



How to Build a Perfect Backlink Profile

for the U.S. Real Estate,
Law and Accounting Firms

SEMrush Study 2018

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01. Introduction

The professional services industry continues to expand steadily and is expected to show a 5.4% growth rate from 2016 to 2020, according to the Professional Services Market Global Report 2017. Along with a strong demand for services like real estate, law, and accounting, competition between companies that work in these industries remains fierce. So how can your business succeed in a crowded marketplace?

Creating a solid backlink profile can give businesses the opportunity to improve their search engine rankings, raising visibility among their target audience. If any pages of your website are getting organic links from other reputable sources, those pages can rank higher in Google, as this factor remains one of the strongest signals in its search algorithm. However, finding quality link sources can be a daunting venture.

For our brand new research, we analyzed the backlink profiles of the leading companies in three highly competitive industries in the U.S.: Real Estate, Legal Services, and Accounting. The results of the study helped us discover the most popular and the most reputable domains that link back to the sites we analyzed.

We hope that the insights provided in this research will help companies find valuable backlink sources, make data-informed decisions, and adjust their link building strategy accordingly to accomplish their business goals.

02. Methodology

We analyzed the websites of over 2,000 firms working in the **real estate, legal services, and accounting** industries. For our research we used lists of the leading U.S. companies in these industries, according to the popular niche rankings. We then found over 60,000 referring domains that link back to these companies.

Using the SEMrush data, we looked at the backlink profiles of the real estate, law, and accounting firms to lift the veil on their link building secrets.

First, we selected referring domains that link back to over 50% of the companies analyzed in each industry. Next, we wanted to identify both the most reputable and most popular referring domains for each industry. For this purpose, we used two different approaches.

Approach #1: Identifying the most reputable referring domains

To determine the authority of the referring domains we used our Authority Score metric. Since not all links are equal, website owners must pay careful attention to the domains they get their links from.

Authority Score measures the overall quality of a domain and is based on the following SEMrush data:

- Backlink data including referring domains, follow and nofollow links¹, Domain Score², Trust Score³, and more
- Organic search data including organic search traffic and positions
- Website traffic data

This compound metric helps to understand how valuable a backlink from a referring domain is to your website's SEO, or how beneficial a new backlink would be from a domain that you are hoping to get a link from.

1 **Follow links** are links that instruct search engine crawlers to follow the linked-to website and thus communicate trust to it. Meanwhile, **nofollow links** send users to another site if clicked on, but tell search bots not to crawl the link.

2 **Domain Score** measures the importance of a domain based on the **volume of links** pointing back to the domain. Volume represents link "weight," or the cumulative number of backlinks pointing to the page that points to the target page. It is calculated similar to the way Google PageRank was calculated.

3 **Trust Score** places more emphasis on **high-quality backlinks** and measures the trustworthiness of a webpage or domain based on the number of links coming from **highly trusted websites**. If the Trust Score of your domain is much lower than its Domain Score, it can be a sign that your website has too many low-quality backlinks.

The authority and quality of a website is highly important, since earning links from a good domain serves as a solid trust endorsement for your site and can boost your SEO efforts. On the other hand, receiving links from sources with low authority will do you no good or can even hurt your site, in terms of SEO.

To explore backlink profiles of the leading industry companies and check the authority of referring domains, we used [SEMrush's group of Backlink Analytics](#) reports.

Approach #2: Identifying the most popular referring domains

To identify the most popular link sources, we looked at how many of the analyzed corporate websites have backlinks from the listed referring domains. The most popular domains were defined as domains that were referring to most of the websites analyzed. In the following, we use the term **Matches** to denote the percentage of the companies that a particular domain links to. For example, a domain with 90% Matches would mean that this domain links to 90% of the companies analyzed.

To find out which domains the companies get their backlinks from, and their Matches, we used [SEMrush's Backlink Gap](#).

To make an informed decision when searching for potential backlink sources, it is important to understand how much traffic these link building prospects get, in addition to their authority and popularity. For this reason, we also looked at the estimated monthly traffic of each referring domain. As we were analyzing U.S. firms, we considered only U.S. traffic during February 2018. Estimated monthly traffic data was taken from [SEMrush's Traffic Analytics](#) reports.

