

Football, Strategy and Legal Marketing A Winning Game Plan Drives the X's and O's

It's my favorite time of year. The air is getting a little crisper and pumpkin spice is, well, frankly in places it shouldn't be. But the best part? Football is back.

While basking in the glory of my favorite pregame show last weekend, I started seeing the X's and O's come alive as coaches were interviewed and key plays were broken down. It wasn't just football it was strategy.

There are so many similarities between this game I love and my daily passion of marketing and public relations. Here's a brief play-by-play.

The Game Plan

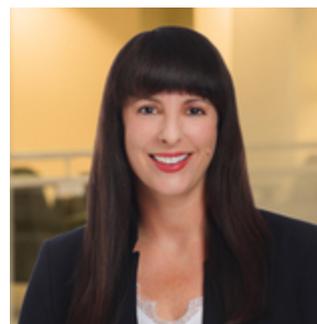
When a team steps onto the field, they have meticulously reviewed tape of their opponents and studied their own games to develop a game plan. The plan is specific to each opponent and, while it can be adjusted if needed, the players and coaches are all on the same page about what they need to do to emerge victorious. Nick Saban and Dabo Swinney don't head into a key matchup hoping a Hail Mary will work they are focused and intentional about their game plan.

Legal marketing and PR professionals should also have a strategic plan to serve as their guide to success. Whether the responsibility of a one-person department or a multi-office team, identifying goals and developing plans is fundamental to yielding consistently positive results for your firm. At the same time, a strategic plan can't include everything for everyone, so it is important to identify the firm's or attorney's area(s) of focus. Otherwise, you'll find yourself constantly defending your efforts or answering questions about other things, causing you to lose focus and take your eye off the ball.

The Playbook

Every football team has a book of plays that the coaches and players know forward and backward. There are different plays for different scenarios, whether putting together a long drive or advancing the ball a few yards for a first down. A team would never run the same play every time and expect a successful outcome.

You and your marketing team have similar tactics to draw upon that allow you to act on your strategic plan. A football team has the option to run, pass and kick. Your team has public relations, business development, social media and events. While your team may be segmented by experience and knowledge, it is the integration of all these tactics that



Mary Smith

Senior Account Executive
814.880.9398
msmith@jaffepr.com

allows you to advance closer to your goals.

You can't just host an event every week and be surprised at a lack of results. But if you invite relevant professionals to attend, pitch the topic to a local news outlet and promote a resulting article on social media, or identify a client for the attorney to conduct a one-on-one presentation with, suddenly you are generating more momentum and [building brand awareness](#).

The Coaches

Every team has a head coach who is responsible for the supporting staff, the players and, ultimately, the outcome of the game. They motivate and coordinate. They are able to see the whole field in front of them but also zero in on things that nobody else can see.

You are the subject matter expert for PR and marketing at your firm, and you have supporting personnel to execute the various tactics to move the ball forward. Sometimes, you also have to know when to push back and reevaluate. If one of your attorneys has decided to do a podcast and you realize that they are not a gifted speaker, it's best to find a tactful way to channel their efforts elsewhere. If you are working to promote a practice area but the attorneys are not responsive enough to allow you to gain traction, it is worth a conversation with a department head or firm leader so they are aware of the situation (they are often surprised by the "lack of response" issue). You might all determine that channeling the focus to another attorney who is more responsive and motivated would be the better play.

The Players

Once you have developed your plan and identified the tactics, you need to make sure you have the right players. Nobody is going to put Tom Brady in a game to return a punt. You have to line up the key attorneys with the right opportunities to execute your plan.

If you're working to elevate the profile of a specific practice group, identify who the right attorneys are for any sub-areas within that practice. Figure out where they shine. Are they dynamic speakers? Create a list of media interviews or keynote speaking opportunities, and put them in front of target audiences. Does your firm have attorneys who are prolific authors? Identify a solid media list that accepts bylined articles or see if there is enough fodder to warrant a blog.

Lining up [the right attorneys for the right opportunities](#) is always a good use of time. If a positive connection is made with a reporter or an organization and an attorney is sought out frequently, then you've demonstrated tremendous value in your role and for that attorney.

The Game Clock

At the beginning of a game, teams have more freedom to move around the field and draw up plays that take more time. Once the game is close to conclusion, the clock becomes an important factor. Teams have lost games because of poor time management. A player

isn't aware time is almost up and tries to scramble instead of getting out of bounds. A coach doesn't realize there isn't time for a final throw and the game ends on an anticlimactic third down when they had a chance to tie. Or a team thinks they have the game won and suddenly the opponent runs back a kick 100 yards as time expires. Strange things can happen in the final minutes of a game.

Be mindful of how your time is spent, and, if you are working with a vendor, how your budget is being allocated. We have all worked with attorneys who are really good at using our resources but ultimately don't follow through or produce what they promised.

Make sure that your goals are attainable within your resources and your budget. Remember, a plan can't be everything to everyone, and a large reason is due to resources. Focusing on target practices or attorneys should be just that: targeted. If you have 20 practices to promote, your efforts will be spread too thin, your budget will be wasted, and you will be left frustrated and feeling like you can't win no matter what you do. Communication at the front end is essential to make sure you have the right tools to accomplish what is expected, so make sure you're set up for success and not caught off guard at the end of the game.

Need a pep talk? If you are looking for help with developing or implementing a winning game plan for your firm, reach out to Mary Smith at mbsmith@jaffepr.com to talk X's and O's.