Market Authority Index

Professional and Business Services

Sector Executive Summary

Q2 2026 | 13 brands in this sector out of a total of 164 Assessed brands.

Average Market Authority Index: 57.6/100

Median: 59 | Certification rate: 38.5%*

*(*achieve a score of 65 or above)*

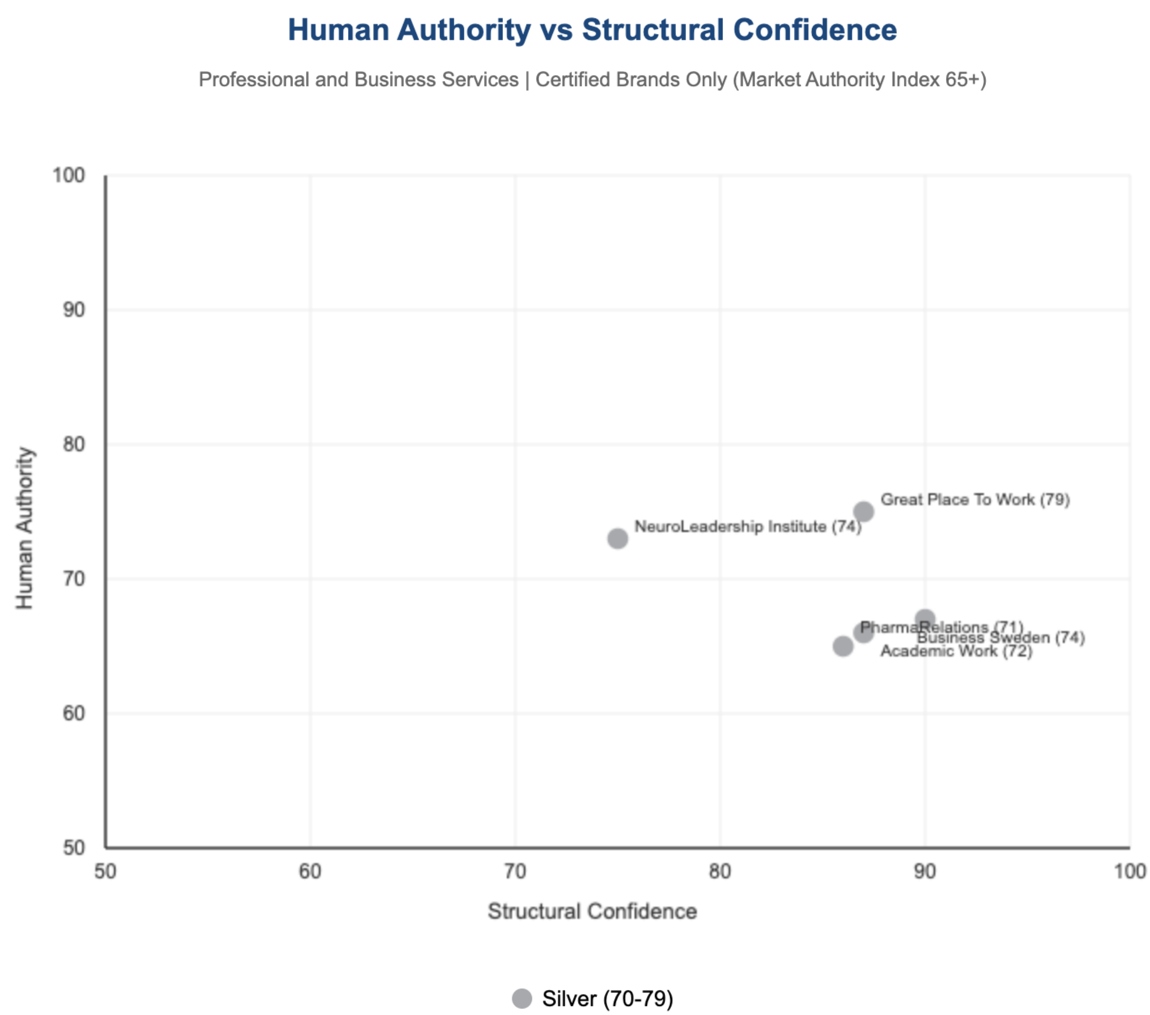
21 July 2026

Sector Executive Summary

Prepared by Digital Scorecard

Sector Overview

Professional and Business Services is the lowest-scoring sector in the Q2 2026 Market Authority Index benchmark, averaging 57.6 against a cross-sector portfolio average of 67.1. The sector's median of 63 places the typical professional services brand in the Developing band, 7 points below the portfolio median of 70. **With a certification rate of just 38.5%**, just over one in three assessed brands meet or exceed the certification threshold of 65.



No brand in this sector achieves Gold certification (80+). Five brands achieve Silver (70-79), and none sit in the Certified band (65-69). The remaining brands score below the certification threshold, with four scoring below 50 and classified as At Risk.

