



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION POLICY

RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICE GUIDE  
OF LAWYERS MUTUAL

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OCTOBER 2016

# Social Media and Crisis Communication Policy

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## RISK MANAGEMENT PRACTICE GUIDE OF LAWYERS MUTUAL

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## Introduction

A law firm's presence in the media is one of the key factors in determining its public reputation. When reporters and bloggers interview your attorneys and/or staff, portraying the firm in the best possible light is not something that can be taken for granted. In light of this, we encourage all firms to adopt a media policy governing contact with the media by staff, associates and partners.

It is important to have such a policy in order to manage who in the firm speaks with media and under what circumstances. A media policy is also essential during crisis communications situations.

When a crisis strikes, your law firm's reputation – potentially the lifeblood of your organization – is at stake. Whether you are faced with layoffs, malpractice, attorney departures or bad financials, underestimating the potential hard and soft costs associated with a crisis, including the speed at which it can escalate online, can be devastating. To help you prepare and implement a crisis communications strategy that protects your firm's public reputation, we offer this crisis media policy template. Please feel free to tailor it to meet your firm's particular needs. And when you are ready to bring crisis communications to the next level, or if a situation escalates and you have questions about how to handle the media and online influencers during a crisis, consider hiring a professional communications firm.

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**A law firm's presence in the media is one of the key factors in determining its public reputation.**

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## Social Media Policy

Today, social media encompasses a broad sweep of online activities, all of which are trackable and traceable. These networks include not only the blogs you write and those to which you comment, but social networks such as Twitter and Facebook and professional networks such as LinkedIn. Every day, it seems, new online tools, platforms and advances introduce new opportunities to build your virtual footprint.

As a firm, we believe that social media can drive business and support our professional development efforts – and recent research agrees: HubSpot finds that companies that blog welcome an average of 55% more visitors to their sites than companies that don't. Blogging companies may generate 97% more external website links and 434% more indexed pages, both

of which are critical to a company's search rank. And a global survey by McKinsey of approximately 1,700 corporate executives finds that 69% of respondents claim measurable advantages from social media, including a lower cost of doing business, better access to knowledge, increased marketing effectiveness, insight for developing more innovative products and services, and higher revenues.

We are also aware that social media will not be used exclusively for business; keeping that in mind, we attempt here to provide reasonable guidelines for online behavior by members of our firm when participating online on behalf of our firm. As new tools on the Web are introduced and new challenges emerge for all of us, this document will, of necessity, evolve.

### Social Media and Social Networking Policies and Procedures: Your Identity Online

- You are responsible for what you post. You are personally responsible for any of your online activity conducted with a firm e-mail address or which can be traced back to the firm's domain or which uses firm assets. The FIRM DOMAIN. com address attached to your name implies that you are acting on the firm's behalf. When using a firm e-mail address or firm assets to engage in any social media or professional social networking activity (for example LinkedIn), all actions are public and attorneys and staff will be held fully responsible for any and all said activities.
- Outside the workplace, your rights to privacy and free speech protect online activity conducted on your personal social networks with your personal e-mail address. However, what you publish on such personal online sites should never be attributed to the firm and should not appear to be endorsed by or originated from the firm. If you choose to list your work affiliation on a social network, then you should regard all communication on that network as you would in a professional network. Online lives are ultimately linked whether or not you choose to mention the firm in your personal online networking activity.



#### PRACTICE TIP

#### YOUR ONLINE IDENTITY

You are responsible for what you post. You are personally responsible for any of your online activity conducted with a firm e-mail address or which can be traced back to the firm's domain or which uses firm assets.

- Be transparent. When participating in any online community, disclose your identity and affiliation with the firm, and your professional or personal interest. When posting to a blog, always use your name. Never create an alias and never be anonymous.
- Follow the rules in the FIRM NAME's (Employee Staff Manual). These rules also apply to employee behavior within social networking and other public online spaces.
- Follow the terms and conditions of use that have been established by each venue used for your social networking activities.
- Obey the law. Do not post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate applicable local, state or federal laws or regulations.
- Never be false or misleading in your online credentials. Attorneys and other professional staff members MUST maintain complete accuracy in all of their online biographies (bios) and ensure there is no embellishment. For example – a lawyer's bio states, "Harvard trained" after the attorney attended a weekend CLE course at Harvard – this is inaccurate and noncompliant with the rules.
- Use the words "expert" or "specialized" very sparingly and only when such claims can be substantiated and are approved for usage by the appropriate state bar association.

