The New Zealand Law Firm Digital Footprint Report has several key objectives:

1 - It seeks to give law firms a peek into the fundamental metrics of their digital presence. This is intended to assist law firms in identifying areas for further improvement, and determining how they can position themselves.

2 - It aims to provide practical recommendations and tactics to help law firms elevate their digital presence.

3 - The Report intends to educate New Zealand law firms on the value of having an active online presence, particularly on LinkedIn, updated with current digital trends and recommended practices in the legal industry

DISCLAIMER - This report is a result of research and analysis conducted using SEMrush[1] tools, that collects publicly available data and analyzes the parameters. We want to make it clear that the information presented in this report is our interpretation of the data available on SEMrush and LinkedIn's Competition Analysis , and is intended to provide a general understanding of paramaters of digital marketing. Please note that any variations or discrepancies in the data presented may be due to the limitations of the tools used and other factors beyond our control. We do not intend to misrepresent or offend anyone with our findings but rather present them objectively.

[1] Semrush is an all-in-one tool suite for improving online visibility and discovering marketing insights.

The Need to Have a Strong Digital Presence

While historical and long-standing client relationships remain a fundamental part of securing work for any law firm, increasingly the world and law firm clients are interacting and making decisions online, rather than in person.

Thinking outside of the legal world for a second - to how you make your larger purchasing decisions - it's unlikely you haven't researched the product/service online. Most people in their research phase will go beyond a company's website and seek out social proof in the form of online reviews to empower their decision-making. Law firm clients are no different.

All firms have a website, and these are generally updated, have a good look and feel, and increasingly better usability. Most large and mid-tier firms certainly have a presence on LinkedIn. Many other firms are using other social media platforms too, and when used correctly, they can also have a great impact.

Clients and potential clients are visiting firm websites for information and are now engaging regularly with social media content. Client audiences expect legal updates and informed business content that is valuable and helpful to them. This type of content helps to build trust in a digital world.

The days of a firm's website being just an online brochure are coming to an end as external factors mean that increasingly buyers of legal services are looking for online resources. Increased engagement means that interactivity and features that engender this engagement are becoming more fundamental. Websites as a source of lead generation should now be part of any law firm's digital strategy.

With BD and Marketing teams, alongside the firm's Senior Leadership teams, now focusing on growth in a market with increasing outside pressures such as inflation, and increased market competition with traditional law firms and emerging alternative legal providers, the desire for a tangible ROI on firm's digital strategy is increasing.

This means that firms need to invest in their company and senior individual's LinkedIn strategies to increase connection, engagement and ultimately generate more leads.

Brands have seen a 33% increase in purchase intent resulting from ad exposure on LinkedIn

Hootsuite 2022 Digital Trend Report

Methodology

Our methodology for the New Zealand Law Firm Digital Footprint Report was founded on a close examination of the digital presence of 10 law firms during the June-November period of 2023, using data collected up to 14th November 2023. Our team carefully studied the capabilities of SEMrush and LinkedIn Analytics to enable a comprehensive and nuanced analysis. We extracted meaningful insights about each law firm's digital performance by strategically utilising these industry-leading tools and our professional acumen. Four key steps guided the entire process.

Step - 1 Website Metrics

Studying website metrics of law firms involved collecting and analysing data related to each website's performance and user engagement. This data provided valuable insights into how well each website is meeting its intended goals, and how it could be improved to serve its target audience better. To conduct a thorough analysis, we used SEMrush and identified eight website parameters that were relevant to law firms.

Website Strength

- Backlinks
- Authority Score
- SEMrush Rank

Website Popularity

- Organic Traffic
- Total Visits
- Unique Visits

Audience Retention

- Average Visit Duration
- Bounce Rate

#FACT

Before interacting with a website, **the average B2B buyer conducts 12 different online searches**

Google

1 - Backlinks - Backlinks, also known as inbound links, are links that take the visitor from one website to a page on another website. It is essential for SEO because it represents a "vote of confidence" from one website to another. The more backlinks a website has from reputable websites, the higher its potential to rank highly in search engine results.

2 - Authority score - The Authority Score is a composite metric (out of 100) used by SEMrush to measure the overall quality of a website or webpage. It takes the quality and quantity of backlinks into consideration, along with estimated monthly average traffic (Organic Traffic), and indicators of manipulation or spam in the link profile (Natural Profile). The higher the authority score, the greater the weight of a domain's or webpage's outbound links to another site. A lower score reflects poorly on the website metrics. In this report, the authority score of law firms ranges between 20 to 30.

3 - Organic Traffic Search - Organic traffic refers to the visits to a website that come from a search engine's organic results (and not via paid ads). This indicates how well the website is performing in terms of its ranking and that visitors come directly to the website after a search on the internet.

4 - Visits – A visit refers to visitors arriving on a website and browsing. A visit counts all visitors, no matter how many times the same visitor may have been to the site. The number of visits can indicate a website's overall popularity and engagement.

5 - Unique visitors - Unique visitors is a metric that shows the total number of distinct visitors to a site, counting only their first visit. This metric is important for understanding a website's reach and how many people it can attract to its content. Although there is no set benchmark for the number of visitors a website should receive, having a higher number can indicate that the law firm has a strong online presence and is attracting significant traffic.

6 - Average visit duration – The average visit duration is the average time a user spends on a website during a session. This is calculated as the time elapsed between a user's first and last action on a website during their visit. This metric is an indicator of engagement. A longer average visit duration where visitors spend more time exploring the website, indicates that the content is relevant and interesting. In cases of a shorter average visit (i.e., lasting less than a minute), visitors may not have found what they were looking for, causing them to navigate away from the website, which may mean the website’s content needs some tweaking.

7 - Bounce rate - Bounce rate is the percentage of visits to a website where only one page was viewed, indicating that the user didn't engage any further with the website. A high bounce rate could suggest that the site's content needs to be improved to retain visitors to the website. In general, a lower bounce rate is preferred, as it indicates that visitors are engaged with the website and exploring multiple pages. As a rule, a bounce rate below 40% is considered good, while a rate above 60% may indicate that the website needs improvement in terms of UX/UI (user experience/user interface).

8 - SEMrush Rank - SEMrush Rank is an innovative metric that critically evaluates a domain's visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs) by assessing its organic traffic potential. SEMrush Rank analyses keyword positions, search volume, traffic cost, and competition to view a domain's performance in search engines. Generally, any domain with a ranking of less than 100k performs well based on the vast data in the SEMrush database. Below 50k is considered a particularly successful rank. Still, scores between 50k and 100k indicate that an SEO strategy is heading in the right direction and will likely result in increased visibility for the website. With more visibility, firms can gain higher-quality leads and customer conversions, which could help grow their business.

