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So You've Written a Press Release. Now What?

A new partner-level attorney has started working at your law firm, and the first thing to do is draft a press release and send it out. This is routine public relations – so routine that sometimes, PR professionals can forget about the basics of maximizing the news. Legal PR professionals can ensure they get the most out of their press releases about partner-level hires and changes in firm leadership with these five simple steps – because you're never too experienced to practice the fundamentals.

1. **Send at the right time.** Decide on which day of the week the release will be sent to the media. Avoid Fridays and right before holidays, when journalists may be out of the office and the news might get buried under a mountain of emails. (There are occasions when the firm may have no choice but to announce the news on a certain day because the attorney's old firm has already shared the news publicly.) A 2022 study by Prowly covering more than 55,000 press releases determined some of the most optimal times for sending a press release:

- Thursdays have the highest email open rate – 26%.
- Wednesdays and Fridays are the worst days for sending a press release – 85% get lost in inboxes.
- The best time of day to send a press release to editors is from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

1. **Fire up the attorney's bio.** Confirm the attorney's bio will be up on the website before the news is announced. The release should include a link to the bio in case a reporter would like to review it. The bio page should also include a photo of the attorney that will be shared with the media.

2. **Ensure the attorney is available for interviews.** This step is the most important: Make sure the attorney will be available for interviews on the day the news is announced. Few things will irritate a reporter more than offering an interview with a new attorney and then turning around and saying they are not available after all. If the attorney will be busy on the day of the release, try to carve out a window of time – at least an hour – that can be shared with the media beforehand so they know the attorney's availability up front.

Go ahead and prepare comments ahead of time in case the attorney can't speak with a reporter. The two basic questions reporters are likely to ask are "Why did you join the firm?" and "What will your practice focus on?" This also applies to the representative of the firm who may be quoted in the release about the attorney's hire.

1. **Keep your media list up to date.** Ask the incoming attorney which publications their clients read, and add those to the media distribution list. This is especially critical when the attorney has a niche practice like intellectual property or focuses on certain

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industries, such as aviation or maritime.

2. **Give advance notice to a key journalist.** Depending on how newsworthy the hire might be, it may be worthwhile to offer the release ahead of time to a widely read legal publication. Consider offering the embargoed release the day before it is to be distributed and provide the reporter with enough time to interview the new attorney. The goal is to have the news story run the morning the release is to be distributed.

Distributing a press release effectively entails making it easier (and more likely) for journalists to cover your news. In turn, this improves your chances of landing coverage and increases exposure for the new attorney, their practice group and the firm. These five simple steps will provide you with a maximum return on investment for your public relations efforts.

If you need assistance with your media needs or managing your firm's PR expectations, reach out to me, Carlos Arcos, at carcos@jaffepr.com.