

## Keep the Box Score: Writing

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*This article is part IV in a series about the [FIVE essential marketing activities](#) to grow your practice.*

As an attorney, you already engage in a considerable amount of writing. Consider flexing your writing muscle by keeping the [box score](#). Promote your insights to your many contacts, colleagues and prospective clients across one or more venues.

Each writing platform targets a particular audience, and the format and distribution vary accordingly. You control some vehicles, while others are subject to the preferences of editors and inscrutable designs of algorithms.

Let's examine the possibilities: articles in non-legal publications, newsletters, blogs, LinkedIn articles and posts, plus client alerts and reports.

**Articles:** You probably have published an article or two in a legal publication, perhaps via the local bar association. However, it's more likely that your target audience is reading newsletters and magazines focused on their own industry, not *The National Law Journal*. Here's how to publish your insights in *Chain Store Age* or a similar industry magazine.

Think of a theme or hot topic that potential clients will want to hear about so they can save money and avoid litigation. Some potential ideas are:

- A trend in the industry regarding technology, employment or financing
- Best practices in a common scenario
- The outlook for industry consolidation

Develop your theme in a three-to-five-sentence paragraph. Then list three or more bullet points for the discussion to prove your point.

Contact the editor of the relevant industry publication with this article proposal; suggest your idea and ask for the word count.

Here's the reason why you first *propose* an article and do not write it. Imagine that you drafted an essay of 600 words and sent it to the editor. "Sorry," the editor replies. "Our articles have a maximum of 500 words."

You decide to contact another editor, who replies with interest. "Great idea. If you also discuss this additional aspect, I'll give you 750 words."

In either scenario, you have to perform major surgery to make the article fit the editor's requirements. Wouldn't it be easier to ask for the word count up front and write your thoughts to precisely that length?

***Team up with a client.*** One approach to an article is to invite a client to co-author a discussion of your work together on a successful matter. There are multiple benefits to this approach. First, the editor will recognize that the client is aware of the issues in the sector, increasing the likelihood of the proposed article being accepted. You will make

the client appear to peers as a thought leader in the industry by co-authoring an article in a trade publication, and working together with the client will strengthen your relationship. Finally, your deep understanding of the industry will be showcased to others in the sector, who may become your potential clients.

For this type of article, or case study, you might use the **PARI model**:

- P represents the Present situation or Problem
- A is for the Action you took or Advice you gave
- R means the Result in the short term
- I stands for the Impact over the long term

A client success story neatly follows this paradigm.

Another way to collaborate with clients on an article is to crowdsource your ideas. Ask five or more clients in the same industry to respond to a series of questions. Take their *prettiest pearls of wisdom* and string them together in your article. Credit each contributor in turn, granting them a moment in the spotlight.

With these meaty quotes in hand, all you need is some introductory text to set the stage and a wrap-up paragraph; this type of discussion practically writes itself.

**Develop a forecast.** In late November, as the year draws to a close, look in your crystal ball and anticipate the industry's future. Editors are always interested in what lies ahead for the industry. Do not worry that 11 months later you may be criticized for being wrong. It's more likely the editor will remember you as the source of a forecast and invite you to submit a new outlook for the following year.

Once you have published an article, secure permission from the publisher to share it. Either purchase the article as a PDF or copy it into a document and include the reprint permission.

Display the article prominently on your website and share the link to your webpage by taking the following steps:

- Place the article title and the link in your email signature
- Add the article PDF to the *Featured* section of your LinkedIn profile and additionally note it as a *Publication*
- Summarize the article's highlights as a post on LinkedIn and include the link; your goal is to drive the reader to click the link and read the entire article
- Pose a question in the relevant LinkedIn discussion groups; frame the question so that your article is the answer
- Consider whether the topic merits broader discussion as a subject for a webinar or a guest appearance on a podcast

It's not *one and done* with an article; extend its distribution and shelf life by making it available in other settings that will drive readers to visit your website and contact you.

**Newsletter:** Many firms have a periodic communique to keep in touch with clients, referral sources and other colleagues.

A newsletter sits passively in the subscriber's inbox. Whether they read it the same day or a week later, and even when they delete it, it flashed under their noses and they thought of you.

