

3 Strategies for Getting Quoted on Breaking News

When news breaks, reporters want a source immediately – not in an hour, later that day or first thing the next morning. Reporters who can get to a source first and fast – and are confident that source will provide reliable and insightful analysis – win the day. If you want to be considered a thought leader on timely topics, understanding the compressed timing of the news cycle is critical.



Jaffe Staff

To get on a key reporter's speed dial, here are three tips you can incorporate into your PR and marketing activities.

Build a Relationship

This tip could be a separate blog post of its own because it is essentially the golden rule of PR. It is also the most difficult and time consuming. Reporters change beats – and even media outlets – frequently, so this is an ongoing effort.

To build a relationship with the media, as in life, you need to start with a first date, if you will. Identify that critical reporter and set up a brief meeting – it can be over drinks, coffee or a meal, or in the firm's offices. This is a chance for you to *listen* to what the reporter covers and why. From there, you can describe your work, your experience, what's important to your clients, and how you can help this key reporter round out his or her coverage.

If the reporter sees the value in your insights, you'll get the all-important second call (date) when the reporter is working on a particular story. You may not always be able to provide "on-the-record" comments, so be absolutely clear whether your discussion should be considered "background," which means the reporter can use the facts you share, but will not attribute them to you directly. The article may say something like, "sources say..." or "experts note..." When your comments must be completely and totally "off-the-record," the reporter can use the material you provide to inform ongoing reporting, but actual comments will not appear in the story and they certainly won't be attributed to you.

Advanced Pitch

Anticipating breaking news is difficult. While most reporters have a good sense of what is about to happen in the space they cover, they may not always have the inside track on the latest developments in the same way someone on the front line might have.

Given your personal involvement with the reporters' areas of focus, there is a certain amount of coverage you can anticipate, especially when it concerns a specific legal decision, regulation, rule, new hire, etc. When such a development occurs, anticipate

answering certain questions like:

- What does the decision, regulation, rule, new hire, etc., mean for industry?
- What sort of precedent does it set?
- What are companies (or more importantly, your clients) going to think, and how are they going to respond?

Better yet, your PR team can put your responses to those questions into a compelling pitch with some sample quotes and send it out to key reporters in advance of the development. This gives reporters a sense of what you can talk about and tees you up as a source who is at the ready once the news breaks.

Do Your Homework

Another approach is to take the time to do some research into previous coverage. Reviewing what a reporter has written about in the past can serve as a good prediction of what's to come. Go back a year or so to see if the journalist (or the outlet) does a cyclical round-up of important milestones in your area of expertise. That's a good way to identify, in advance, a breaking news commentary opportunity.

For example, [Law360](#) does a "cases to watch" feature every year in January and again at the half-year mark. Think about what you are monitoring for your clients and why, and then reach out to the appropriate reporter to share your perspectives and insights. It's a good way to get to the top of the call list when the journalist is ready to sit down and write the story.

For more information on how to capitalize on breaking news, see our previous [blog post](#). When you do secure that coveted media interview, there are some helpful tips [here](#) and [here](#) that will help you nail it. If you still feel you need a bit more guidance, please feel free to contact Vivian Hood at vhood@jaffepr.com.