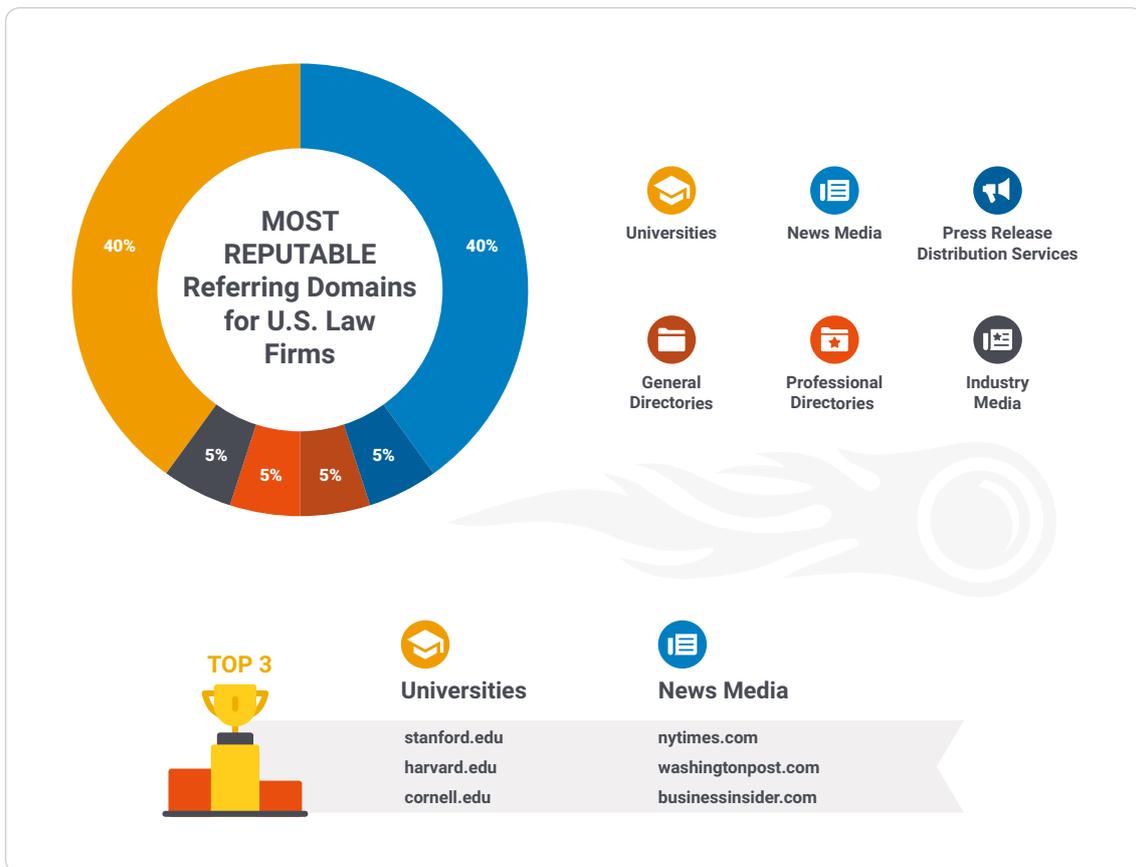
Now let's dive deep into our findings ...

03. Research Findings

Legal Services

We looked at backlink profiles of the leading law firms in the U.S. and discovered where the backlinks for these companies are coming from.

First, we identified the most reputable referring domains, based on their Authority Scores.

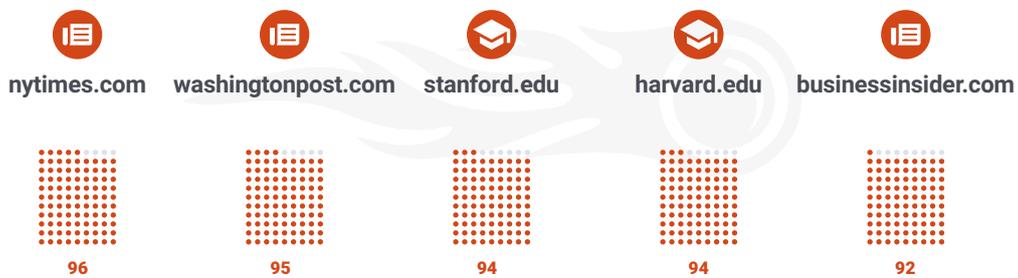


KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Among the most reputable domains, news media and universities appeared to be the main link sources for legal services firms – each of them accounts for 40% of all domains from the top 20 list. These categories are followed by industry media, local directories, professional directories, and press release distribution services, each of them accounting for 5% of all the domains.

