

With Rapidly Changing Technology, Don't Forget the Fundamentals

Many external developments are having an impact on our profession, such as artificial intelligence, hybrid work, new social media platforms, shifting [advertising laws](#) and more. Amidst many changes, the unchanging fundamentals are more important than ever.

The key question today is: How do legal marketing and public relations professionals incorporate new technologies and industry shifts to execute on the basics in the best way?

Coming Home to Change

I lived in Charlotte, North Carolina for nine years, spent six years in Washington, D.C., and recently moved back to Charlotte. The number one question I get is, "How does it feel to be back?"

On most days, it feels like I never left. Many things have grown and changed: traffic, the skyline, hot spots, sports teams and the neighborhood where I live, to name a few. Yet the core of what I love about Charlotte, such as the people, climate, greenway, tree-lined streets, and proximity to both beach and mountains, remains the same.

My own life change served as a reminder that we can learn and improve during transition, and though circumstances and externalities may change, fundamentals remain the same.

I recently had a conversation with one of our clients about the importance of (and humility in) going back to the basics, because no matter how seasoned, successful and tech-savvy we become, no one ever has all the answers. In moments of question or indecision, the answers can often be found in the 101.

The Fundamentals

As a PR and marketing professional, these things will always be essential:

1. Know your audience.

Without strong knowledge and understanding of your primary audience(s), your messaging won't resonate and your tactics will fall flat. Identify exactly whom you're trying to reach, be it clients, prospective clients, members of the media, shareholders, the community, fellow marketers or all the above. Next, arm yourself with information about their industries, job responsibilities, experience levels, priorities, concerns and any challenges they're facing.

2. Reach your audience.



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With a defined audience, you can determine the best communication methods and frequency for reaching them. What are they reading? Let's place an article in or secure an interview with that publication. Do they respond best to email, text or a [phone call](#), or do they only engage via social media? Let's use what works.

3. Nail down (and then nail) your messaging.

Identify your key talking points, ensuring they align with your brand and long-term PR and marketing goals. Learn the messaging and nail it in every interaction, be it for a [media interview](#) or new client [pitch meeting](#).

4. Know and differentiate yourself from competitors.

The legal marketplace is extremely competitive. Give yourself a competitive edge by becoming familiar with your main competitors and determining ways to set yourself apart. What are they doing to market themselves and how are they communicating? Where are they advertising and how are they [defining their brands](#)? Who are their biggest clients and what are some of their unique client service efforts?

5. Proofread everything.

It's a simple and common-sense step that not everyone takes. I recently attended a steeplechase with friends and caught several blatant and repeated typos in the program. I immediately pointed these out to our group because I was so appalled. Hundreds of thousands of people were holding poorly (or not at all?) proofed program books. We all make mistakes, but take the time to proofread – emails, articles, pitches, briefs, ads, posts, etc. – and ask for a second set of eyes on anything that will be consumed externally. One egregious error could result in losing a client or getting mocked on social media.

6. Build relationships and connections.

I recently hosted a surprise 40th birthday party for my husband with our friends and family. During the gathering, I watched with admiration as my dad became the life of the party. He made his way around the patio, chatting animatedly with every single one of our friends, most of whom he had never met. I later commented on his social finesse. "It's easy," he said. "You just have to find common ground to establish connection." It was a good reminder of a basic [networking](#) concept. Opportunities, goodwill and open doors start with connection and relationship.

7. Earn trust through authenticity.

Everyone senses and appreciates authenticity, and people want to work with those whom they trust.

With the basics in play, are there then ways to accomplish some of these practices better by leveraging today's new or developing tools, resources and technologies?

For some, the answer may be no. I don't think there is a tool for authenticity, and if there is, ChatGPT certainly isn't it.

Yet, if you don't want to use ChatGPT to [write your press release](#) or blog posts, perhaps you can use it for its proofreading capabilities.

Instead of a traditional media placement, perhaps [pitch a podcast](#) to secure a guest spot

that provides a new opportunity to highlight key messaging and subject matter knowledge.

Invest in a competitor intelligence software that captures competitors' movements – such as messaging, market strategies and leadership changes – in real time.

The legal industry is now even dipping its toes into the metaverse, a rapidly developing and somewhat elusive world that may hold untapped opportunities for lawyers and marketers. (But don't try to sell me a [MetaBirkin](#). I'll take the real thing, thank you!) What opportunities does the metaverse present for reaching target audiences?

Here at Jaffe, our slogan is "Adapt to change" and we are always working to research, adopt or advise about new technologies and opportunities for advancement. But we never abandon the proven fundamentals of excellent PR and marketing.

Do you need help with your PR plan or want to chat about any of the industry changes you're facing? Reach out to me, Bethany Chieffallo, at bchieffallo@jaffepr.com.