# How to Leverage Media Relations Throughout an Attorney's Career

**By Janet Falk**

The timeline of an attorney's career offers multiple points for contact with the media. A lawyer can utilize the platform of media outlets to share insights that will develop business by attracting the attention of potential clients and referral sources. Following are viable opportunities that transcend all practice areas.

Upon joining the firm, as an associate or in a lateral move as counsel or partner, an attorney benefits from meeting with a marketing or public relations professional to provide a resume and information for a press release announcing their new role. The basics, of course, are the area of practice, additional specialization, the names of the law school and undergraduate college, as well as any clerkship. The marketing or public relations colleague then distributes the press release to the local legal and business publications, as well as to the relevant industry trade publications and appropriate alumni newsletters.

***Associate***

As a member of the legal team in litigation or transaction, an associate's name may be included in press communications announcing the consummation of the deal or the outcome of the trial. Accordingly, a press release should be included in the standard timetable of activities to be completed during the course of the transaction or trial.

As an associate gains experience in a specific industry, it is important to pay attention to changes in regulation and legislation that will have a business impact on companies in relevant industries. She may work with a partner on a client alert that considers how the new rule will affect operations.

These discussions generally are directed to clients who are corporate counsel; therefore, it is worthwhile to take the next step and draft a timely article in *layman's language* for a broader readership. For example, an overview of an emerging aspect of employment law may be suggested to an industry publication editor, such as *Supermarket News*.

This article will attract the attention of executives at companies and businesses that may not already be acquainted with the law firm and now may be prompted to inquire about the firm's services on the issue. (*See*, "Maximize Client Alerts" in *Marketing the Law Firm*, February 2014; http://bit.ly/2G6qSaE). On occasion, inviting a client to contribute to the article can be a two-fold plus: 1) enhancing the authority of the writers; and 2) strengthening the relationship with the client. Readers in that industry will take to heart the lessons learned when recounted by a market participant. (*See*, "Co-authored Articles in Industry Trade Publications," in *Marketing the Law Firm*, January 2018; http://bit.ly/2G8DHkD).

Similarly, many legal publications, such as a State Law Journal, invite submissions articles for special quarterly sections. Consult the publication's annual calendar and propose topics

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# *Cyber Threats*

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understand the language of IT experts. The firm's cybersecurity measures have to be clearly explained and delivered so clients and prospects don't feel like they are being misdirected by complicated, technical language.

***Crisis Communications Plan***

As with any issue of potential risk, a law firm must have a solid crisis communications plan that outlines the firm's internal and external response to a cyber breach. (*See*, "Crisis Management Preparedness: Are You Ready?," Jaffe, http://bit.ly/2GeLGwP.) Some say a cyber attack is no longer a question of "if" it will happen" but "when." Outlining a communications plan before an attack happens, and keeping it up to date as the digital landscape changes, requires input from various firm resources.

Work with your IT department to make sure your marketing committee or department understands the full implications of a cyber breach and the steps required to restore protections. Be aware of the potential consequences of client data landing in the hands of cyber criminals. Often, the full implications of a data breach are not realized until well after the breach happens. Preparing a crisis communication plan will at least empower your firm to stay on top of a crisis.

**CYBERSECURITY RESOURCES FOR LAW FIRMS**

The ABA has created a cybersecurity legal task force that provides cyber alerts, legislative updates and recent cyber news to help law firms navigate the ever-present threat of cyber attacks (*see*, http://bit.ly/2F69Fhu).

The Global Resilience Federation formed a Legal Services Information Sharing & Analysis Organization where "members are 'trust-sourcing' threat indicators for analysts to research, scrub and anonymize, yielding actionable intelligence for dissemination in real-time" (*see*, http://bit.ly/2Ge3CHL). More than 100 law firms have joined the organization to share information and flag potential threats and system weaknesses.

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## *Media Relations*

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in advance. Of course, these publications and the many practice-specific Law Journal Newsletters are always open to proposals of a traditional byline article that is not linked to a particular thematic issue. Associates should note whether a partner is required to be a co-author.

When an attorney plans to write any article, whether for the legal press or an industry trade outlet, it is best to contact the editor, *propose a topic* and then ask for the appropriate word count and deadline, as in the sample below.

Drafting a complete article prior to submission may be a risky approach; the publication may have recently covered the topic or even have another similar essay in the hopper. Separately, a discussion that is 750 words may be too long for a publication that has a suggested word count of 600 words. Also, the editor may deem it important to include an aspect that was not addressed in the initial proposal, making the article somewhat longer. Avoid disappointment and major word surgery by submitting a proposal and waiting to be advised of acceptance.

***Sample Article***

***Proposal Email***

Name of Editor,

As you review recent developments in the specific sector, the issue is likely to affect companies and their operations.

As an attorney who has worked with Company and Company in practice area, I offer the following perspective:

- Important consideration that will affect many companies;
- Another trend that will impact businesses; and
- Some people are not aware that this aspect is also a factor.

I am interested in sharing my views in an article for your readers.

I know this is a hot issue for your industry and look forward to hearing from you to learn your interest in an article, the word count and the deadline for submission.

Regards.

Name of Attorney

Name of Law Firm

***Partner***

An experienced attorney who has now become a partner may wish to speak with the media about her own cases, comment on industry trends and weigh in on developments of other cases in the news. One way to introduce an attorney to reporters as a reliable and authoritative source available for interviews on specific topics is with a *Media Profile*.

In this basic outline, a lawyer may highlight particular areas of interest and indicate that she is available to journalists who currently cover that practice area or industry and seek the perspective of an experienced professional and observer. The following model incorporates references to both corporate and litigation matters and is easily adaptable to any practice.

***Sample Attorney***

***Media Profile***

First name Last name, partner, Law Firm PLLC, 111-555-1234, name@lawfirm.com

First name Last name is a partner in the City office of Law Firm. She has extensive experience in M&A transactions in the advertising industry. She has litigated cases in the specific industry, representing companies in federal and state courts throughout State and State. In addition, she has represented clients in complex litigation matters including contract law, general commercial disputes and product liability, such as the defense of prescription pharmaceutical companies.

Extensive work in transaction/litigation in specific industry market: (3-5 bullets)

- M&A transactions, especially cross border with Canada
- Employment and discrimination (plaintiff or defendant)
- Environmental clean-up cost claims (defendant)
- Consumer fraud and class action suits

Trends on the Horizon/Upcoming Hot Topics: (3-5 bullets)

- An issue that should be getting more news coverage and requires an experienced professional to simplify technical aspects
- A new regulation that requires companies to change operations
- How the law regarding this topic will affect small businesses

Resolution of a *pro bono* matter is only occasionally considered newsworthy. A more fruitful approach is to frame *pro bono* work as an example of a social issue.

By joining the professional membership or industry organization in which clients participate, the attorney may find opportunities to contribute to the group's newsletter. Consider proposing a *Legal Update* as an occasional column. As noted earlier regarding the client alert, these articles may be shared with editors.

Looking at the arc of an attorney's career, it is clear that there are countless opportunities to publish articles and speak with reporters. A lawyer's effective use of media outlets to deliver timely, industry-specific counsel helps to engage potential clients and referral sources. Finally, opportunities for comment regarding individual corporate transactions and litigation will arise and should be anticipated accordingly.

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