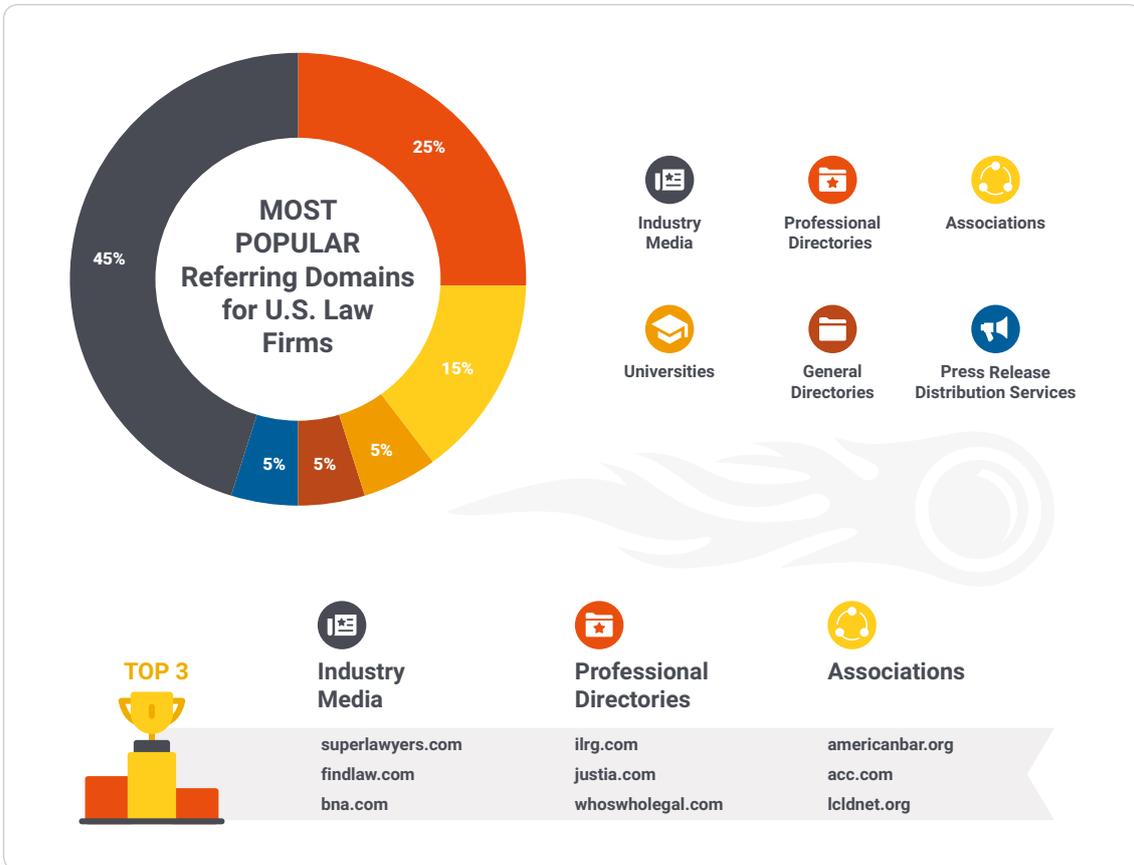
- Generally, backlinks placed on university websites come from the lists of alumni, including their current job positions and their company news.
- The high percentage of universities among the most reputable linking domains can point to the fact that the leading law firms are closely connected to the academic communities of lawyers.
- Over 60% of industry leaders have backlinks from each of the most reputable domains, which is reflected in a strong online presence of law firms. If most of your rivals have backlinks from these domains, you can also try to acquire a link from these resources to keep up with the competition.

Top 5 Most Reputable Referring Domains for U.S. Law Firms by SEMRush Authority Score



[Download the complete list of the top 20 most reputable domains \(XLS\)](#) →

As for the most popular referring domains and their categories, we see a whole new picture.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Industry media, professional directories, and professional associations prevail among the top 20 most popular referring domains.
- It seems that the leading industry players put their efforts into building a solid online presence – the absolute majority (80-99%) of the leading law firms have backlinks to their websites on these domains.

This is just an introductory excerpt

You can download the full version here:

<https://www.semrush.com/ebooks/how-to-build-perfect-backlink-profile/>