Step 2 - LinkedIn Performance

Since all law firms' preferred social media platform is LinkedIn, we have included a thorough examination of engagement numbers collected via LinkedIn and its Competitor Analysis Tool. This data offers invaluable insights into the success of law firms in engaging their audience and raising awareness of their services and expertise. For a comprehensive analysis, we have identified several metrics relevant to law firms and their intended audience.

Popularity

- **Followers Count**

Activity

- **No. of posts**

Engagement

- **Total Engagement**
- **Engagement Rate**

1. Follower count: The follower count depends upon several factors, such as brand awareness, post frequency, and employee engagement. The follower count provides an understanding of a firm's standing in the industry and amongst other law firms.

2. Total number of posts: This accounts for the total number of posts the firm has made in the last six months (June-November). This six-month analysis can capture a significant sample of the firm's LinkedIn activity.

3. Total number of engagements: This metric refers to the number of likes, comments, and shares made for all posts within 6 months.

4. Engagement rate: We have derived our engagement rate percentage by dividing the total number of engagements (likes, comments, shares, etc.) by the number of followers.

Step 3 – Scoring

Website & LinkedIn

Scoring for all the metrics of the website and LinkedIn has been done based on global industry trends, industry average benchmarks, and the potential of digital media as it grows. We have taken into consideration how industry leaders are performing globally, and the industry milestones which impact the performance metrics. We have analysed all the data based on common notions and rules followed in digital marketing. For example, firms with a higher number of backlinks have a higher score, and firms with a lower SEMrush Rank have a higher score. We have scored each metric out of 10 (10 being the maximum and 0 being the minimum).

The Commwiser Take

To optimise a social media strategy, firms need to adopt a holistic approach that encompasses generating and distributing compelling content. For example, including infographics, videos, and posts that promote inclusivity, collaboration, or foster networking, is crucial. This report delves into how each strategy has satisfied the following parameters on LinkedIn and website metrics. The 'Commwiser Take' offers our expert stance on the effectiveness of each firm's strategy.

The parameters considered include:

- **Content** – Engaging, relevant content not only showcases a firm's expertise but can also enhance visibility and engagement on LinkedIn, expanding brand awareness and potentially attracting new clients.
- **Visual Appeal** – A compelling profile can help a law firm stand out in a crowded market. High-quality images or videos can highlight the firm's unique personality and values, fostering authenticity.
- **Inclusivity** – This report assesses the degree of inclusivity within the firm, reflecting its commitment to engaging diverse internal stakeholders. A focus on inclusivity enhances representation and encourages meaningful engagement.
- **Video Thought leadership** – Videos provide a dynamic medium for showcasing thought leadership and simplifying complex legal concepts. This report evaluates whether the firm has effectively leveraged video content to engage with its audience.
- **Creativity** – Beyond using infographics, creative LinkedIn content involves innovative visuals and ideas. Law firms can boost engagement and demonstrate their forward-thinking approach by infusing their posts with creativity.

Step 4 – The Score

	Website Strength	Website Popularity	Audience Retention	LinkedIn Popularity	LinkedIn Activity	LinkedIn Engagement
Anthony Harper	5	4.6	5	2	4	6.5
Bell Gully	5	8.3	5.5	6	5	3
Buddle Findlay	5.5	2.6	7	6	4	2.5
Chapman Tripp	5	2.6	8	7	7	6.5
Dentons NZ	5	3.6	1.5	4	7	5
Duncan Cotterill	3	4.6	5	4	9	6.5
MinterEllisonRuddWatts	5	4.3	4.5	6	6	5.5
Russell McVeagh	5	4.6	8.5	7	8	8.5
Simpson Grierson	6.5	3.3	5.5	4	4	5.5
Tompkins Wake	6	4	4.5	3	3	3.5

