

Why you shouldn't ask a reporter for a copy of their article before it publishes

In my day-to-day law firm PR work, I'm frequently asked by clients if they should request a copy of a reporter's story quoting them before it runs.



Jaffe Staff

I always answer with an emphatic "no."

Most reporters do not like being asked by a source they have just interviewed for a copy of the story before it runs. It really, really annoys them. And there is a reason for that. Reporters are, in theory at least, supposed to be independent observers. They are not beholden to the individuals, organizations or institutions they cover, and they are not keen on any suggestion that they must follow a certain line when reporting.

And if you think this only applies only to certain kinds of sources, think again. Check out this article regarding what happened when [the NSA asked the *Washington Post*](#) to scrub on-the-record quotes and replace them with a written statement. Let's just say it didn't go over well.

It is pretty safe to say that most requests to review an article before it publishes will make a reporter bristle. This is why I always tell my clients never to ask that question. It will likely sour any relationship that has formed with the reporter.

There is a slight loophole, however. In situations where an attorney source might be talking a reporter through a very technical subject, or the topic of the article is somewhat controversial, it can be OK to ask to review the specific quotes a reporter might use. These are very rare situations, however. For 99 percent of interviews, there is no need to ask to review quotes. If you have done your job as a source and spoken thoughtfully and carefully, there should be nothing to worry about.

And, yes, I can hear you say "But I don't know what the reporter will use! What if he misquotes me?"

Again, if you have stayed on message and stuck to what you want to focus on, then any quote pulled from that interview will be on message. Good interview hygiene is the best way to prevent misquotitis.

So the next time you're about to ask a reporter to see his or her article before it runs, please stop and consider if it's really necessary and the harm it could do to your relationship. Because, when it comes to [law firm reputation management](#), reporter relationships are gold.