

How to Become a Quotable Lawyer

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Summary

- Being quoted in the media is an invaluable marketing strategy.
- Building your reputation and credibility via third-party media sources is the heart of a public relations strategy.
- If you focus on the legitimate media and facts, your message will receive the attention it deserves.



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Court cases involving high-profile politicians and businesspeople grab headlines daily. Journalists—including many without any legal background—must be accurate, compelling, and unique when reporting these legal sagas. They rely on knowledgeable lawyers as legal commentators to explain everything from criminal and civil court procedure to the laws the defendant is accused of violating.

While these lawyers help both journalists and their audiences understand potentially complex or confusing legal concepts, there is plenty of *quid pro quo* to being a quotable lawyer.

Why You Should Incorporate Media Outreach into Your Legal Marketing Strategy

Being quoted in the media is a valuable legal marketing strategy because nothing provides more validation of your credibility than a reputable journalist labeling you as an “expert.” This also creates a domino effect, as once you start providing commentary, other reporters will become familiar with you and reach out for your insights.

For example, a reporter for your local newspaper calls you because she is working on a story about a CEO accused of fraud. You are a trial attorney who defends businesses in a variety of industries from allegations of wrongdoing. After making it clear to the reporter that you are not involved in the case she is reporting on and that you don’t know all the facts related to the dispute, you answer her questions about whistleblower and fraud laws, the possible consequences of violating these laws, and what will be next procedurally in the case.

The story publishes the next day and includes your name, your law firm’s name, and your quotes. Here’s what could happen next:

- 1 A television news producer calls you because his station is covering the same story and wants to interview you.
- 2 A business owner calls you after seeing your interview because her company is being sued and she needs a trial attorney.
- 3 Your law firm shares links on its website and social media channels to the news coverage with your interviews. This leads to one client finding you in an online search and another who found the coverage while vetting you after a referral.

Building your reputation and credibility via third-party media sources is the heart of a public relations strategy. Consumers view earned media more favorably than marketing

materials disseminated by a business or firm. [According to LinkedIn](#), which cited the Edelman Trust Barometer, more than two-thirds of consumers say they trust earned media (including PR) more than any other form of marketing. With so much information available online, consumers often face information overload and uncertainty. Credible media sources, known for their fact-checking and objective reporting, help consumers navigate this information chaos and make informed decisions.

How to Get Quoted: Five Steps to PR Success

List Your Quotable Topics

Brainstorm a list of laws and legal trends that are related to your practice and that you can speak to with a high degree of confidence. Be broad with your list and then note related topics and keywords. For example, you represent defendants accused of white-collar crimes. List that, with antitrust, fraud, counterfeiting, and so on underneath it.

Include on the list other topics you can speak about with authority. This can include law practice management, diversity and inclusion in the legal industry, or even insights based on former positions, such as U.S. Supreme Court inner workings if you were once a SCOTUS clerk or general criminal law and procedure if you are a former prosecutor.

Once your list is complete, review it with these questions in mind: “Are there cases or trends in the news that relate to these topics?” and “Can I discuss these topics in a relatable manner without using legalese?”

Identify Your Target Audience and Where They Get Their News

Now that you know *what* you can talk about, list *who* you want to talk to, also known as your target audience in marketing parlance.

Since you already have a list of topics related to your practice, think next about who would need those services and create a persona for your ideal client. Rely on demographic information about your current and past clients to do this. For example, a family law attorney who focuses on child custody disputes wants to reach women aged 25 to 45 who are considered middle or upper class and live within 50 miles.

Include referral sources in your target audience. As a family law attorney, your target audience may include attorneys in other fields, like trusts and estates or criminal law, as well as professionals such as real estate agents, physicians, and accountants.

Use a PR expert or do your own research with publicly available media kits (information packets media outlets compile about their publication, audience demographics, reach, and other important facts) and search engine optimization data to discover what media your target audience uses. Look at editorial staff lists and articles to identify individual journalists who are writing about the topics on your list. Often, you can find a journalist's email address linked to their byline or in a short bio at the bottom of the article. (Pro tip: Follow the journalist on social media and engage with them to boost their awareness of you. Also, referring to a recent headline or the journalist's body of work in your email to them shows you've taken time to learn more about the journalist's "beat," aka, what they write about.)

Introduce Yourself to Journalists

Write an email that begins with two to three sentences introducing you and your relevant professional background and experience, along with a link to your firm bio or LinkedIn profile. Let the journalist know you understand their beat or interests by providing some thoughts about their recent coverage.

The more help you provide, the better. Journalists appreciate being given good story ideas with ready-to-interview sources. These can be follow-up features to an ongoing news story or another topic or angle entirely.

Invite the journalists to call you for assistance on those topics or other legal reporting and include your contact information.

While you want to reach out periodically to the reporter with fresh ideas, a way to be extremely helpful is to contact them very quickly when news is breaking or, better, before it does—such as when a court decision is coming. A journalist on deadline will appreciate a statement from a knowledgeable professional sent to their email that provides a fresh and informative perspective. The journalist may call you for a follow up interview or use some or all of your statement in their coverage.

Don't let perfection stand in the way of your PR goals. Not everything you say or write needs to be a memorable sound bite, but be sure you define terms, explain concepts, write out acronyms, and use examples if you have them. Reporters often summarize your words.

Be Responsive

As former journalists, we can tell you definitively that the number one reason lawyers don't get quoted is because they didn't return a reporter's phone call or email. If your goal

is to be a quotable attorney, be responsive!

During and After an Interview

Answer a journalist's questions as fully as possible even if you are thinking "everyone already knows that." Occasionally, a reporter may fish for information to validate a viewpoint. Don't feel compelled to agree with a supposition if you believe it is wrong or to give an opinion if doing so makes you uncomfortable or is against your firm's policy. Stick to facts and the law.

Reporters try to respect your time, but sometimes interviews take longer than expected—especially if you are helpful and interesting. Budget enough time to give a reporter a chance to get to know you and feel comfortable asking as many questions as needed. Also, your chances of getting quoted numerous times in the same article increase the longer you speak.

Understand that some reporters may allow you to review your quotes before publication, but you will unlikely be allowed to review an entire article.

Get More Bang for Your Quote Buck

There is a lot of marketing and PR value from appearing as a legal and subject-matter analyst in credible news media. However, there are additional ways to use those reports to support your marketing and PR efforts and build your brand.

After you're quoted, share a link to the article or broadcast clip:

- On your firm's website
- On social media
- In an e-blast or e-newsletter

Final Thought: The Media Landscape Today

Not all media is created equal. There is a distinct difference between reputable and credible news outlets and those that are not. This isn't to say that some neighborhood blogs and trade organization newsletters can't be a valuable platform for your quotes, but do your homework and avoid media that is biased, sloppy, or unprofessional. At a time when the trust in "the media" is low, the general public sometimes confuses credible journalism with uninformed rumors non-journalists post on social media.

If you focus on the legitimate media and facts, your message will receive the spotlight it deserves.

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