



Is Your firm Ready for PR?

Cheryl Bame, Principal of Bame Public Relations

December 8, 2011

Are you ready to run with a PR program? Are you really ready?

Some lawyers and law firms think they are prepared to implement a PR program and many of them are. But, before lawyer and law firms consider taking on this project, they need to answer some basic questions:

- 1) Do we have a marketing plan and strategy?
- 2) Do our attorneys have the *interest* and *time* to speak to the media?
- 3) If our attorneys are interested in PR, will they respond to media requests?
- 4) Are the lawyers *open* and *interested* in new ideas to promote the firm?
- 5) Will the attorneys participate?

Many law firm PR programs fail because the attorneys are not responsive. They get excited about the idea of have a PR firm working with them, but when the rubber meets the road, the attorneys become "too busy" to participate, even if all that is asked to respond via email to a few questions from a reporter.

Firms that want PR to generate media attention need to realize that PR can't operate in a vacuum. PR professionals need to know about the cases you are working on, the transactions you are handling and closing, and the trends and developments that you are identifying with your clients. Many of the larger, more sophisticated firms have procedures in place to report matters, but other firms still don't realize that news is driven by news --

like when you close that \$100 million deal or win that Supreme Court case. Reporters don't want to speak to attorneys just because they are fantastic practitioners. They need a good reason.

What else should you consider before embarking on a PR campaign? Your firm's website. PR drives traffic to your website so it is important to update the design, technology and content, as well as update the attorney bios and add a news section.

Many PR campaigns are non-starters because the law firms that engage these services don't ask these questions beforehand and understand that PR is a two-way street. In other words, without the firm's participation, nothing will happen. PR people can't take interviews (except as firm spokespeople) and can't write attorney-authored columns. It's up to the attorneys to do that. So, why spend the money if you aren't fully on board?