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Marketing

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THE BUSINESS OF BRANDING

Creating a Client-Centric Brand[®]

By Cindy Sharp

Professional legal marketers are by and large responsible for the creative and labor-intensive effort involved in developing a strong law firm brand. After all, a brand does not develop by chance, but rather is strategically planned, crafted and communicated.

SHAPING AN ATTORNEY'S UNIQUE BRAND

However, the firm's brand represents only one component of the business development matrix and individual lawyers bear a measure of responsibility with respect to establishing and promoting their own personal professional brands. In John Hellerman's excellent article, "To Build the Brand, Build Up the Lawyers," featured in July's issue of *Marketing the Law Firm* (<http://bit.ly/1MIsUin>), he pointed out that the brands of individual lawyers must be developed because clients hire attorneys and not law firms.

Personal professional branding cannot be reduced to a blueprint. The marketplace will define an attorney's individual brand, in large part, on the basis of the breadth and quality of the lawyer's actions. For example, a lawyer who routinely publishes

continued on page 4

'Why Her and Not Me?' Best Practices for Initiating and Maintaining Relationships with Reporters

By Janet Falk

Has one of your partners read a news story in which an attorney at another law firm was quoted? Or perhaps seen competitors on television speak on a hot topic that affects their own clients? No doubt you received an angry e-mail or call asking, "Why her and not me?"

You know the answer, of course. The person in question was introduced to the reporter as an authoritative source on a compelling business issue.

Reporters are under tremendous pressure to publish their stories quickly and attract readers by promoting their news articles on social media. That makes it even more imperative for you, as a communications professional, to make it easy for journalists to remember which of your firm's attorneys are available for comment on key issues, have something to share that is both insightful and has bottom-line impact, and are readily accessible for comments.

Below are Four Do's and Four Don'ts — tips that you may implement today in order to work more closely with reporters and generate the media coverage for your partners that will keep the attorneys of your firm top-of-mind for clients and business prospects.

THE FOUR-DO'S

1. Introduce an attorney as a source with an Executive Media Profile. Unlike a press release or a speaker bio, an Executive Media Profile establishes credentials and answers the essential questions of a skeptical reporter. "Why YOU?" and "Why NOW?" An Executive Media Profile may focus on several hot topics that reporters are not granting much attention and may present a new perspective.

First, summarize three areas where the attorney is an expert and narrow the niche: perhaps IP for alternative energy venture capitalists or hotels and shopping centers for foreign investors. In three sentences and no more than six lines,

continued on page 2

In This Issue

Reporters and You 1

Business of Branding:
Client-Centric Brand..... 1*Voice of the Client:*
Fruitful Feedback 3*Marketing Tech:*
Awareness 5*Professional Development:* Summer
Programs 7PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LANGHORNE, PA
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Press Relations

continued from page 1

mention a few themes. Omit the lawyer's degrees, clerkship and former corporate titles, unless they are directly relevant to a specific and current situation, *i.e.*, "former Wall Street compliance officer is available for comment on an insider trading case."

Next, assemble three to five timely issues in a bullet format that resonate with the readers of that publication. For example, this list may address the bottom-line impact of regulatory changes or reporting requirements. These topics will probably have a direct effect on sales, operations, finances and so on. Each is listed on one line and demonstrates that the attorney understands what keeps executives and readers up at night. You'll have time to provide more depth and nuance during a subsequent conversation or interview.

At the top of the page, clearly state the partner's contact information so it is readily accessible: Name, Partner at (law firm name), e-mail address and Direct Phone Number. Speaking at the Law Firm Media Professionals meeting in New York in March 2015, Bill Donahue, IP reporter at *Law 360*, asked for "a 50-word explanation of what the attorney knows about a subject to determine whether it is worth calling the attorney."

That reporter's request is the evidence you need to educate an attorney on the benefits of collaborating with you on her Executive Media Profile. Use Donahue's 50 words as a guideline to keep the bio and bullets under 150 words in total.

2. Once the attorney has been introduced as a credible source, prepare to capitalize on an impending regulatory decision or some active litigation that everyone is watching. Include an incisive quote that addresses the current situation, and also speculates either on next steps or what

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the possible impact may be for companies or an individual in that court case.

As an example, newspapers quoted several former federal and state prosecutors across the country when the verdict was announced in the Boston Marathon bombing trial in April 2015 on their points of view. Most, but not all, were from Massachusetts. How did they make it into the news? In anticipation of the verdict, their firm's public relations professionals introduced these attorneys to reporters as authoritative sources with a sample snappy quote. The reporters were primed to call these former prosecutors when the jury delivered its verdict.

