

Why am I not...?

"Why am I not quoted in this article?"

"Why am I not a speaker at this conference?"

"Why am I not published in this journal?"

As publicists for law firms, we have many goals. To name a few: get positive media results in outlets that reach a lawyer's target audience; help lawyers find meaningful speaking engagements for purposes of networking; coordinate bylined article opportunities that illustrate their skill and knowledge.

At varying points in a PR program, a lawyer will contact me with a question that starts with "Why am I not ...". Perhaps you've been asked this question as well. While it may catch you off guard, I suspect there's usually a good reason that answers the attorney's question. Likely, it's because the attorney has not fully committed to the PR program, or needs to be educated on how the process of earning publicity works. Either way, it's time to get to work and help the attorney succeed with public relations.

Here are some examples.

Why am I not ...

... in the *Wall Street Journal*? You can substitute the *New York Times*, CNN, Bloomberg, a local newspaper, any media outlet. I've even been asked this: Why was my neighbor in the *New York Times* and I wasn't?

What's going on here is that the lawyer, an avid reader of the publication in question, sees other attorneys getting quoted in articles about topics the attorney knows well. He or she believes, rightly so, that he/she could offer an insightful perspective backed by experience in the subject matter. But does anyone at the *Wall Street Journal* know this attorney's name? Has this attorney been pitched as a resource to anyone at the outlet? How long ago, and under what circumstances? Now is a perfect opportunity to explain that getting into the *Wall Street Journal* is something we can work on together. More on that below.

Why am I not ...

... a speaker at this conference? In the days before email became the **primary tool of communication**, this discussion originated with a bright-yellow sticky note on a conference brochure, mailed to my office by an attorney, with the words "Why wasn't I a speaker at this conference?" A colleague jokingly called these "love notes," but they sent a strong message of "what are you doing for me?" Clearly, the brochure for the conference caught the attorney's attention, and again, rightly so, he/she felt this was a missed opportunity. As with quotes, there's a process for **earning a speaking engagement**, and it has to be explained.

Why am I not ...

... an author in this special section? When a law journal, as an example, publishes a



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supplement focusing on one area of law, those who practice in that area can earn media attention by submitting an article for publication. Naturally, your attorney wants to build a reputation and become better known for his or her knowledge. But first I'd like to know, has anyone at the firm reached out to the editor about the special section to pitch a topic? Does the editor know that this attorney is even interested in publishing an article? Does the attorney know that [bylined article opportunities](#) also exist in the trade publications that clients read?

None of the above situations require magic skills! To obtain positive PR results requires skill, experience, persistence and advocacy. Why not go for the trifecta and get a hit in a top-tier outlet, a speaking engagement at a must-go conference and a bylined article placement in a well-read journal? It's all doable. It requires some assistance from the attorney, but not too much to be burdensome.

I always tell law firms that my job is to take the raw material from a lawyer, let him/her return to the job of practicing law, and allow me to do the work necessary to earn results. If the "why wasn't I ..." lawyer is really eager to see results quickly, it's important to explain that these opportunities take time to generate. Yes, being available to comment on breaking news may earn immediate results, but it's a slower process to get a speaking engagement or a bylined article placement, and it takes time to [build relationships with reporters](#).

But let's not focus on how long something takes. Let's talk about the steps required to get the job done. After all, that's the point, right?

Connecting with Reporters

I'll start with media attention. Reporters need to know their sources, and they need to know the topics these sources are comfortable discussing. Sometimes a reporter needs to understand a complicated legal topic for future stories; other times the reporter needs a source ASAP about a new piece of legislation or a Supreme Court decision, so we're talking about background meetings as well as [interviews for breaking news](#).

First things first: the reporters need to know the source. The best way to get that job done is to sit down with the attorney and in 20 minutes, leave with a bulleted list of topics, insights and perspectives. Go back to your desk and type up a compelling letter that describes the attorney's professional background and offers specific topics for purposes of an interview.

Remember, your goal is to obtain a media result, but your simultaneous goal is to help the reporter. You've heard it before: You must make sure that the reporter you're pitching actually covers the topic the attorney wants to discuss, so do your homework by reviewing previous articles and digging deep on the Internet to ensure you know everything about the reporter. This takes time, but if it's done correctly, a reporter will respond to your email with a request for an interview of some sort. And there you have it – an introduction has been made, and the chances of the attorney being quoted have just increased!

If nobody bites on your pitch, keep at it, with fresh topics and viewpoints offered to the

reporters, best when you know there's a story percolating and knowledgeable commentary will be needed.

Finding the Right Speaking Engagements

Next, speaking engagements. At Jaffe, we have [a team dedicated to finding the best speaking engagements for lawyers](#). Why? Because there are many, many conferences to consider; they are planned out months in advance; and conference organizers are specific about their needs. The submission process to place an attorney at a conference may require a particular format – just sending over a bio won't do the trick.

Ask the attorney to attend the conference in question, to see what it's like, and to mingle and network with attendees and speakers. In the meantime, find out everything you can about the next time conference will be held – most importantly, who will be in the audience. It's got to be an audience of potential leads, so if you are wondering, ask the conference organizer (or Jaffe!).

Quick tip: As you are working on the submission and the topic the attorney would like to present on, use that information to build a pitch to reporters. My philosophy is never to miss an opportunity to promote, so blend your PR efforts so you are always working to earn a result.

Pitching Bylined Articles

Finally, the bylined article. How many times has an attorney presented a fully written article to you, with the request to get it placed? Once again, this is a process, and as you know, most editors have their own writer's guidelines for bylined article submissions. Maybe the attorney's article is 4,000 words, but the editor only wants 1,500-word pieces. What to do then?

Educate your attorneys that the best approach, as with media outreach and conference spots, is first to present a bulleted list of ideas to pitch the editor and assess the publication's interest. With a go from the editor, you'll be more informed about word count, style, endnotes or footnotes, and deadlines. If the attorney is a talented writer who submits articles on time and per publication guidelines, the editor will ask for more articles in the future.

I hope that this article has taken the sting out of the “why am I not ...” question. These opportunities are not easy to earn, but with some education and a roadmap for success, the “why am I not ...” question can turn into a “thanks, and how can we best use this opportunity to promote the firm further?” These elements of PR complement all of the other marketing tools you're using, such as social media, search, website content and branding. Each piece requires experience and focus, and when used all together, prove that legal marketing works.

If you would like to talk about media relations, speaking engagements and bylined article campaigns, give me, [Liz Lindley](#), a call at 917.455.1798 or email me at llindley@jaffepr.com.