

5 Ways to Capitalize on 2017 Legal Marketing Trends

There's no shortage of prognosticating in our industry on what will be some of the biggest public relations trends in 2017. Rather than cover the broad array of predictions, let's focus on the more-omnipresent, tactic-focused trends that could enhance your law firm public relations and marketing efforts.

No More Taking Facts for Granted

The "fake news" backlash is not a mirage. (Check out my colleague Lisa Altman's post this week on [the fake news phenomenon](#).) Suffice to say, legitimate media – especially reporters at the nation's top news organizations – are feeling the burn and will be more diligent than ever about getting their facts right. It's highly likely that media will consume law firms press releases, blog posts and any other information that we, as facilitators, serve to the media with a larger-than-usual grain of salt. Our role is to make sure the information we provide is as complete and accurate as possible.



Randy Labuzinski

Vice President
Public Relations
773.405.7583
rlabuzinski@jaffepr.com

Greater Emphasis on Quantity of Placements

There's no slowdown in sight for the proliferation of content on news, quasi-news, news aggregate, business, organization and other informational websites. More stories by more publishers are available via more distribution channels than ever before. As audiences are bombarded with a growing number of messages, the competition is fierce for even a shred of your target audience's attention span.

How does that affect the way we ensure our messages are reaching their intended audiences? It means strategic targeting of communications becomes more crucial. It's critical to know your audience, as well as how and from which sources they're getting their news, and make sure you're focusing on primarily feeding those media outlets and vehicles. Also, logically enough, fewer people are reading each news story, so there may be higher value in focusing on generating a greater number of placements for your news versus securing one high-profile story in the publication you believe may reach the largest possible audience.

In this age of content proliferation, quantity (of placements and outlets) may prevail over quality and prestige of the article and media outlet, although that's not to say quality is not critical. You still have to produce high-quality content – actually, now more than ever – because your audience has such a plethora of options for its daily news fix.

A More Hands-on Approach

As news outlets continue to trim their staffs and publish a greater amount of content digitally, the opportunities and challenges are increasing for PR pros to get their law firms' news published and disseminated. More publications are allowing – in some cases, requiring – users to post news directly to their own sites. We're seeing more and more traditional news sites providing direct means for users to post complete press releases; news about attorney moves, promotions and accolades; and, in some cases, actual stories. Most publishers vet and review submitted material before it goes to readers, but not as much news filtering is going on.

Consequently, this trend also is allowing law firms to disseminate their controlled messages and content in more places. Many readers often can't discern the difference between reporter-driven and user-generated content. That's a boon for public relations pros, but also an added burden. You can't expect that your work is done once you send out a press release. The number of outlets that will process and/or publish news from your press release is dwindling, and the onus is increasingly on PR pros to know where they can post news themselves, as well as to budget for the time and resources to do it.

Ingratiating the Media as Influencers

As technology and media evolve faster than I can even write this sentence, we are continually challenged to use social media effectively to enhance law firms' public relations initiatives. Our partners in the media are using many of the same tools to enhance their own products and engage more heavily with their audiences.

One way that publicists can help publishers and, in turn, help themselves, is by actively engaging with those editors and publications that are on top of their social media game. Savvy editors and publications are using every social media channel available to distribute their content to the widest possible audience.

In turn, when an outlet publishes an attorney's article or a positive story about a law firm, make sure that article or news item reaches a broad audience through the law firm's own digital and social media tentacles. Media outlets want law firms to help them distribute their content. This also helps build goodwill with a publication for the next time you come calling with a great story or article.

It also helps to follow editors and reporters on social media and encourage them to follow you and your firm. The more embedded you are with a reporter, editor or media outlet, the greater benefits that association and implicit endorsement will provide.

Thought Leadership – More of the Same

Just about every online article about PR trends for 2017 highlights thought leadership, in some cases as a "new" trend. Of course, Jaffe and our clients know that sharing and promoting attorney insights on key issues and topics in the media and among core constituencies is an effective reputation management strategy – we've been doing it for decades. With opportunities continuing to flourish for content marketing, we advise our

clients to double down on producing articles, blog posts, newsletters, email blasts, media pitches and even videos that inform and educate audiences on attorneys' niche practice areas.

What other PR trends do you predict we'll see in 2017? Contact me, [Randy Labuzinski](#), at rlabuzinski@jaffepr.com.