3. Make sure the attorney is available to speak to a reporter within the time frame required. When the situation changes, be responsive and, if appropriate, proactive. After you have secured a reporter's interest and set a mutually convenient time for an interview, continue to hold your breath. Schedules and priorities may change for the lawyer and the journalist. Either be flexible about postponing/re-scheduling the conversation, or provide an advance notification if a deal or court case will keep the attorney out of pocket.

4. Coach attorneys to prepare a memorable and concise quote that will resonate with reporter and readers. Analogies, visual imagery, word play, rhyme and alliteration keep the reporters' (and readers') interest. Use or create an acronym such as SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat). Compare the plaintiffs in a class action suit with a fashion show runway, where each participant is the focus, momentarily. These hooks can catch a reporter's attention. (See also Janet Falk: Maximize Client Alerts, *Marketing the Law Firm*, February 2014, <http://bit.ly/1PDB7CF>.)

THE FOUR DON'TS

1. Don't send legal jargon-laden e-mails, unless the reporter is a non-practicing lawyer and the target audience is composed entirely of other attorneys. All materials should be written in accessible language to gain the interest of those who read that publication.

continued on page 8

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Professional Dev.

continued from page 7

counseling, team building, problem solving, conflict resolution, negotiation and business development.

Many professional development departments develop and offer a variety of skill level programs in each topic. In some instances, an academy or boot camp type format is employed offering myriad required and elective courses for summer associates. These courses should be accessible in-house or externally through online legal educational groups.

6. Pro Bono Activities. Additionally, the professional development department can assist students in identifying pro bono opportunities that offer practical application of skills. Many law schools have mandatory pro bono requirements. Those that do not strongly suggest that students engage in community service. Work on behalf of the public interest is both informative and rewarding and is often built into a firm's culture.

7. General Skill Building. Even top students from top law schools

may need skill refreshers or initial training. This especially can be the case if the student went straight to law school after earning an undergraduate degree. In addition to the legal skills courses, professional development departments often present programs on etiquette, teamwork, leadership development, organization and time management, effective communication, and working with superiors, peers and support staff.

8. Evaluations. In cooperation with the supervisors and the recruiting department, the professional development department may manage the summer associates' performance reviews. These evaluations, which take note of the summer associates' use of professional development opportunities, should be used in deciding who will receive offers of permanent employment. Additionally, students should be encouraged to evaluate the summer associate program — what worked and what did not — which is critical in sustaining the firm's continuing professional development efforts.

CONCLUSION

Successful summer programs are no longer solely about wining and dining prospective associates. A well-balanced summer program is a good mix of connections and engagement, exposure to cutting-edge legal issues and challenging matters, as well as community service, camaraderie, exposure to leadership, and professional development.

The mission of a professional development department is to provide summer associates with essential knowledge, skills and abilities. The department's offerings should include mentoring, print and electronic resources, programs, seminars, workshops, forums, and special projects.

By utilizing this wide array of opportunities, both the firm and the student benefit. The students gain by taking advantage of the firm's resources, thus becoming more knowledgeable and successful attorneys. The benefit to the firm regarding its efforts becomes apparent once the student joins as a new associate and can hit the ground running.



Press Relations

continued from page 2

2. Don't call the same day to confirm that the reporter received the e-mail with the Executive Media Profile, unless it is time-sensitive. After you have introduced the attorney to a reporter, follow up with a phone call a few days later; link the media profile to an issue that has emerged in the interim, if possible.

3. Don't expect an advance look at a quote from the interview. A post-interview call or e-mail about one hour later, with a jaunty, "Sounds like you and [Attorney Name] had a productive conversation," opens the door to ask if the reporter would like a photo of the attorney and any additional information. At that point, you may be able to review or clarify the discussion.

4. Don't expect a quote to survive the editor's pen. Observations from

a third party, or what one reporter from *The Wall Street Journal* called the "floating head quote," are the first things to be excised by editors at press-time.

Finally, be alert that not every call from a reporter is an opportunity for a positive interaction. When you receive an unanticipated phone call from a reporter, especially one who may know something you do not, or who may wish to discuss something you are not yet prepared to discuss, use this script and share it with your colleagues:

"I'd really like to talk with you, but I have someone in my office now. If you would please give me your name and number, I'll call you back in a half hour. And in case I need to gather any information, would you please let me know what you'd like to discuss, so that I can be more helpful to you?"

This approach allows you or the attorney to call when ready. You will

have time to take a breath, gather data and prepare your memorable quote. Or, you'll have time to draft a statement that is responsive to the reporter's question, but not newsworthy. There's little benefit to a news story that says, "The law firm refused to comment," or, "An attorney at the law firm did not return a reporter's phone call."

CONCLUSION

Remember, reporters call the people they know and rarely call the attorneys they have never heard of. If it's likely that some attorney will be quoted in a particular news story, make the source be one of your colleagues by following these do's and don'ts for solid relationships with journalists.



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