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Reprinted from

# New York Law Journal

Tuesday, April 24, 1990

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## Getting the Most Out of a Bylined Article

*By Steven A. Meyerowitz*

One of the most effective methods that lawyers use to develop new business is writing articles for magazines and newspapers on their areas of practice.

But a lawyer who does nothing more than leave a bylined article to its initial readership is not getting the full benefit. Here are 10 things a lawyer should do with a bylined article after it is published.

### 1. *Develop New Articles*

A published article should serve as the basis for new ones. Keeping in mind the marketing goals of the lawyer and the firm, the principal idea in the original article should be recycled for another publication or distinct parts of it should be expanded into new articles for different readers.

For instance, a lawyer who writes an article for a chemical industry trade publication on environmental develop-

ments of which chemical manufacturers should be aware might expand the scope and target it for a broader-based business magazine, aimed at senior executives and members of boards of directors of large corporations.

It is economical to use the research that went into the first article for a second and a third time, and each piece lends support to the proposition that the lawyer is an expert.

A lawyer may be able to get additional mileage out of a published article if it can be reprinted in full in a second magazine that has a similar, but perhaps geographically distinct, readership. The author should try to maintain the copyright to the original piece. If that is not possible, the lawyer should ask permission to have the article reprinted elsewhere with the original publisher's consent duly noted.

### 2. *Reproduce It*

Lawyers should have copies of every article they write.

A photocopy is acceptable if it looks professional. That means the type size should not be reduced, the words must be readable, the copy has to be straight, and the publication's masthead should look fine. When a publication prints an article in different columns on several pages, requiring a lot of cutting and pasting before copying, photocopies tend to look bad and should be avoided.

Computers and in-house desktop publishing systems offer lawyers the ability to retype and layout their published articles at minimal cost in the convenience of their own offices. The biographical sentences that most publications use to describe the author can be placed on the front page of the newly typeset piece. The article can

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then be bound by systems now available to both small and large law firms.

Also, many magazines and newspapers provide professional, high quality reprints at a nominal cost.

### 3. *Distribute It*

Article reprints should not just sit in a lawyer's bookcase or desk. They should be distributed.

A short note accompanying the reprint signed by the lawyer (and personalized, if possible) will go a long way to cementing the lawyer's relationship with the client or contact who receives the reprint.

Some lawyers might fear that sending out their own articles to people on their mailing lists is too aggressive a marketing tactic or might make them seem too egotistical. That's probably too conservative a view to take in the competitive environment in which law firms operate. Nonetheless, an author can ask a partner to distribute the reprints to the appropriate people.

### 4. *Have the Firm Distribute It*

Having a lawyer/author send reprints of a published article is only the beginning.

The law firm should send reprints to

every client and contact who might be interested, with a letter from one of the firm's partners indicating that the article was written by a lawyer at the firm and describing the subject it covers. The cover letter also should mention that the firm thought the information would be useful to the client or contact.

Of course, not every person on the mailing list should be targeted. An individual client who has used the firm for house closings and wills probably need not be sent an article targeted to senior corporate executives--unless that individual is a senior corporate executive and the firm wants to generate more work from that person.

The firm's mailing lists should be well thought out, the characteristics of each name on the lists should be carefully defined, all lawyers at the firm should provide names for the lists, and someone with authority should periodically review them.

Whether from the lawyer who wrote the article or from other lawyers at the firm, a mailing to contacts and clients does two important things. First, it lets people know that the firm is thinking of

them, is on top of a developing issue and is available for legal work.

### 5. *In-house Distribution*

Often a lawyer neglects to send reprints to all other lawyers, including associates, at the firm. That's a mistake. In addition to the fact that it is courteous to include one's colleagues, there are three other reasons to distribute an article in-house.

First, by becoming aware that one of their own has written an article, lawyers will avoid the embarrassment of learning of it first from a client. It also helps other lawyers understand the author's position on the subject of the article, which is especially important if it is an op-ed piece, advocates legislative or judicial change, or interprets a court decision in a manner that may be inconsistent with a position taken by the firm.

A second reason is that other in-house lawyers may know people not yet on the firm's mailing list who would find the article of interest and can distribute it to them.

Finally, it might send a signal to the other lawyers that the firm advocates writing articles as a means of marketing



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and attracting new business.

#### **6. *Waiting Room***

Copies of a published article should be kept in the firm's waiting area. The target here isn't necessarily clients who come in to the waiting area--presumably they will have already received a reprint. Rather, the target is opposing counsel and their clients.

Clients often are recommended by lawyers, who either do not have the capability to handle a particular matter or who must refer the matter because of a conflict of interest. If these other lawyers become aware of a firm's ability in a certain area, as evidenced by a bylined article, they are more likely to refer this sort of business to that firm.

Similarly, businesspeople who come to a firm's reception area in an adversarial position often need legal representation on other matters. If they are subtly told of a firm's expertise they may come back to that firm again--this time as clients.

#### **7. *Newsletters***

A firm's newsletter to clients should have a section listing achievements of the firm's lawyers, including any of their published articles. Bylined articles should be mentioned in a general

newsletter as well as in those that address special interests.

Thus, clients who never received a copy of the published article will learn of it and those who received it but put it aside, might be compelled to pick it up again. The firm will benefit by reinforcing the fact that the article was written, much as advertisers benefit from repetition in their ads.

#### **8. *Press Releases***

A published article also could serve as the basis for a press release. Depending on the scope of the article and the place in which it was published, as well as on the size of the firm and its marketing goals, the release could be sent to local media (including print, radio, and television) or distributed more nationally.

The release could describe the article and state that it is available upon request from the firm or it could enclose a reprint.

The goal in this case is to interest the press in the author and in the firm. If the media pursue a story, the author could expect to be interviewed and quoted.

A less likely result is a local newspaper story mentioning that the lawyer

had an article published, which is beneficial to the extent that a lawyer's clientele are community-based.

#### **9. *Repository***

Law firms should have some central repository for articles written by lawyers at the firm.

That way, no articles ever get lost; topics can be revisited and research can be utilized again.

In addition, a law firm could prepare an annual Publications List to distribute to all clients and contacts containing a list of all publications written by in-house lawyers, properly indexed, and offering copies. A long Publications List is an impressive marketing tool.

#### **10. *Thanks***

Finally, a lawyer who has had an article published in a magazine or newspaper should consider sending the editor with whom the author worked a short thank you note.

Editors all too often hear writers scream about their editing, or they are forgotten. They appreciate a word of thanks; giving it is the human thing to do. And from a marketing point of view it may also help the lawyer place another article with that same editor some time down the road.