*Firms listed in alphabetical order

Keep up the good work

Need a little push

Area of improvement

*For each category max score is 10

Ranking Meter

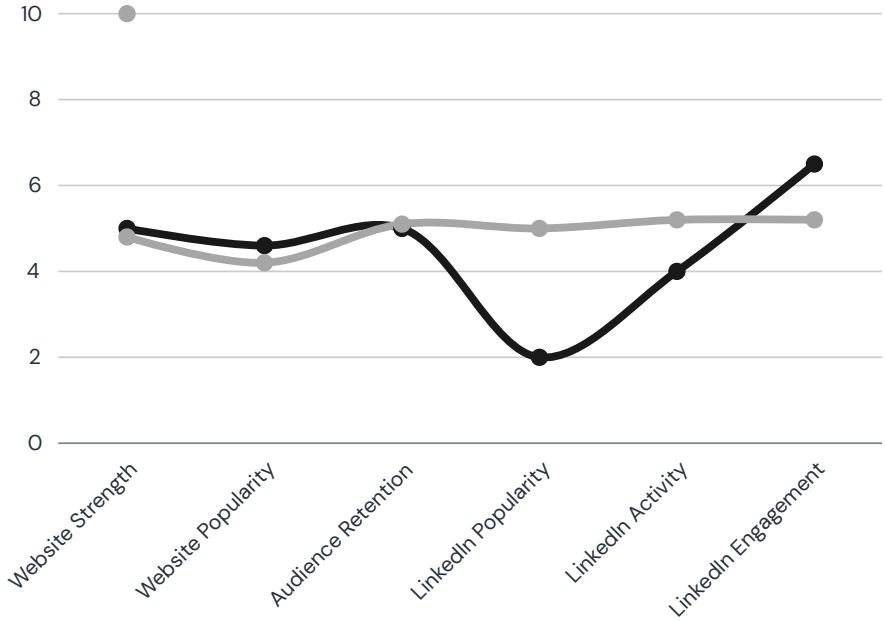
ANALYSIS & SCORING

Commwiser x The BD Ladder

*Firms discussed in alphabetical order

Anthony Harper

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

50.2%

Avg. Score

Anthony Harper

Commwiser Take

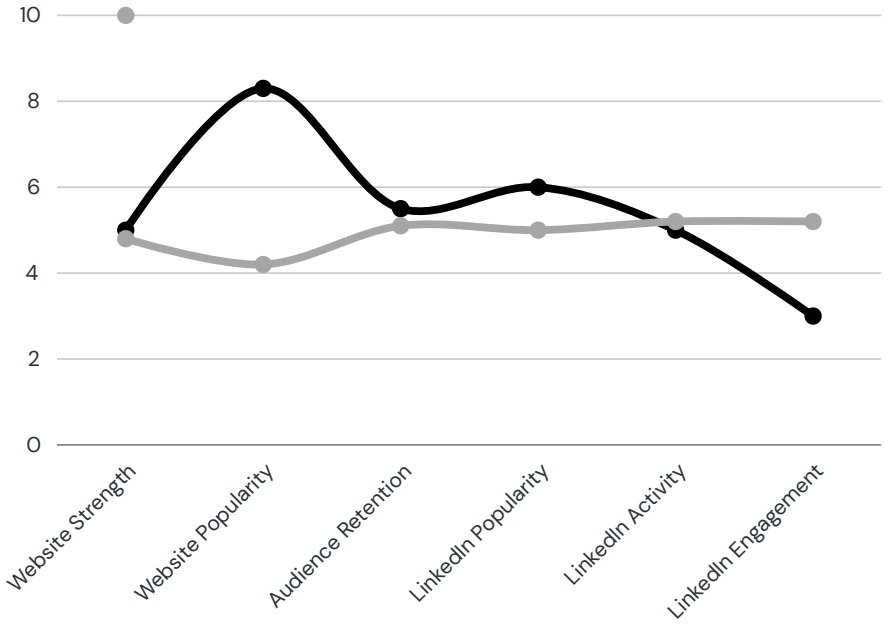
Website - Starting with a warm "Kia Ora Welcome," Anthony Harper's website embraces the friendly local essence of NZ, which sets a positive tone for readers. However, the immediate leap into the firm's introduction on the home might overwhelm visitors seeking specific information. The use of varied image styles lacks uniformity, impacting the site's visual coherence. While website metrics perform averagely, the site's impact could be improved by adding consistent and meaningful thought leadership content that addresses relevant trends on the homepage. A comprehensive SEO strategy, supported by high-quality backlinks and a thorough website audit to eliminate detrimental links, could significantly strengthen the website. This site demonstrated an ability to retain visitors, indicating that the website holds immense growth potential which could be achieved via a more strategic approach to content placement and delivery.

LinkedIn - Anthony Harper's LinkedIn page has 2,872 followers and 2155 engagements across 64 posts over the last 6 months. It has aced the LinkedIn essentials— with a polished cover, profile picture, engaging headline, and a compelling 'About Us' section with an impactful sign-off. Its unique 'Career Stories' series stands out, shedding light on the people focus of the firm. It also actively reshares employee posts, showcasing a supportive and encouraging environment for its team.

The firm has maintained a diverse content mix by posting blogs, achievements, news articles, lawyer spotlights, and reshared content. However, while there has been some emphasis on showcasing thought leadership, it is intermittent and it's not consistent throughout their posts. There's an opportunity here to highlight the expertise of its large team by creating more content dedicated to thought leadership. With a sharper focus on thought leadership, it can further elevate its presence and highlight the wealth of expertise within the firm. Doing this would also aid in reaching a broader audience, and in turn, increasing its number of followers. The engagement rate suggests that there is an audience ready to engage with the firm's posts – it just needs to leverage it!

Bell Gully

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

61.3%

Avg. Score

Bell Gully

Commwiser Take

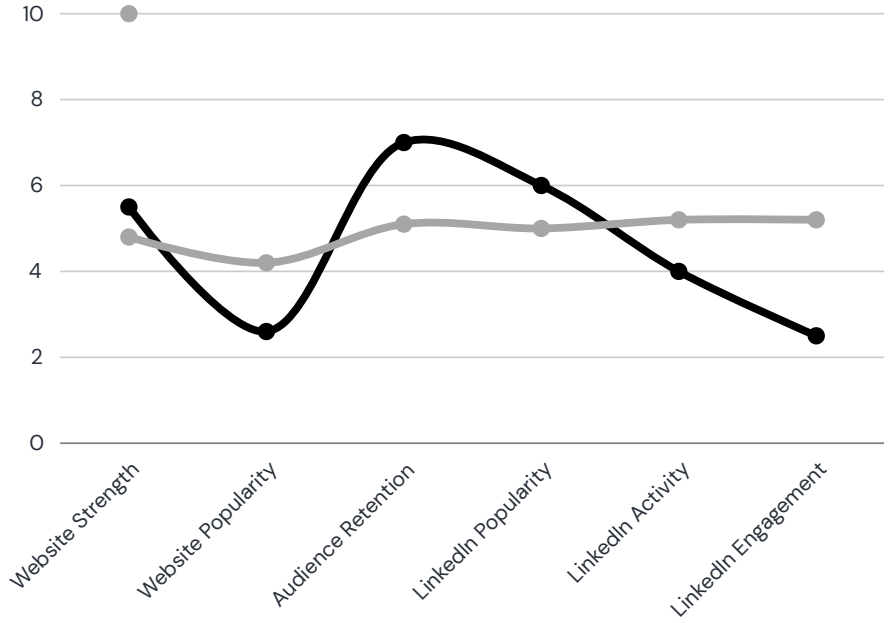
Website – Bell Gully's website confidently asserts authority through a compelling statement on the home page and maintains a consistent brand colour scheme, creating a sense of reliability. Impressively, its metrics surpass the average among similar firms in this report. To fortify its online presence, revisiting SEO strategies and content formats could amplify the website's impact. Moreover, incorporating audience-friendly legal information that speaks directly to the public could enhance audience retention and engagement.

LinkedIn - Bell Gully has an active LinkedIn presence, with 8,094 followers and a consistent posting schedule of 2-3 times a week, amassing 1,867 engagements in the last 6 months. While some aspects could use a colour boost (such as the cover picture and use of scenery images), its concise 'About Us' section hits the mark. The partner introductions in video format and the Four Fast Facts updates are particularly effective at engaging their audience. The firm's use of diverse content formats—from blogs to videos, guides, and informative PDFs—is commendable, showcasing its thought leadership. Celebrating employee achievements through highlighted PDFs is also a nice touch.

To further enhance the strategy and bolster engagement, the firm could consider increasing the frequency of Four Fast Facts updates. By initiating more informative series like this one, Bell Gully can elevate their engagement rate and solidify its brand identity, building upon its already strong following.

Buddle Findlay

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

51.9%

Avg. Score

Buddle Findlay

Commwiser Take

Website - Buddle Findlay maintains a consistent and professional brand colour scheme across its website. However, the landing page could benefit from a more controlled presentation of information, perhaps by adjusting slide speed to avoid overwhelming visitors. The firm demonstrates strong backlinks, which has a positive impact on its website strength. To improve visitor count and website popularity, Buddle Findlay could consider implementing a strategic content approach. For example, incorporating reader-centric content like FAQs could attract and engage a broader audience. Given the website's ability to retain its audience, refining the content strategy could further enhance the overall performance of the firm's website.

LinkedIn - Buddle Findlay, with 8,178 followers and 66 posts in the last 6 months, showcases brand consistency through its cover picture. However, the headline could benefit from a more personalised touch to convey the firm's unique identity. “Life at Buddle Findlay” displays the best of the firm on its page. The firm's strength lies in its thought leadership demonstrated via blogs, coupled with posts on deal announcements and achievements that effectively direct traffic to the firm's website—a sound strategy for driving online engagement.

We did observe some untapped potential in enhancing their thought leadership display. While the text-based approach is good, there's room for improvement by exploring diverse content formats and introducing engaging campaigns. Currently, the firm lags in engagement compared to others in this report, with the lowest engagement of 1,724. To address this, the firm could benefit from more consistent posting and a more robust thought leadership strategy. Subtly diversifying content formats and introducing richer imagery campaigns could create a more compelling LinkedIn presence, to effectively capture and retain audience attention.

