

PR Tips from Kim Kardashian West

Kim Kardashian West. Not a name you frequently hear in professional services marketing material. A pop icon, yes. Socialite, for sure. Social media and fashion icon? Check. PR pro? Surprisingly, also yes.

“Keeping Up with the Kardashians” aired its last episode in March 2021 after 20 seasons, making it one of the longest-running reality television shows in U.S. history. Even if you’ve never seen an episode, chances are you have heard about the celebrity family that is famous for ... well, being rich and enjoying the limelight. And while Kim and her clan have a large fan base, they also have at least as many critics, which makes the positive review of Kim’s performance on “Saturday Night Live” (SNL) on October 9 so interesting.

What was Kim’s formula for success, and how can we apply it to the less-glamorous work that we do as legal marketers?

Know your audience and how to win them over

Kim’s performance was live on national television. She had to appeal to a broad, diverse group of people, many of whom probably tuned in just to make fun of her. But unlike most of SNL’s hosts, Kim was not there to promote a movie or performance. Her job was to host SNL, and she understood that she needed to make the show successful at all costs, not herself.

In the business-to-business marketing world, our audiences are usually well defined. However, it is always important to understand a publication’s audience and a reporter’s beat. Reporters grow very tired – and sometimes offended – at receiving [media pitches](#) that have nothing to do with their beats. It is not only a waste of their time to read those; receiving irrelevant pitches may make them inclined to press “Delete” the next time they see your or your firm’s name in their inbox or hear it on their voicemail.

Likewise, trade and business publications appeal to niche audiences. Ensuring that your messaging is relevant to the audience is the way to ensure the best exposure.

Speak the truth

Kim knows her critics. Instead of delivering a monologue that ignored what they say about her, she pulled no punches and cut them off at the pass. Acknowledging that she came to fame because of a leaked video, she also addressed her, and her sisters’, generous use of plastic surgery; her mother’s gold-digging boyfriend; and her father’s relationship with O.J. Simpson. She also held nothing back when speaking of her estranged husband, as well as his (and Caitlyn Jenner’s) failed political run. By adeptly controlling her message, she took the power away from the media, fans and critics.



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Back here in the “real world,” we can learn from this strategy. If you know that your firm has been in the news for something unsavory or has a negative reputation for something, sometimes it is best to address it head on. That can be done simply by saying something such as, “I understand you may have heard ...” or “I would like to clarify a misperception about ...” It is the chance for you to deliver your message.

Step into the **interview** equipped with your talking points. While you might not be able to deliver them as they are written, remember to glance at them casually to make sure that you have not forgotten anything and that you are staying on point. And remember that reporters always respect when you admit what you don’t know. If you are asked a question and do not know the answer, it is okay to say, “I am not sure, but let me check and get back to you.” Honesty with reporters goes a long way to developing a positive rapport and building your reputation.

Do you, and be relatable

What made Kim’s SNL performance work was her openness. She made fun of herself, her family, her failed marriage. She came across as genuine, which drew her audience in. She wore a hot-pink, Big Bird-inspired outfit on live television, and came off as funny, warm and charming. She was able to prove that underneath the fluff, literal and figurative, there was a real person who took her job seriously and wanted to succeed.

What does that mean for attorneys and other professional service spokespeople? They surely should not dress in bright feathers, but they can try to connect with reporters naturally. Find a way to relate, perhaps through something in common such as a shared alma mater or knowledge of the same city. These small connections make a big difference in helping the tone of an article become more positive. If the reporter walks away feeling that they have developed a rapport with a knowledgeable, relatable source, they are much more likely to turn to you again for future articles.

As you prepare for your next **media interview** or big client presentation, remember to take a deep breath, channel your inner KKW and relax. Be open, be honest, use humor if the topic warrants and remember that this is your opportunity to own your message.

To discuss ways to make your media relations program distinctive and memorable, drop me a line at sholtzman@jaffepr.com.