

How to announce law firm lateral hires

It's done: the tentative discussions, the intense negotiations, the signed agreements, the handshakes. Your law firm is proud to have a new lateral hire – a partner with fresh promise and possibility.

The success and satisfaction of a lateral hire has a strong correlation to a firm's commitment to an integration process, as a March 2014 [lateral partner satisfaction survey](#) confirms. Aric Press, editor-in-chief at American Lawyer Media, wrote in [his news story](#) about the findings that, "They wanted specifics on matters ranging from cross-selling their practices to announcing their arrivals."

How does your firm prepare for an announcement of a new attorney? Here are a few questions to consider.

- Does the firm have a standard plan of action or checklist to be used every time a lateral joins, or has this been an *ad hoc* process?
- Is there a media relations plan in place targeting relevant national, local and industry trade publications for the new lateral?
- Is the news about the new lawyer, or group of lawyers, worth considering for an advance news story? Depending on the experience, public personage or value of the lateral growth, it might be appropriate to secure media interest in advance with the promise of an embargo. This can go well with reporters with whom the firm has a good and trusting relationship.

Beware, however: The idea of announcing a lateral before the deal is done is risky. I will never forget a firm that, years ago, forged enthusiastically ahead with a news blast on a Friday to make the Monday print news cycle. Unfortunately, over the weekend, discussions fell apart and the high-profile lawyer walked away from the firm. It was embarrassing for all the parties when the news broke on Monday morning about his move to the firm and quickly turned into news about him *not* joining the firm. All things considered, it's best to wait to announce until after all parties sign the arrangement.

- Will the new lawyer be available for media interviews after the announcement, or is she going on a "no email" two-week vacation? If she will be absent, wait for her return. The news doesn't have to be released on the exact date of the signed agreement.
- How can your firm's social media platforms be effectively used for the announcement?
- What is the plan to continue leveraging the lateral's news announcement? What profile opportunities exist for local, regional or industry trade press?
- How will you approach the announcement internally? Ideally, the first internal communication to the firm – in advance of sharing it with media – should mention how the new lawyer can benefit the firm's existing clients and other firm practices for



Vivian Hood

Owner/CEO

Public Relations

904.220.1915

vhood@jaffepr.com

immediate cross-selling opportunities and introductions.

While these communications-related tips for announcing a new lawyer are only one part of a larger integration plan, law firm marketing professionals should be prepared with a consistent approach. A law firm's growth strategy depends on the success of these lateral movements, and each firm needs a strategy that fits the firm's overall business goals.

For tips on strategic and effective announcements about lateral hires, please contact Vivian Hood at vhood@jaffepr.com.