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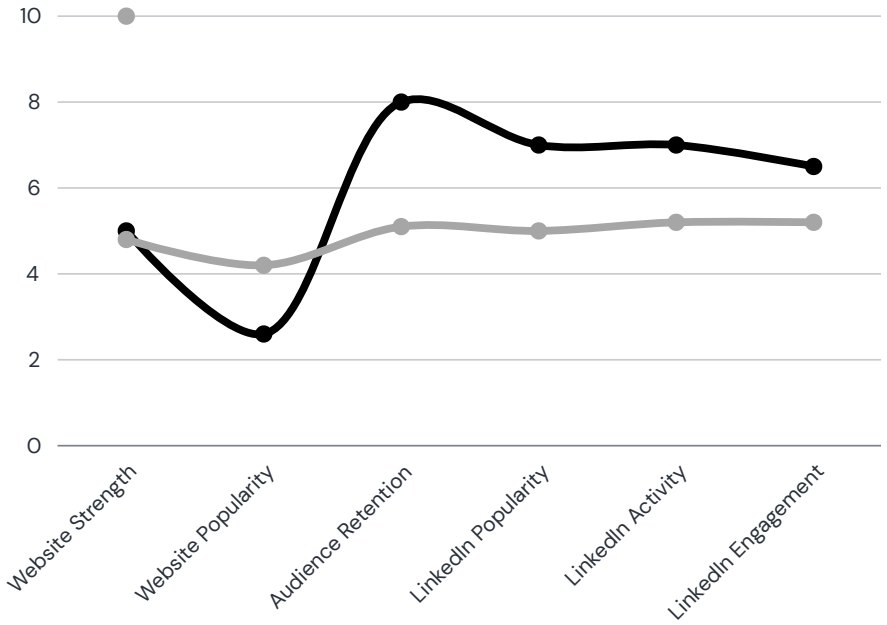
Chapman Tripp

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

63.6%

Avg. Score

Chapman Tripp

Commwiser Take

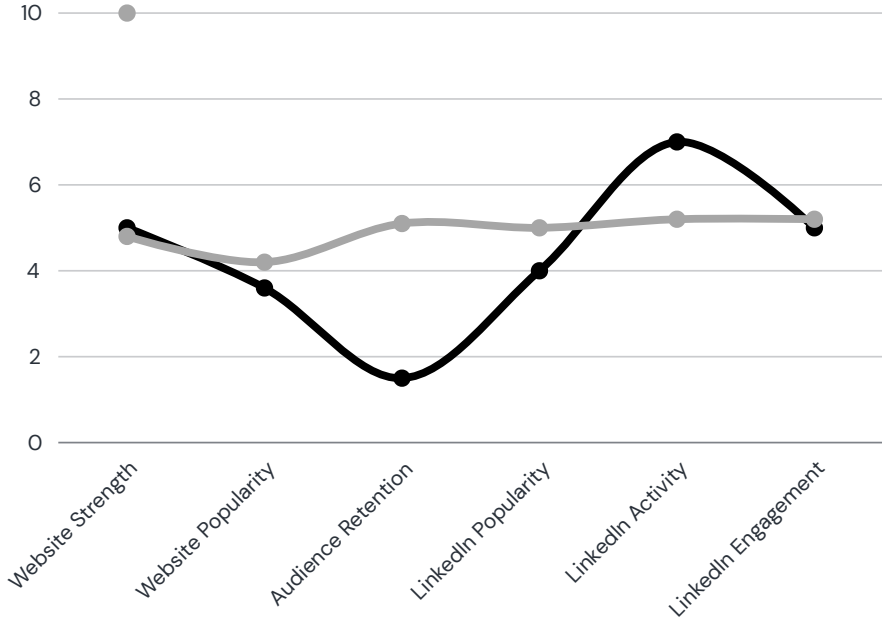
Website - Chapman Tripp's website has a visually cohesive design with consistent brand colours and seamless functionality. The website has the potential to strategically enhance its authority through high-quality backlinks and a diligent audit to remove any detrimental links. Improving technical SEO, revisiting content strategies, and integrating more reader-friendly elements like generic blogs could amplify metrics (related to website popularity and website strength) and improve the website's overall performance metrics.

LinkedIn - Chapman Tripp's LinkedIn strategy is on point, boasting 10,178 followers and 124 posts over the last 6 months. The firm has nailed the LinkedIn essentials with a captivating headline, and engaging summary. The content strikes a chord by speaking directly to readers in simple, relatable language. Ranking second in engagement among law firms is no small feat, and its diverse range of posts covering deals, sponsorships, events, awards, team updates, and insightful articles keeps its audience engaged. The incorporation of podcasts showcases the firm's openness to diverse content formats, and its consistent use of brand colours elevates the firm's overall image. However, to further enhance engagement, Chapman Tripp could consider experimenting with more interactive posts such as polls, Q&A sessions, or live streams, to directly involve its audience. Perhaps increasing the frequency of informative series like Workplace Watch or Election Policy could generate more anticipation among followers.

By incorporating these strategies, Chapman Tripp can build upon its already strong engagement (4167), fostering a more interactive and involved community on its LinkedIn page.

Dentons Kensington Swan

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

50.2%

Avg. Score

Dentons Kensington Swan

Commwiser Take

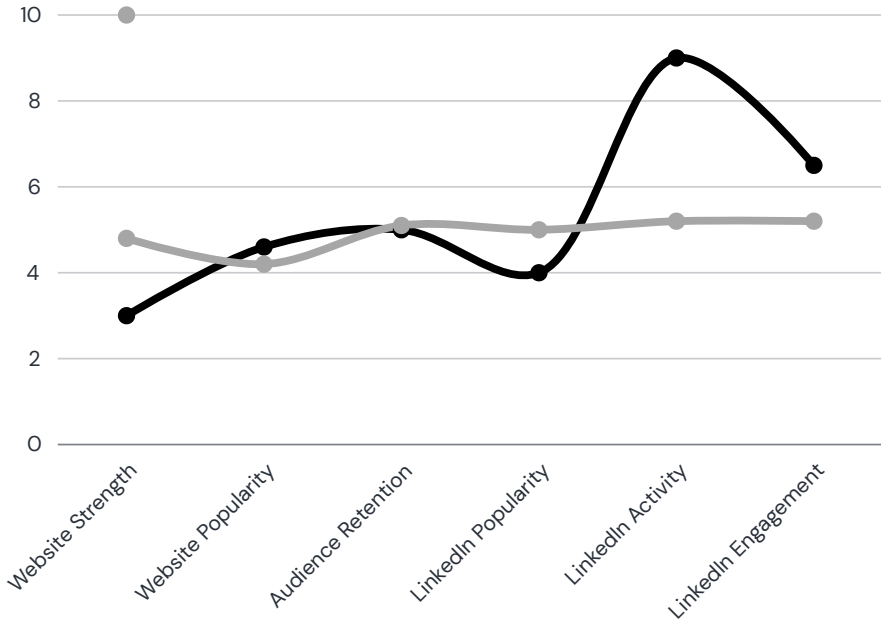
Website - Dentons Kensington Swan introduces its website with four impactful messages, redirecting readers to the Global Dentons Website, a strategy that resonates well overall. However, this approach falls short for Dentons NZ, lacking visitor retention, possibly due to a disconnect in meeting visitor needs. To address this, integrating more localised content specific to their NZ audience (without eliminating access to the Global Dentons page) could significantly enhance the site's appeal. This local focus not only caters to the audience's needs but also boosts website popularity by drawing more individuals seeking jurisdiction-relevant information to the site.

