

Turning Losses into Wins in Baseball and Public Relations

It's been a tough season to be a diehard Chicago Cubs fan. The team started strong in April, hovering around first place in their division for a few weeks before showing cracks in the armor, and then crater-diving over the last month to last place, with very little hope for a playoff spot come September. The losing has been demoralizing and it's been hard to escape, especially with Cubs baseball games to watch on TV almost every day.

Why do I bring this up to an audience of legal public relations and marketing professionals? With so much losing, I've been thinking about how to visualize a win out of a loss. Psychologically, it's a helpful exercise, especially since when it comes to the Cubs playing baseball, there's not a dang thing I can do about the losses.

Similar to baseball, a certain amount of success is **out of one's control** in the media relations quadrant of public relations. For the Cubs, success is sometimes determined by the baseball gods (dictating a good or bad bounce of the ball). With the media, you're often reliant on a gatekeeper: a reporter or editor who gets to decide what topic they want to cover or what source they want to quote.

You're definitely going to lose some along the way, so to repeat a cliché, this post is about making lemonade out of lemons.

Let them owe you one

The next time a reporter or editor cuts your client attorney's quote from an article or doesn't use an attorney's comments from a **recent interview**, be sure to accept the defeat graciously and remind them that the attorney wants to contribute and help with the next source opportunity. Often, a reporter will feel a sense of debt about the omission and will go out of their way to make amends when the timing and topic are right.

One publication's loss is another's gain

Let's say a commentary article written by an attorney gets rejected by an editor after its initial acceptance. The win is in the fully realized and developed content you now can pitch to other publications for placement, or to use to **pitch an attorney** to a large swath of editors and reporters as a source about the article's subject matter.

Try winning with a different team

When the Cubs – or any team – lose, they don't stop playing the game. They're back at it the next day. Losing out on an interview or article today should have no impact on finding the next great opportunity tomorrow. If you can't score a win with one team (in this case, a specific reporter or publication), try looking elsewhere. Think outside the box, shift the



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focus or angle of the story or pitch, and shop an idea to reporters or publications you haven't approached before or had past success with.

One person's trash is another one's treasure, to quote another cliché. There are so many media outlets hungry for content in today's media landscape that it's unlikely there's not a good home for most content you can deliver.

Engage, don't ignore

A published story with negative, or at least unflattering, news about a law firm or attorney is often unexpected, sometimes inaccurate, and almost always an opportunity for dialog and relationship-building with the reporter who wrote the story.

The tendency is often to try to minimize the negative news (perhaps by trying to proactively manipulate online search results so the story gets pushed off the radar a bit), and quietly just move on. Instead, a winning strategy would involve acknowledging the truth of the story, if accurate, and further engaging the reporter for a face-to-face or video conference with key firm leaders who should be prepared to tell an equally compelling story about positive happenings at the firm or valuable insights about relevant industry areas, ideally as an exclusive to the reporter.

The key is to take advantage of the opening to build a mutually beneficial relationship that is likely to reap only positive results moving forward.

A second bite at the apple

A mistake – a misspelled attorney's name or the accidental omission of an attorney from a legal rankings press release – can deliver a second bite at the apple. Don't let an attorney with a modest personality let the mistake slide. Always request a published correction. Sure, you're calling attention to a fumbled ball, so to speak, but you're also making sure the attorney or firm's news is highlighted to readers a second time – and this time, accurately.

An added bonus

As Chicago Cubs losses become almost as enjoyable as a trip to the dentist, I just might turn off the TV more often, so I may have more time to help turn the page and gain some traction from your missed opportunities. If you're looking for ideas and suggestions for an innovative media relations strategy for your firm and attorneys, contact me at rlabuzinski@jaffepr.com.