If you hesitate to start a newsletter, consider these statistics:

- Consumers prefer email, even millennials
- 53% of people check email on their smartphone
- There are THREE TIMES more email accounts than Facebook and Twitter combined
- Email delivers 90% of the time. Only 9% of LinkedIn contacts, 2% of Facebook fans and 1% of Twitter followers see social media posts

In short, YOU control the distribution of the newsletter and the subscriber list. It is not subject to an algorithm or the possible disappearance of the social media platform.

The most important aspect of the newsletter is the subscriber's interest. Readers listen to the world's greatest radio station *WII-FM*, which stands for *What's In It For Me*.

*The reader's attention is yours to lose.* Sprinkle YOU and YOUR amply throughout the discussion to keep the reader engaged.

Make it easy to subscribe to your newsletter by including the latest title and a hyperlink to it in your email signature, along with a link to sign up.

Publish all your newsletters on your website so they are always accessible. Don't make a new subscriber feel left out because they didn't meet you last year and missed your October newsletter on cybersecurity issues.

Share the newsletter on your Facebook and Twitter accounts, if you think your target audience is active there.

When you are in conversation with a contact, ask to be added to their newsletter list and invite them to subscribe to yours.

There are a dozen email newsletter programs available for novices. It's simple to create a single-subject newsletter that your subscribers will savor, save and even share with their contacts. Many Public Relations professionals recommend MailChimp; it is easy to use and there is no fee for the first 2,000 subscribers.

**Blog:** Many marketing professionals urge their clients to publish blogs to promote search engine optimization, by providing frequent updates to their websites. I disagree.

I prefer a newsletter to a blog, because it is addressed directly to the individual. No one wakes up in the morning and thinks, "I haven't heard from Barbara Green at Green Grass and Meadows in the longest time. I should check out her blog."

Moreover, many blogs are not set up for subscribers; it is up to the reader to remember to look for the blog post, which means they are more likely to overlook it than to search for it.

When you publish a monthly newsletter, you are regularly providing new content to feed the search engines.

If you do commit to writing a blog, remember to keep a rhythm of frequent publication. You should also apply the above tips about the reader's attention, make it easy to subscribe, mention your blog to others and post the blog on your website and across other social media platforms.

**LinkedIn Articles and Posts:** Now that you have published an article in an industry or legal publication, or you have issued a newsletter, spread the word on LinkedIn to drive visitors to read these insights on your website.

You can summarize the magazine article or the newsletter in a new article on LinkedIn and then indicate that it was previously published elsewhere. The LinkedIn system will automatically prompt you to write a post on the article topic, making the subject more visible to your many contacts on the social media platform. LinkedIn articles can be as long as 40,000 characters, so let your fingers fly across the keyboard.

You can also express shorter takes on issues you see in the industry, the news or law firm management in a LinkedIn post. The first 210 characters are visible, and a post can be up to 1,300 characters. When relevant, cite a colleague, contact or client company. Placing an @ before the name makes the name turn bold; the individual, plus their contacts, are notified that the name was cited. Using an image often catches the attention of the reader who scrolls through the news feed or searches for content.

With more than 700 million members in the LinkedIn universe, your content may travel widely.

**Client Alerts and Reports:** Because these are familiar opportunities for publication on timely issues, this discussion will be brief. Make your client alert or report more memorable by using the four A's:

- **Acronym.** Take a familiar acronym and give it a twist: TGIF means *Thank Goodness It's FREE* (not Friday). Or create your own acronym.
- **Analogy.** Compare your solution to something familiar: Is the situation now as clear as day or as clear as mud?
- **Anecdote.** Share a concise narrative of the consequences of making a certain decision.
- **Alliteration.** String together a sequence of words that have the same initial letter, as exemplified here.

Keeping the reader in mind, make the report or client alert easy to scan. Short paragraphs, numbered lists, bullet points, bold font and subheads all work to break up long blocks of text, as you see in this discussion.

Share your client alerts and reports on your website and through your social media activity. Consider inserting a link to a client alert in your newsletter and email signature. Place a report in the *Featured* section of your LinkedIn profile.

Current, prospective and lapsed clients, plus referral sources, not to mention colleagues, are all eager to read your insights. Draft a game plan.

Schedule a newsletter quarterly, if not monthly. Prepare a few articles for client-focused industry publications per year. Be ready to develop client alerts when you win a decision and as relevant topics arise.

When it comes to scoring a (writing) hit for your team, you're the pitcher and the hitter. Get out your pencil and work on the box score.

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