LinkedIn - Dentons New Zealand has 6,029 followers and posted 121 times, gathering 2,544 engagements in the last 6 months. As an arm of the global Dentons firm, its page maintains a consistent visual appearance with a matching cover and profile picture. The headline sparks interest, but the About Us section primarily focuses on Dentons as a global entity and could benefit from more information about the New Zealand office.

There are several positives on the firm's page. They maintain a consistent presence with podcast episodes and have effectively used the LinkedIn Newsletter tool, which has over 2,000 subscribers across 9 editions—a notable achievement. Featuring lawyer journey videos and sharing articles and newsletters is a good approach. However, most posts direct audiences to external articles, newsletters, or podcasts. Creating content specifically for LinkedIn (apart from newsletters) could further engage the audience within the platform. Increasing video content, infographics, and industry campaigns could captivate audience attention and broaden engagement beyond redirecting to external content. The page's success lies in utilising Global Dentons' resources but could benefit from tailored content designed specifically for LinkedIn to keep audiences engaged on the page itself.

Duncan Cotterill

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

63.6%

Avg. Score

Duncan Cotterill

Commwiser Take

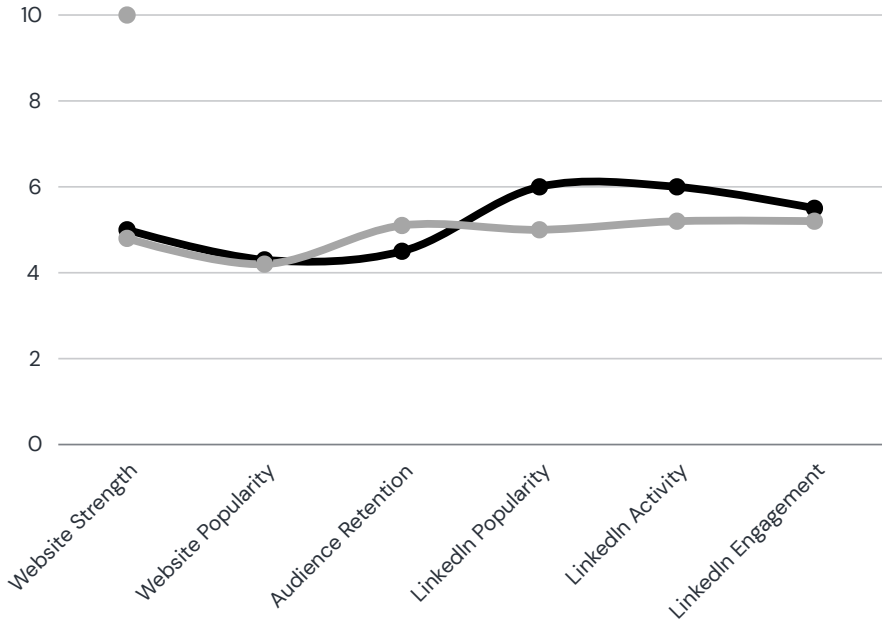
Website - Duncan Cotterill's website greets visitors with vibrant colours and engaging images. The website captivates attention on its landing page, effectively retaining its audience's interest. However, despite clear messaging in the slides, the website's overall strength appears low, potentially due to a lack of high-quality backlinks and limited impact on search results. Addressing this requires a focus on acquiring high-quality backlinks and conducting a thorough website audit to enhance its authority. While the site's layout is visually appealing, improvements in technical SEO could rectify any content discrepancies, elevating website popularity and visibility significantly. The firm could better leverage its website's ability to retain its audience by incorporating diverse content appealing to all, not solely prospective clients. Balancing general legal information and solutions to common legal issues could effectively draw and retain visitors. Implementing these strategies has the potential to propel the website to new heights.

LinkedIn - Duncan Cotterill has 6,255 followers and a solid engagement of 3,322 on 68 posts, indicating followers actively engaging with the content. The page maintains a diverse mix of website blogs, newsletters, events, and accomplishments.

However, there's an opportunity to add vibrancy to the page. The use of text is consistent, but it could be more visually striking. To inject fresh energy and become more dynamic, the firm could consider repurposing blog content into engaging videos, guides, and infographics. Additionally, highlighting more individuals as thought leaders would help to showcase the firm's unique identity. Increasing the frequency of posts could also be beneficial in expanding reach and boosting engagement, allowing the firm to connect with a wider audience. Overall, Duncan Cotterill's LinkedIn presence is strong, but there's potential to diversify the format of their content and highlight thought leaders to further demonstrate the firm's unique strengths.

MinterEllisonRuddWatts

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

58.8%

Avg. Score

MinterEllisonRuddWatts

Commwiser Take

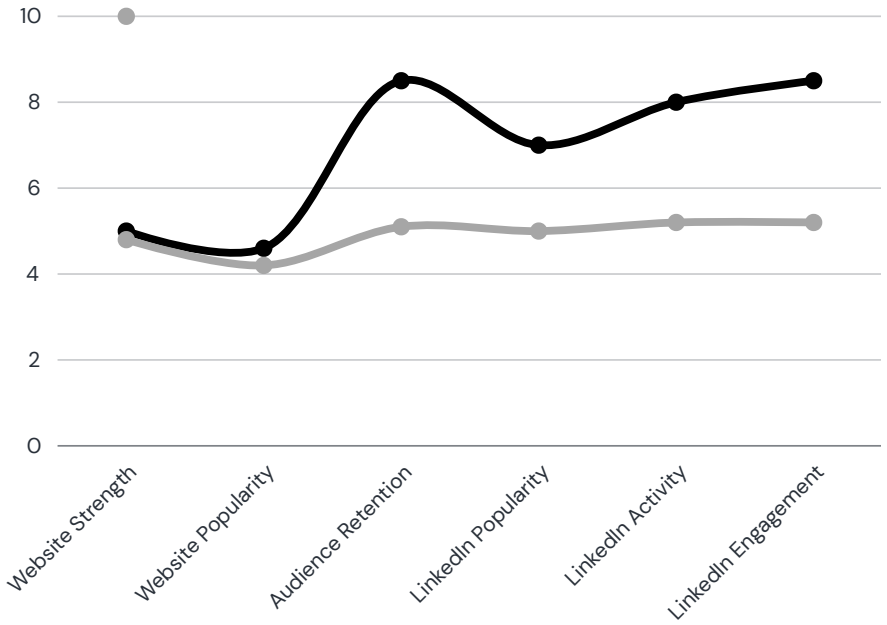
Website - The firm's website embraces a clean, minimalistic design that complements its red and white colour scheme, creating an aesthetically pleasing experience. With a compelling opening statement, MinterEllison effectively presents its firm's identity. While current website metrics align with the report's average, the firm could increase its website strength and popularity by integrating a robust SEO and content strategy tailored for both prospective clients and general readers. Addressing discrepancies in keywords and SEO through a content audit, acquiring high-quality backlinks, and consistently publishing engaging content could significantly improve audience retention and overall website performance.

