

MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS

Co-authored Articles In Industry Trade Publications

By Janet Falk

The complex and thorny problems your attorneys solve for clients are not unique. Doubtless, many of the clients' competitors and other industry players face similar and troublesome issues. Your colleagues can reach out to these prospective clients, as well as diverse influencers and multiple referral sources, while they simultaneously showcase their in-depth knowledge and extensive experience in a niche field. The ideal showcase tactic is to write an article for an industry trade publication.

Trade publications deliver industry-specific news with tremendous value to their readers. Your firm's attorneys are poised to deliver powerful and actionable insights to these target audiences. Such ideas are not featured in general business magazines (local or national) or the business section of the metropolitan newspaper. Rather, these practical pointers in industry publications go directly to readers who eagerly await market-tested solutions.

HOW TO REACH YOUR PROSPECTS AND REFERRAL SOURCES

Here's how to reach this most desirable group of prospects and referral sources.

1. A case study, with your client as co-author, will be compelling to the publication's editor, who is eager to offer proven tactics and tips that help readers to save time and money. Of course, avoiding

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litigation is a helpful bonus. Most editors are attracted to reports from the field with strategic pointers that readers can implement, either by contracting with an attorney or by tapping internal resources.

2. A pragmatic article that focuses on a time-sensitive issue, recounts the resolution of a complicated situation or specifies the necessary steps to address a change in regulation or legislation is precisely what these readers are compelled to read. Touting a recent success may also inspire other companies in the market to take a leaf from your partner's book. Lessons learned are particularly valuable and, therefore, highly persuasive examples of the attorney's ability and accomplishment. By sharing these approaches, your firm demonstrates the range of the attorney's experience in an applied setting relevant to the readers.

Riding the coattails of your client's stature in the industry, the attorney author is granted enhanced credibility as a resource, in spite of his being an outsider to the sector.

WHY HAVE A CO-AUTHOR?

Co-authoring an article is a *mutually beneficial process* for the partner at your firm, as well as for the client. Begin by identifying the hot topic or key theme for the proposed article. Typically, this draws upon a recently consummated transaction, a winning litigation, or a looming deadline for implementation of a regulation or law, among other matters. The meetings and conversations that take place to develop the ideas for the article will prove to be a bonding experience with the client as the collaboration and the draft progress.

This collaboration is a clear win-win. From the client's perspective, she may be interested in promoting

her company and her own status in the industry, but is strapped for time, money and resources to effectively tackle a project like an article. Now, she will be seen as a thought leader who shares vital experiences and a success story with her peers. Serving as co-author permits her to participate in the article writing in a time efficient manner, while yielding significant results and visibility.

The partner will enjoy extended time with the client as they truly become a team, forging ahead to meet the mutual goal of writing the article. In-person meetings, phone conversations and the drafting process open the door to professional discussions of the issues at the heart of the article, and will likely generate some interactions of an informal nature.

In addition, beyond the client connection, the client's colleagues in the sector will ultimately view the attorney as a resourceful professional who brings both legal know-how and industry knowledge to the situation described.

Finally, the co-authors will bask in the glory of an informative article in a respected publication that can be shared on company and law firm websites, in LinkedIn profiles and across other social media platforms.

HOW TO BEGIN

To begin the article-writing process, make a point of confirming that the client willingly agrees that your attorney is free to share the narrative of the matter or transaction. Promote the possibility that others in the industry might look up to her and benefit from discussion of the recent issue, whether substantial tax savings, limits on liability or other topic.

Then, prepare an email with your pitch to the editor of the industry publication, drawing upon this format:

- First, develop a theme that summarizes the scope of your proposed article.
- Add three bullet points that illustrate key aspects of the issue.

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- Indicate the specific results achieved in terms of dollars in cost-savings, limits on liability, changes in employee classification, new corporate structure and its tax consequences, etc.
- Finally, ask for the appropriate word count for the article, and the deadline for submission.

Once the editor has agreed to the proposed article, advise the attorney

to schedule a series of dates to speak with and meet with the client to draft the document. Keep in mind the audience is comprised of non-legal professionals, so make sure the discussion is accessible to industry participants. Select examples, turns of phrases and other ways to make the language and write-up memorable. (See *Maximize Client Alerts, Marketing the Law Firm*, February 2014).

Submit the article as per the agreed deadline, along with a two-sentence bio and a headshot of each co-author.

When the article is published, celebrate over a meal that will further strengthen the personal bond between the co-author client and the attorney.

CONCLUSION

Re-publishing the content across social media platforms will continue to promote your thoughtful insights and your client's name, which will redound to her credit and thought leadership, while increasing her gratitude for the invitation to participate in writing the article.



Marketing Tech

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results and publications. Instead of just listing these things, talk about what it meant to you. Take a publication, for example. Speak to what it means to you to have been selected; how the selection process worked; why it's a big deal. Give it some context.)

A Crowd Where Everybody Knows Your Name

To overcome the fear of public speaking and to ensure that speaking engagements are worthwhile, it's necessary to build an audience where everybody knows the attorney. The best way to do this is to hold a lunch-and-learn in a conference room. Lawyers should invite clients, prospects and referral sources to a program that they host. Notify

invitees that they can make appointments before and after the program to discuss their legal issues.

The firm can provide inexpensive box lunches and sodas, along with firm gift items like tote bags and coffee cups. A CMO should invite all the attorneys from the firm to sit in the audience and build rapport with attendees. It's a good idea to make the educational event fun time by giving away prizes like books and gift cards.

For online purposes, a CMO should videotape the presentations and upload them to the firm website. It's important to upload a transcript as well because humans can listen to the audio and video, but search engines need a text transcript. To take it a step further, attorneys should consider presenting a companion webinar with their talk. Whether the attorney uses PowerPoint or Google

Slides, it's simple to compose several main talking points and record the audio to go with it in a GoToWebinar program.

Another thing to consider is visual aids, particularly infographics. An attorney might want to take points from her presentation and convert them into an infographic — which is particularly useful in that infographics compress a lot of information into a small space and, if done properly, are a lot of fun for people to look at. And there are lots of programs now you can use to create infographics for free, and easily.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

In-person marketing is essential, but it only works one-to-one. Complementing it with matching digital marketing will allow you to market one-to-many.



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- **Share of Voice:** Is your firm's name being included in industry dialog? Of all the blog posts, white papers, webinars and speaking engagements in your practice areas, how many of them are highlighting your firm versus a competing one?

- **Conversation Drivers:** Does your competition consistently beat you to the market with big ideas or trends? If so, that's a sign that you need to step up your game.

Thought leadership is not just the role of a few people, it's the responsibility of everyone at the organization. Establish benchmarks for the metrics above. Support the program by empowering everyone to contribute if

they feel capable. Communicate how your thought leadership program is driving the firm forward, and you will not only win the battle of trust and authenticity, but also become a world-class organization with a highly engaged workforce.



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