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Media Relations 101 for the Solo Attorney

Tips for becoming one of the attorneys that reporters call for timely insights on the issues of the day in a given industry or locale.

By **Janet Falk** | July 14, 2020 at 10:00 AM

As a solo attorney, you may have sought getting in the news to reach prospective clients, referral sources, former colleagues and attorneys on the other side of the transaction or litigation, among other assorted contacts.

What are the best practices for you to start generating some ink in the press?

Begin by thinking about the five Ws that reporters use to tell their stories: *Who, What, When, Where* and *Why*, in terms of the audience(s) you wish to reach.

Simply stated:

- Who do you want to read the news story?
- What idea will they read about?
- When: Is it time-sensitive?
- Where do they look for news?
- Why will they care?

Having clear answers to these questions will put you on the path to identify topics you may address and the media outlets where you may be seen.

For example, consider a specific practice area or a topic within that practice. Judie Saunders, at [The Law Office of Judie Saunders](#), offers legal counsel and litigation services to survivors of sexual, physical and psychological abuse, as well as personal injury and criminal defense services, with offices in Red Bank and New York City. She focuses part of her practice advising parents and students who have suffered abuse

from sports coaches. Accordingly, she is in touch with reporters “in the area of child abuse and sport.”

Once Saunders learns the reporter’s specialties, she keeps in touch by “reading their content, and following their social media posts,” especially so that she might “add value or data to the reporter’s content.”

Perhaps you take a geographic focus, like Judith Bachman, of **The Bachman Law Firm**, with a practice in business law, such as corporate matters, commercial real estate, contracts and commercial litigation, as a virtual practice in New Jersey. She has developed relationships with reporters working for the local newspaper and keeps in touch with them by phone and email, plus casual conversations at the local Chamber of Commerce meetings.

Alternatively, you might consider the media outlets themselves. Rajeh Saadeh focuses on internet bloggers and freelance reporters in discussing his matrimonial and real estate law practice, **Law Office of Rajeh A. Saadeh** in Somerville. “I email and send messages to reporters who might be interested in my perspective” on timely issues.

Now that you have identified the topic, geographic market or media outlets, the next step is to introduce yourself to reporters in a way that professionally states your experience as well as your compelling analysis on an issue that has impact for individuals, business owners or business executives.

A **media profile** is a valuable tool to describe your background, highlight current topics that deserve greater attention in the media and invite the reporter to explore how your insight will help others to *save time, save money, make more money or achieve justice*. By including your email, phone and street address, a reporter can easily follow-up with you when one of those ideas grabs their attention.

After you set up an interview with a reporter, you must thoroughly prepare for that conversation in advance. According to Saunders, “Always assume you are being recorded and the information you provide will become public.” If you have something that you do not wish to disclose, *don’t say it*. Do not hope that your slip-up will be off-the-record. A reporter must agree *in advance* that a conversation is *off the record*.

Saunders also points out that it is vital to “understand the reporter’s objective and the main point of the piece or article the reporter is writing.” The article is likely to be about more than you, your firm and the matter in question. Your quote is part of a much larger discussion.

Make a list of the three points that you wish to emphasize in the conversation. Print it in 16-point font, nice and big, so that you can focus on these ideas during the interview. This discussion is likely taking place on the phone, so the journalist cannot see that you have this document and guidance on your desk.

The language you use in the interview is also a consideration, which is why it is so important to prepare your remarks. Saadeh points out “Reporters are looking for snappy quotes to appeal to their audience, which is usually not attorneys!”

Make sure each of the three points you’ve prepared will be accessible and memorable for the readers. Here are some ways to turn your thoughts into a quotable sentence or two that will stand on its own. *Acronyms*, *analogies* and *anecdotes* all create an opportunity to further elaborate on the idea mentioned and provide an example. Similarly, *alliteration* of a few words makes a thought memorable. Indeed, this paragraph demonstrates how alliteration works: the suggestions acronym, analogy, anecdote and alliteration all begin with the letter A.

Cite a visual image, say a stalled car to convey an idea that does not make forward progress. Use rhyme or mention popular culture as other techniques to give extra

sparkle to your quote. All these tactics will help capture the reporter's ear, thereby lifting your thought off the reporter's notepad and into the news article.

Once the interview is complete, it is appropriate to ask when the article will be published. Reporters (and their editors) are eager for the article to be seen widely, and the click of a link to the online article is appreciated. Bachman, Saadeh and Saunders all promoted the articles in which they were quoted. They used social media, namely their own blog posts and LinkedIn posts, to drive contacts to read the original news story.

Finally, solo attorneys should consider not only being interviewed for news stories but also writing articles for appropriate media outlets. Saunders said, "I have published in local New Jersey township periodicals regarding the Black Lives Matter movement."

Additionally, membership organizations often have newsletters, where Bachman has placed her articles.

These basics of using the five Ws to identify audiences, topics and publications; emailing a media profile to introduce yourself to reporters as a source on specific hot issues; plus creating a list of three points reinforced by quotable examples will position you to be among the attorneys that reporters call for timely insights on the issues of the day in a given industry or locale.

Janet Falk is the head of **Falk Communications and Research** in New York. She provides media relations and marketing communications services to law firms and consultants.

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