LinkedIn - With 8,335 followers and 104 posts in 6 months, the firm ticks all the boxes, boasting a polished profile from the cover photo to the "About Us" section. The firm's active advocacy for Diversity and Inclusion, and its Rainbow Tick reaccreditation shine through in its posts, reflecting genuine commitment. The firm's podcast collection, notably 'The tech suite', showcases a strong inclination towards thought leadership. Moreover, the ongoing 'Cover to Cover' series, now on its 28th edition, speaks volumes about the firm's dedication to sharing insights. Exploring video content and infographics could diversify its page while engaging the audience with richer content to further amplify its thought leadership. These additions could inject freshness without overwhelming the audience.

An engagement of 3,476, suggests a receptive audience. There's room to leverage this by offering varied content formats for a more enriched engagement experience. Overall, the firm's commitment to Diversity and Inclusion and a strong emphasis on thought leadership positions them as a noteworthy presence on LinkedIn.

Russell McVeagh

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

76.1%

Avg. Score

Russell McVeagh

Commwiser Take

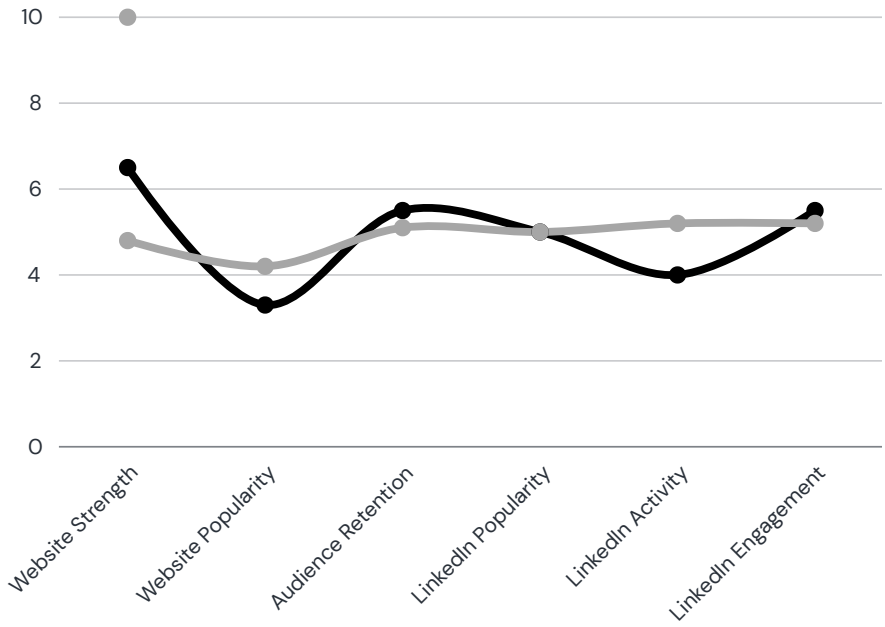
Website - The Russell McVeagh website confidently asserts its authority through a compelling statement on the landing page and maintains a consistent brand colour scheme, imparting a sense of reliability. Impressively, its metrics surpass the average among similar firms in this report. To fortify its online presence, revisiting SEO strategies and content formats could amplify the website's impact. Moreover, incorporating audience-friendly legal information that speaks directly to the public could enhance audience retention and engagement.

LinkedIn - Russell McVeagh stands out with a significant following of 10,387—the highest among comparable firms in this report. Its 153 posts in the last 6 months have resulted in an impressive engagement of 5,594, the highest in this report. Overall, its LinkedIn presence is highly successful. The cover picture and profile picture complement each other, offering strong visual appeal. The headline and 'About Us' sections are succinct but effective. The firm excels in leveraging video content, particularly in featuring Partners through informative series like the Digital Download Series and Let's Talk Climate Series. These videos effectively engage the audience, along with the firm's knack for highlighting recent awards and campaigns such as the Watching Brief and RMA reform series. Its diverse content caters to various interests, offering tax updates, ESG overviews, and more.

A subtle suggestion for improvement could involve aligning thumbnails for blogs more closely with the firm's brand colours and themes. This could enhance visual consistency and further reinforce its brand identity without detracting from its already strong engagement strategy. Overall, its active presence and well-executed content strategies have propelled the firm to lead in engagement, making it a benchmark for effective LinkedIn utilisation among similar firms.

Simpson Grierson

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

53.8%

Avg. Score

Simpson Grierson

Commwiser Take

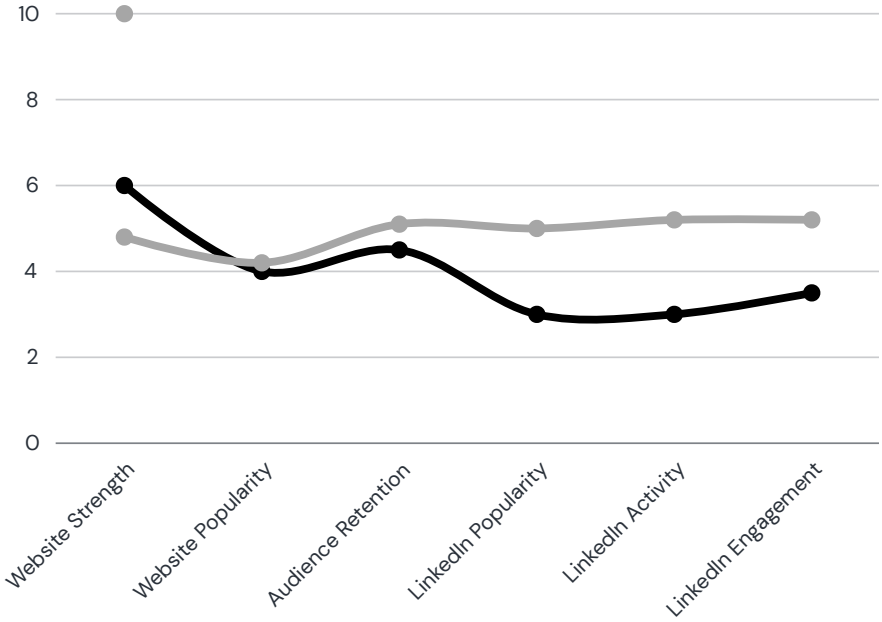
Website - Simpson Grierson strategically establishes credibility through concise statements that are displayed prominently on the landing page, and effectively communicate the firm's philosophy. Despite this, the website's popularity metrics sit at the lower spectrum, potentially indicating a lack of returning visitors. Broadening content appeal to a wider audience demographic could address this issue. Additionally, while the website boasts high-quality imagery, revisiting the UX/UI (user experience/user interface) may enhance navigation and ensure a seamless user experience. Investing in this factor could increase the website's popularity.

