



Q&A With Kate Berry from American Banker

Cheryl Bame

Bame Public Relations

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I have worked with [Kate Berry](#) for many years and followed her journalism career from Staff Reporter at [Los Angeles Business Journal](#) to Consumer Finance Reporter at [American Banker](#). She agreed to talk to me about what makes a great source and how law firm PR professionals can help her do her job.

LegalPRAdvice: Where do you find your sources?

Berry: My sources are almost exclusively through referrals from other sources. Any journalist covering a beat will develop a wide range of sources that includes corporate executives, industry lawyers, analysts, government staffers and insiders of all kinds. Some of the best sources are third-party service providers that work on projects either for a company or government and have insight into what's going on.

LegalPRAdvice: Who do you consider your best sources?

Berry: Bank executives, chief financial officers, lawyers and third-party service providers.

LegalPRAdvice: Where do you find the news that you cover?

Berry: News comes from sources and often plays off other news. For example, the government just announced a "retuning" of the HARP refinancing program for homeowners who are underwater on their mortgage (they owe more than the home is worth and cannot refinance.) If I call around asking my regular sources asking about the program, they will invariably raise new ideas, generating several related story ideas. Some of those ideas I'm

likely to already be reporting on. That's how beat coverage works – stories generate other stories.

LegalPRAdvice: Do you rely on news releases for stories? How about news releases from law firms?

Berry: I do sometimes rely on news releases for stories. It's unavoidable. For example, a company announces they are buying another company, or introducing a new product or program. News releases from lawfirms are helpful but usually I don't "cover" the news release. More often the law firm is writing about a specific regulation or a specific cases that impacts news.

LegalPRAdvice: What would a source have to do to lose your trust?

Berry: Tell me false information or knowingly lie. The best sources give inside information that breaks new. But others offer unique insight on news that I may not be able to get anywhere else. Many sources, however, are useless. A lot are shameless self-promoters. Many sources basically want (and think) reporters are there to write favorable stories that reflect wonderfully on them and their company. That is not news, that's PR.

LegalPRAdvice: Any other tips you can provide for people who present their attorneys to you?

Berry: Find the niche a reporter covers, find the attorneys involved and call or email the reporter offering the client as a reliable source. Do this on a regular basis, once a week or every two weeks. You will develop rapport with the reporter and they will come to rely on you and know you can deliver good sources.

LegalPRAdvice: Anything else you want to add:

Berry: I have one wonderful PR guy who calls me once a week, often when there's breaking news and I'm writing on deadline, and he gets his attorney-clients on the phone immediately. All reporters need attorneys as sources.

Kate Berry can be reached at Kate.Berry@sourcemedia.com