This is not entirely surprising. Professional services firms, particularly B2B consultancies, agencies, and staffing businesses, tend to invest heavily in relationships, referrals, and direct sales rather than in the kind of structured, public-facing digital authority that the Market Authority Index measures. Their strengths are often invisible to AI systems and buyer discovery tools because they exist in private conversations, client networks, and industry reputation rather than in publicly verifiable digital evidence.

The sector is also almost entirely of pure B2B brands, which aligns with a consistent pattern across the benchmark: B2B brands score lower on average than B2C brands, primarily because B2C businesses face stronger market pressure to build visible proof, reviews, and structured trust signals. The other brands have a mix of B2B and B2C which also tend to score higher as the B2C part has a greater focus being visible to customers.

Where Professional Services Brands Are Strong

Strategic Positioning is the sector's strongest pillar at 18.8 out of 25, close to the portfolio average of 18.7. This is notable because it means professional services brands are generally clear about what they do and who they serve. The value propositions are well-articulated, and the positioning language is specific. This is a sector where expertise and niche focus are the core offering, and the data shows that most brands communicate this effectively.

The sector's weakest pillar is Proof and Validation at just 9.8 out of 25, below the portfolio average of 11.8. This is the defining gap. Professional services firms struggle to make their client outcomes, endorsements, and third-party recognition visible and structured. Many have strong client relationships and impressive track records, but this evidence lives in proposals, pitch decks, and private conversations rather than on their websites in a form that search engines, AI systems, and independent buyers can find and verify. It should be noted that story telling does not mean proof and cases are usually presented in a weak manner and not as credible as they need to be.

Pillar	Sector Avg (/25)	Standard Deviation	Portfolio Avg (/25)
Strategic Positioning	18.8	3.2	18.7
Proof & Validation	9.8	4.7	11.8
Trust Infrastructure	13.8	4.0	16.7
Market Presence	13.9	4.1	14.9

Based on all 13 Professional and Business Services brands.

The standard deviations are all relatively high suggesting a great deal of variability between companies, especially on Proof & Validation.

Sector Leaders

Five brands achieve Silver certification, the only certified tier represented in this sector and each in a different subsector:

Brand	Market Authority Index	Tier	Subsector
Great Place To Work	79	Silver	Employer Branding
Business Sweden	74	Silver	Business Consulting & Advisory
NeuroLeadership Institute	74	Silver	Leadership & Executive Development
Academic Work	72	Silver	Recruitment & HR
PharmaRelations	71	Silver	Business Consulting & Advisory

Great Place To Work leads the sector at 79, just one point short of Gold. It is the only brand in the sector that seems to have systematically built visible, structured proof of its market authority. Its Proof and Validation score of 18 out of 25 is nearly double the sector average, reflecting a business model that inherently generates public evidence: published rankings, employer certifications, and media coverage that are all indexed, structured, and verifiable.

NeuroLeadership Institute scores the highest Human Authority in the sector at 73, driven by the strongest Strategic Positioning score (24/25) of any brand assessed. This reflects deep thought leadership positioning backed by published research and a clear methodological framework.

The Business Consulting and Advisory subsector is represented by two of the five certified brands (Business Sweden, PharmaRelations). These are organisations that have invested in translating their expertise into structured digital authority.

Where the Gap Remains

Trust Infrastructure at 13.8 out of 25 is three full points below the portfolio average of 16.7, the largest gap of any pillar. Professional and business services websites frequently lack structured data markup, clear privacy and terms pages, transparent team profiles, and the kind of trust signals that buyers and AI systems use to assess credibility. Many websites are designed as digital brochures rather than as structured trust environments.

Market Presence at 13.9 out of 25 is also a little below the portfolio average of 14.9. While some brands maintain strong LinkedIn and content marketing programs, many have thin or infrequent digital footprints beyond their core website.

The Proof and Validation leaders in this sector are clear and also reflected in the overall standings.

Brand	**Proof and Validation (/25)**	**Market Authority Index**
Great Place To Work	18	79
NeuroLeadership Institute	17	74

Score Distribution for Professional and Business Services

Band	**Score Range**	**Brands**
Exceptional	80-100	0
Strong	70-79	5
Developing	60-69	3
Emerging	50-59	1
At Risk	Below 50	4

The distribution is bottom-heavy compared to other sectors. Most brands (8 of 13) score below 60, placing them in the Emerging or At Risk bands. This is the most skewed distribution of any sector in the benchmark. It is a pattern that we are seeing for B2B businesses and illustrates an opportunity.

What This Means for Professional Services Brands

This sector's results reveal a structural challenge that is specific to B2B professional and business services: the business model itself does not naturally generate the kind of public, structured evidence that builds digital market authority. Consumer brands accumulate reviews, ratings, media mentions, and social proof as a natural byproduct of their operations. Professional services firms accumulate client relationships, repeat business, and word-of-mouth referrals, none of which are visible to AI-driven discovery systems.