LinkedIn - With 7,892 followers and 68 posts in the past 6 months, this firm's engagement of 3,322 has successfully fostered a connection with its audience. Its approach, featuring real faces in posts from summer/winter clerks to Partners, creates a warm and personable aesthetic throughout its LinkedIn page. This emphasis on authenticity with real images rather than stock photos resonates well, establishing a genuine connection with the audience. While the firm page excels in humanising its brand, there are growth opportunities. Introducing more video content could further enhance the firm's people focus and strengthen engagement. Additionally, expanding into informative series or legal update campaigns on LinkedIn could boost its engagement rate. Moreover, increasing the posting frequency might help expand its brand identity to a broader audience.

Overall, the authentic portrayal of its team members and celebratory culture shines through, creating a welcoming LinkedIn presence. Incorporating these suggestions could further elevate engagement and outreach, solidifying its position as a relatable and approachable firm.

Tompkins Wake

Commwiser Digital Report Card



Score

45%

Avg. Score

Tompkins Wake

Commwiser Take

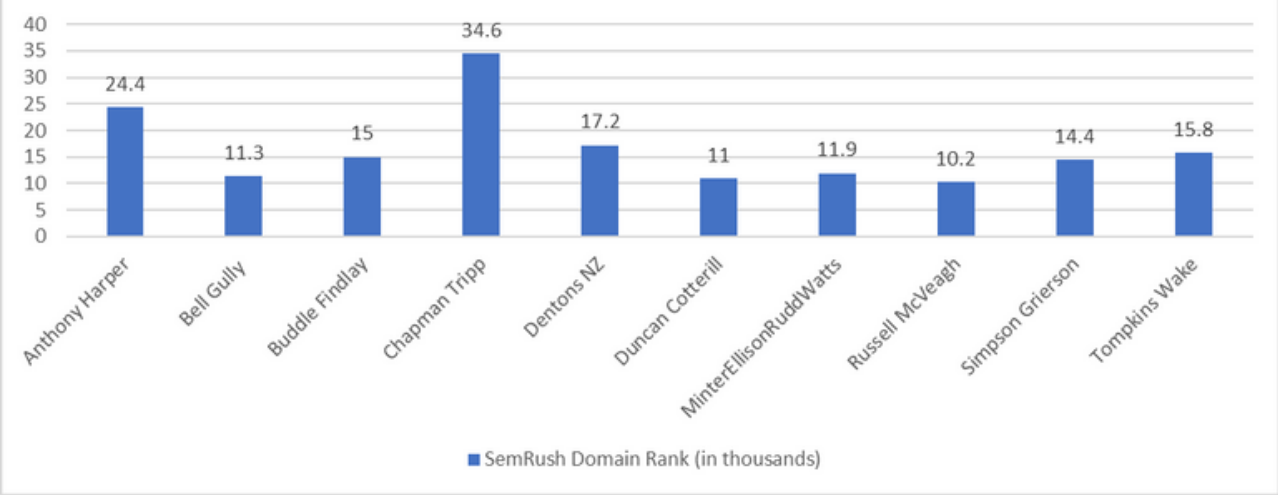
Website - By welcoming visitors with an engaging "Our People" slide, Tompkins Wake's website effectively humanises the firm through authentic faces. Incorporating real people across the website enhances its visual appeal and personalises the experience. However, there's an opportunity to strengthen the website by cultivating more 'followed' links. This entails acquiring high-quality backlinks, offering authoritative content, and implementing internal linking to enhance the website's authority. By employing these strategies, the website could increase its popularity organically through search engines and improve audience retention once foundational metrics are addressed.

LinkedIn - With 4,951 followers, the firm has demonstrated a positive engagement with 45 posts in the last 6 months, resulting in 2,029 engagements. The firm's LinkedIn presence stands out, notably with a cover picture ingeniously incorporating words that echo the firm's guiding philosophy, adding depth and significance to its profile.

What truly distinguishes this firm is its unique approach, notably through the (pdf) series, T|W Insights, and the Privacy & Generative AI Tools checklist. These initiatives reflect the firm's commitment to sharing legal information with its audience. The firm should look at posting more of these. Despite featuring a diverse array of blogs, news articles, and firm and employee accomplishments, the essence of thought leadership seems somewhat underrepresented. The firm's portrayal as a people-centric organisation, celebrating and encouraging the firm's members, is good. However, considering the extensive pool of over 100 lawyers, there's immense potential for the exploration of deeper thought leadership. Elevating the firm's status as a leading thought influencer could be achieved by posting more frequently, broadening audience reach, and concurrently establishing its authority in the legal landscape.

