



## The Benefits of Getting Published - Encourage Your Lawyers to Write!

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Adam Anderson, a senior associate with Beus Gilbert PLLC in Scottsdale, Arizona, was recently in a meeting with counsel from another law firm who recognized his name from a list of contributors he had seen earlier that day in the National Law Journal. They ended up having a lengthy discussion about Anderson's column for NLJ.com, which pokes fun at the legal profession and issues in the law. "Writing adds a unique layer to your relationships with people," he says. And, it distinguishes him from his peers in a positive way.

You could do the same by taking a few small steps toward developing an idea and transforming it into something of interest to your colleagues. Anderson's ideas come from experience. He takes an issue with which he and his peers are concerned, e.g., document discovery, associate reviews or billable hours, and adds an element of absurdity to entertain his readers while simultaneously informing them about important points. In a recent column, he wrote about the benefits of leap year and using the 366th day of the year to bill more time.

### The Effect of Getting Published

Sometimes the impact of Anderson's writing is unexpected. A recent article about depression prompted a professor at

New York University Law School to distribute it to his first year classes. Michael Rakower has had a similar experience. He wrote an article on civil RICO matters in March of 2008 for the New York Law Journal and received calls from other lawyers and the publisher of the Rico Law Reporter asking permission to republish his article this spring. "Your peers develop an appreciation for your scholarship in a particular area," says Rakower, who runs a small law firm in Manhattan that focuses on commercial and federal litigation in New York. In 2007, Lawyers USA recognized Rakower as one of eight "up and coming" lawyers in the nation, and in 2006, the New York State Bar Association named him Outstanding Young Lawyer of the Year.

The art of getting published is one that can be learned and mastered. It offers tremendous possibilities for organic self-promotion and enables you to establish yourself as an authority on almost any topic. The key is to let others know about your work.

### Showcase Your Skills

New York-based Jones Day partner and National Law Journal columnist Steven C. Bennett often posts his articles to JonesDay.com and lists them on his resume. More importantly, however, in

preparation for meetings, particularly those with client prospects, he reviews his list of at least 150 articles (and multiple books) to find items that address issues related to those he expects to discuss at the meeting. "The real value at the end of the day is probably not the publication itself, it is the credentialing value," he says.

Rakower sends e-mails to friends, colleagues and clients updating them on his firm's achievements. When referencing an article he wrote, he includes a link to that article (or a PDF copy if he has the requisite permission). "It becomes an enduring symbol of your ability and your knowledge," he highlights.

### Connect with Others

In addition, writing offers you the chance to work with someone who is outside of your normal daily interaction or with whom you are particularly interested in developing a connection. "There are a lot of networking opportunities available by offering to assist someone with an article," says Bennett. For junior professionals, it provides a tangible expression of your interest and commitment to a particular subject. It also demonstrates your sincerity in a meaningful and creative manner.

More established professionals might use it as a chance to meet others by offering to interview them as experts or profile their work. Anderson's column, for example, allows him to maintain a dialogue with distant friends and contacts. It also serves as a great reason to connect with individuals he is interested in meeting.

The key is to broadcast your name and showcase your thought leadership. Some law firms are so committed to the idea of publicizing the talents of their personnel and the brands of their firms through writing that they actually create their own full-color glossy newsstand-quality periodicals. "Custom publications allow people to remember who you are and encourage brand loyalty," says Mike Winkleman, the president of Dobbs Ferry, NY-based Leverage Media, which produces publications for Goodwin Procter, Patton Boggs, WilmerHale, and Winston & Strawn.

Your published work also becomes a finding tool, notes Bennett suggesting that individuals looking for an authority on a particular topic will search online and off for information related to their issue. To that end, many firms will use a service like Mondaq to provide the broadest possible distribution for their articles, which can help writers actually identify their readers. "If you know that a certain reader is interested in what you have to say, you also know that he or she may be interested in hearing more from you and your firm," says Megan Hill, Mondaq's North American Director.

### Pitching and Selecting Publications

Most hopeful writers cannot spare the time, but the solution to properly valuing your effort is to pitch your idea before setting pen to paper (or finger to keyboard). This requires a simple one-paragraph e-mail describing your thesis in a sentence or two, why you are the appropriate person to write the piece and its relevance to the publication's readership. "It is easier to write something when

you have a commitment from someone on the other side to publish it," notes Rakower. "If you begin writing something without a publisher's deadline, it is difficult to establish an end point by which you will finish the article," he adds.

When selecting a publication, study editorial calendars. They are meant to provide guidance to advertisers on specific coverage a magazine or newspaper will offer in specific issues throughout the year to encourage advertisements when the content is relevant to their business. They are an ideal resource for writers because they specify the type of information for which an editor may be searching at a particular time. For instance, if you would like to write about law office management, the November 3, 2008 issue of *Legal Times* is focusing on Law Firm Administration. The calendars are generally available on the website of the particular publication for which you are interested in writing.

### Maximize the Time

Once you have a firm deadline, schedule the work as you would anything else. Those concerned with time can use Anderson as a guide. It takes him about two hours to write a 750-1,000 word article. That said, he is constantly thinking about possible ideas and carries a pocket-sized notebook with him at all times.

The process may be faster if you start with a topic on which you have written before. Consider editing the earlier piece to fit the publication and its audience by expanding on a concept or just using one idea on which to create a new work. Bennett agrees and suggests that prospective writers turn something as simple as an idea expressed in an office memo, which can be adapted for a wider audience, into an article with practical appeal. "It is something that can allow you to do a relatively small amount of work and obtain a fairly substantial benefit," he says.

Those developing an original concept should start with an outline and expand each idea point by point. If you find yourself facing writer's block, Beverly Loder, Director of Marketing for Shefsky & Froelich Ltd. in Chicago and former Director of Law Practice Management Publishing for the ABA, recommends starting anywhere, even in the middle, just to get the ideas flowing and onto the page. The key is to take the initiative and begin. She suggests setting incremental deadlines for yourself with small sections due on specific dates.

Finally, take the time to polish your draft. "Nobody gets it right on the first draft, and very few get it right on the second," says Loder. "If you're tired of working on it, put it aside for a week and then look at it with fresh eyes." Once you relax, ask for a second opinion. "It's always important to get feedback from someone you trust," advises Loder. Anderson's wife reads everything he writes. "She is my litmus test," he says.

Ultimately, the key is to write about issues that are on the minds of your readers when they are actually seeing your article. After doing so, perhaps you too will have an experience like Anderson at your next meeting. ■

*Ari Kaplan is a lawyer and a writer in the New York area. He teaches a popular course on the mechanics of getting published at law firms and other organizations nationwide. He is also the author of *The Opportunity Maker* from Thomson-West. To receive a set of 2008 editorial calendars, visit [www.AriKaplanAdvisors.com](http://www.AriKaplanAdvisors.com).*