

Happy New Year Begins with Legitimate, Transparent and Trustworthy Media

It used to be that news traveled fast, but these days, thanks to technology and social networking, it's more accurate to say that news travels at record speeds. A news story can literally go viral in seconds. Unfortunately, sometimes these stories are entirely false – and it took a highly contentious presidential election for much of America to realize the distressing and detrimental prevalence of fake news.

Sometimes fake news stories can be detected from a mile away, but sometimes they fool even the most perceptive of readers. As NPR notes [here](#), "...the proliferation of fake news isn't just the responsibility of the platforms used to spread it. Those who consume news also need to find ways of determining if what they're reading is true." What's the primary indicator? An authentic news story originates from a reputable and substantiated news outlet.

As a marketing and/or legal professional, you must do your homework when a media opportunity arises. Similarly to recognizing bogus news stories, you need to use your best judgment to recognize when interview and byline opportunities are not worthwhile or authentic. Interviewing and writing require valuable time and effort, so you want to ensure that every endeavor will be time and effort well spent with a news organization that is authentic, trusted and relevant in your industry. Otherwise, results could be lackluster and even detrimental. As New Year's resolutions and goals are being set, what better occasion than now to refresh our understanding of the fundamental indicators of quality, reliable and suitable media opportunities?

The next time you are presented with a media opportunity, spend a few moments conducting some simple due diligence. When an opportunity arises, both for my clients and myself, I examine the following to weigh its value:

- **Website:** Reputable and established news organizations run websites that are professional in esthetic and content. They have recognizable domains. Their sites are navigable, attractive and well-organized. They feature up-to-date news items. Ultimately, you need to ask yourself whether you want your name, commentary or original thought leadership to appear on that organization's page. If the answer is no, then it's definitely better to pass and hold out for the next opportunity.
- **Media Kit:** Media kits are truly a treasure trove of information. They provide details such as a publication's history, circulation, page views, editorial calendar and – perhaps most importantly – the audience. Who and how many will be exposed to your efforts? If the audience is not ideal for your message, or if numbers appear low, then you should set your sights on a different and more valuable opportunity.
- **Editor or Journalist Background:** You can tell a lot about a media professional just by examining his or her professional history and repertoire of work. The beauty of media is



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that everything is documented. Where did he or she come from? Does the interviewer have established credentials with respected publications? What is his or her writing style – snarky and negative, or sound and informative? What other types of sources do they tend to quote in articles? Reporters are trained to find the story, so if you open yourself up to an interview, you need to make sure that it's a "story" with no negative repercussions for you, your practice or your firm. Don't be afraid to ask questions about the angle or direction your interviewer plans to take for his or her piece.

- **Cost:** My clients often ask us about pay-to-play media opportunities. Generally speaking, my agency advises against pay-to-play. While advertising most definitely has its place, I strongly encourage and believe in conventional editorial opportunities that are gained through traditional PR methods.
- **Social Media Feeds:** Who and what are the organizations/journalists following on social media? As the old adage goes, you are the company you keep. Even digitally! Reputable outlets and media professionals subscribe to other professional feeds.

For 2017, I challenge you to embrace this resolution: Support, read, share and contribute nothing but quality, enriching and authentic news. You, your clients and your colleagues will all reap the benefits. Your time is just that: yours. Make sure it's spent reading and investing in nothing but the best.

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