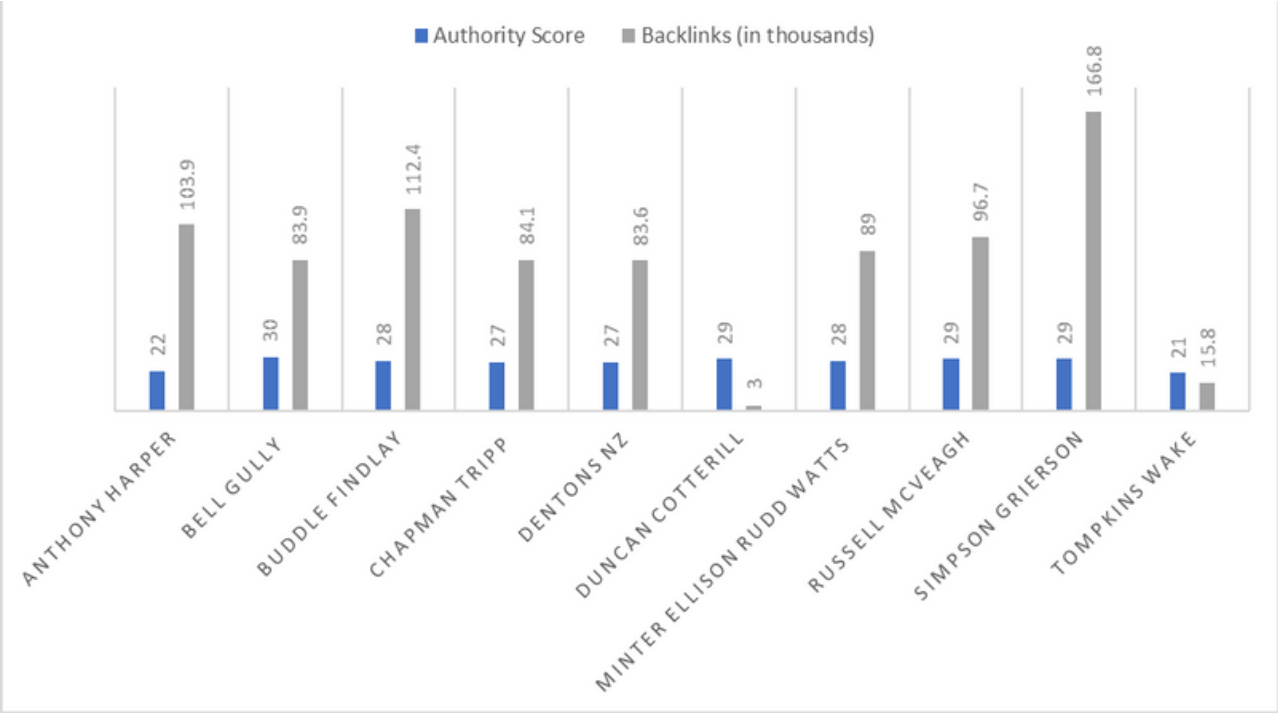
Data Summary

SEMrush Rank



The SEMrush Rank is crucial for assessing a website's presence. A lower rank indicates stronger visibility, authority, and popularity; a higher rank indicates lesser online popularity. Russell McVeagh, Duncan Cotterill, Bell Gully, and MinterEllison demonstrate commendable ranks when compared to their peers in the industry. However, firms like Anthony Harper, and Chapman Tripp struggle with higher ranks, pushing for more comprehensive Content and SEO strategy to be adopted. These firms could invest in SEO, backlinking, content creation, and social media engagement to improve their SEMrush Rank. Addressing these areas will also enhance visibility and authority amongst their contemporaries.

Authority Score & Backlinks



Authority scores and backlinks are crucial indicators that offer insight into the strength and trustworthiness of law firm websites. In general, a high authority score and a substantial number of backlinks are desirable for maintaining a robust online presence. However, some law firms in our dataset require assistance in these areas.

Leading the pack in the report is Bell Gully, with an authority score of 30, setting a high benchmark for other firms. In our analysis, firms like Duncan Cotterill, Russell McVeagh, Simpson Grierson, and Buddle Findlay, also demonstrate close competition in authority scores. Law firms with authority scores of 28+ are well-established firms showcasing digital prowess.

Simpson Grierson stands out with the highest number of backlinks, boasting an impressive 166.8K links, solidifying its strong digital presence in the industry. Duncan Cotterill could enhance their online credibility through a solid backlink acquisition strategy, given its considerable authority score. Tompkins Wake might benefit from a content strategy focusing on building authority scores and securing high-quality backlinks.

Law firms are encouraged to build diverse backlinks to boost authority scores, increase online credibility, and improve search engine rankings.

Ben Paul
CEO
THE BD LADDER

"A strong digital footprint, enhances a firm's BD efforts. With the right focus it can engage with clients and create more trust in your brand. Ultimately, this can lead to an increased reputation and more incoming leads"

Aman Abbas
Founder & CEO
commwiser

"Today's digital world has democratised the content and visibility game. So irrespective of their size, the firms can now showcase their thought leadership and establish their brand authority without the limitations that come with traditional ways."

7 Tips to Improve Your Digital Footprint

1. **Optimise for search engines –** Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is essential to improve visibility and generate organic traffic to your website. Your website should be optimised for relevant key words, meta tags, and descriptions. It should also include relevant content, such as blog posts, articles, and case studies. All firms invest heavily in their websites, so it makes sense to ensure that is widely viewed by and visible to your target audience.

2. **Have a clear LinkedIn strategy –** Post regularly, at least twice a week on your company page. Make the posts a mixture of thought leadership, legal updates, and firm news stories. Encourage internal support of your company posts to help build wider reach and engagement.

3. **Develop an actionable content marketing strategy –** Create relevant and engaging content to establish credibility and attract clients. Having a clear 6-month or 12-month plan in place enables for timely delivery of content, that requires input from busy people.

4. **Consider branching out into video and utilising YouTube –** This is an excellent platform for law firms to broaden their thought leadership via videos. It would be interesting to note that, every week, 78% of individuals watch videos online, while 55% watch online videos daily. This year, online video is predicted to make up 82.5% of all web traffic.

5. **Use email marketing –** Email marketing is an effective way to stay in touch with clients, promote events, changes in legislation, and generate referrals.

6. **Pay attention to PR (Public Relations) exercises –** A PR campaign enhances a brand's visibility and reputation. Such a campaign involves promoting practice areas and thought leadership of lawyers in the media, utilising contact, creativity and innovation.

7. **Utilise analytics –** Analytics can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of your firm's digital presence strategy. Law firms should regularly monitor website traffic, social media engagement, and email campaign performance. By leveraging analytical tools, law firms can adjust their digital footprint strategy in line with the insights gained from these analytics.

Meet the Team

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Senior Manager, Commwiser

About Commwiser

Commwiser is a specialist PR and Law Firm Marketing firm.

We have a market-leading reputation for expertise in Law Firm Marketing & PR, litigation PR, crisis communications and social media marketing.
We draw on our industry experience, market insight and our contacts in the media and more widely create compelling communications campaigns that deliver results.
We help you with your marketing strategy and milestone-based plans to achieve your growth objectives. We are experts in building a strong narrative that supports your brand and helps grow your business or to protect your reputation against potential risks. We will build the narrative with you, sharpen your messages and then go out and tell your story in the most compelling way possible.

Meet the Team

BEN PAUL
CEO, The BD Ladder

LUCY KING
Marketing Executive, The BD Ladder

About The BD Ladder

The BD Ladder is a Business Development and Marketing consultancy that specialises in working with Law Firms and other Professional Services.

Our aim is to provide simple step-by-step sales and marketing advice which enables our clients to grow their law firms, and most importantly their profits.

Our core services are:

- BD Coaching
- Business Development Growth Strategy
- BD & Marketing Director on Call
- Bid/Tender Responses
- Marketing for Professional Services
- Professional Services BD Training

We tailor our support to meet the needs of each individual client to ensure they have the tools to climb the ladder of success.

bdladder.com

Thanks for reading.

THE BD LADDER x commwiser

THE LAW FIRM DIGITAL FOOTPRINT REPORT 2023

JUNE-NOV 2023

NEW ZEALAND

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