The opportunity is significant precisely because the bar is low. With no Gold-certified brands and only five achieving Silver, any professional services firm that deliberately invests in structured digital authority will stand out. The gap between Great Place To Work (79) and the sector average (57.6) is 21.4 points, the widest leader-to-average gap of any sector. This means a modest, systematic investment in the right areas can move a brand from invisible to competitive.

The five Silver-certified brands share common traits: they have published case studies or research, they maintain active thought leadership programmes, they have structured their websites with clear trust signals, and they have built proof infrastructure that is findable by both human visitors and AI systems.

What Should Professional and Business Services Brands Do Next?

The data points to three practical priorities for professional services brands looking to strengthen their Market Authority:

1. Build visible proof infrastructure. The sector scores 9.8 out of 25 on Proof and Validation, the lowest of any sector. The most impactful single action is making client outcomes visible: published case studies with specific results, client testimonials with attribution, industry awards, media coverage, and third-party endorsements. These need to be structured (not buried in PDFs or hidden behind login walls) so that search engines and AI systems can find them.

2. Invest in Trust Infrastructure. At 13.8 out of 25, this is three points below the portfolio average. Concrete actions: ensure team profiles are comprehensive and up to date, implement structured data markup (schema.org) for organisation, people, and services, make privacy policies and terms of service clear and current, and ensure contact and engagement paths are fully functional and transparent.

3. Translate expertise into findable content. Professional services brands often have deep expertise that is not reflected in their digital presence. The brands scoring highest on Strategic Positioning have translated their knowledge into published research, methodology frameworks, regular thought leadership content, and structured service descriptions. The goal is not content volume but content that demonstrates expertise in a form that AI systems can index, understand, and recommend.

Assessed vs. Full Dataset Comparison

Professional and Business Services is the lowest-scoring sector in the benchmark on every aggregate measure. The sector average of 57.6 sits almost 10 points below the cross-sector average of 67.1, and the certification rate of 38.5% is almost half the dataset-wide rate of 64.3%.

This gap is partly structural (B2B firms face less market pressure to build public proof) and partly a matter of investment priorities (many professional services firms allocate marketing budget to events, direct sales, and referral networks rather than digital authority). The data suggests that this creates a significant window of opportunity for firms willing to invest differently.

Metric	Prof Services Assessed (n=13)	Full Dataset (n=694)
Mean Market Authority Index	57.6	67.1
Standard Deviation	17.7	12.8
Median	63	70
Certification Rate (65+)	38.5%	64.3%

The high standard deviation of this sector really illustrates the sector essentially has two clusters: a competitive top five (71–79) and a long tail of underperformers (22–57).

About the Market Authority Index

What It Measures

The Market Authority Index is a composite score (0-100) that measures how discoverable, credible, and recommendable a brand is from the buyer's perspective. It combines two dimensions:

- **Human Authority (70% weight):** The strength of a brand's buyer-facing credibility, measured across four pillars; Strategic Positioning, Proof and Validation, Trust Infrastructure, and Market Presence. Each pillar is scored out of 25, for a maximum of 100. It is a measure of Market Visibility.
- **Structural Confidence (30% weight):** The soundness of a brand's corporate and operational foundations, including filing compliance, financial risk signals, governance stability, and operational longevity. It is a measure of business strength and durability.

Formula

Market Authority Index = (Human Authority x 0.70) + (Structural Confidence x 0.30)

Structural Confidence Cap: If a brand's Structural Confidence score is below 40/100 and regardless of its Human Authority score, the Market Authority Index is capped at 65 regardless of the formula result. This prevents structurally unsound but authority-rich brands from achieving misleadingly high composite scores.

Certification Tiers

Tier	Score Threshold
Gold	80 or above
Silver	70-79
Certified	65-69

Brands scoring below 65 are not certified but receive a full diagnostic assessment.

Assessment Methodology

All brands in this sector summary have been assessed using the full Market Authority Index methodology as defined in the Market Authority Standard (Version 1.1), details here. This includes a complete Human Authority audit across all four sub-pillars, Structural Confidence verification using public filings and financial data, and scoring against the standardised framework.

The Market Authority Index is based entirely on publicly observable, buyer-facing information. It does not use self-reported data, and assessment is conducted independently of the brands being scored.

The Benchmark Dataset

This sector summary draws from the Q2 2026 benchmark portfolio of 164 fully assessed brands across 25 sectors. The full Market Authority Index dataset includes 694 brands scored across three tiers:

Tier	Brands	Average Score	Method
Assessed	164	64.1	Full audit methodology
Estimated	340	69.1	Structured signal analysis
Expected	190	65.0	Observable market signals

For the full cross-sector analysis, methodology details, and complete benchmark data, refer to the Market Authority Index Benchmark Intelligence Report 2026, Q2 Edition here.

Explore all assessed Professional and Business Services brands in the Market Authority Index Certified Directory: https://digitalscorecard.com/sector/professional-business-services/

This report has been produced by Digital Scorecard. The Market Authority Index is based on the Market Authority Standard.

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Data snapshot: Q2 2026

Sector portfolio: 13 brands