### **Social Media and Social Networking Policies and Procedures: Creating and Managing Content**

- Be direct, informative and brief. Follow your state bar's ethics rules regarding social networking.
- Never use a firm client's name in a blog posting unless you have written permission to do so.
- Credit appropriately. Identify all copyrighted or borrowed material with citations and links. When publishing any material online that includes another's direct or paraphrased quotes, thoughts, ideas, photos or videos, always give credit to the original material or author, where applicable.
- Fact-check your posts. Always evaluate your contribution's accuracy and truthfulness. Before posting any online material, ensure that the material is accurate, truthful and without factual error.
- Spell and grammar check everything. Content never disappears entirely once it's been posted.
- Correct errors promptly. If you find that your blog entry contains an error or mistake, correct it. Since transparency is key, admit your mistake, apologize if necessary, correct it and move on.
- While a blog itself is not subject to the limitation on commercial speech, the content of a blog can be. The content must be informative only and nothing in the content should propose a commercial transaction or be for the purpose of directly gaining a commercial transaction. The threshold question to ask is, "Does the content articulate commercial speech in any way?" If so, it's likely that it will be subject to state rules.



#### **PRACTICE TIP**

#### **CREATING AND MANAGING CONTENT**

When writing content, never use a firm client's name in a blog posting unless you have written permission to do so.

Make sure you fact-check your posts, and proofread for errors (factual errors, and grammar and spelling errors.) Correct errors immediately.

Make sure you credit sources appropriately.

## Social Media and Social Networking Policies and Procedures: Leaving Comments

- When posting to a blog, refrain from posting about controversial or potentially inflammatory subjects, including politics, sex, religion or any other non-business related subjects. Keep the tone of your comments respectful and informative, never condescending or “loud.” Use sentence case format, not capital letters. Stick to this maxim whenever you are contributing to any blogs or social and professional networks.
- Avoid personal attacks, online fights and hostile communications. If a blogger or any other online influencer posts a statement with which you disagree, voice your opinion but do not escalate the conversation to a heated argument. Write reasonably, factually and with good humor. Understand and credit the other person’s point of view and avoid any communications that could result in personal, professional or credibility attacks.
- Never disclose proprietary or confidential information.
- When appropriate and possible, provide a link to your LinkedIn Profile, or to supporting documents. This will help raise your search results.
- If in doubt, don’t!

### PRACTICE TIP



#### COMMENTING

Refrain from posting about controversial subjects, like

- politics,
- sex, or
- religion.

Be respectful and professional.

## Social Media and Social Networking Policies and Procedures: Confidentiality and Privacy

- Don’t disclose confidential information. Honor the terms of your contracts with the firm and contracts we have with any client. Do not disclose or use confidential or proprietary information of the firm or any client in any form of online media. Sharing this type of information, even unintentionally, can result in legal action against you, the firm or the client.
- Avoid forums where there is little control over what you know to be confidential information. In the world of social networking, there is often a breach of confidentiality when someone e-mails an attorney or posts a comment congratulating him or her on representation of a specific client or on a specific case. Often these things are being discussed in the social network circles – it’s how attorneys are establishing credibility – so be very selective and thoughtful about where you post and how you reply – or not.
- Respect the privacy of your partners and associates as well as the opinions of others. Before sharing a comment, post, picture or video about a client or other attorney through any type of social media or network, obtaining the client’s or attorney’s consent is not only a courtesy, it is a requirement.

### PRACTICE TIP



#### CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

- Don’t disclose confidential information
- Avoid forums where there is little control over what you know to be confidential information
- Respect the privacy of your partners and associates as well as the opinions of others

## **Social Media and Social Networking Policies and Procedures: Potential Conflicts and Red Flags**

### **Get approval for a post when:**

- Responding to a negative post. If a blogger or any other online participant posts an inaccurate, accusatory or negative comment about the firm or any firm clients, do not engage in the conversation without prior approval of (NAME).
- Posting recommendations for colleagues. Posting recommendations of colleagues is a tool of professional social networking sites. The recommendations and comments you post about other current and former firm attorneys can have consequences, even if you are making the recommendations personally and not on behalf of the firm. Therefore, we ask that you clear all potential recommendations and comments with (NAME) for anyone who is or was ever associated with the firm. (NOTE: or give time limit, such as “anyone associated with the firm in the past # years.”)
- Responding directly to a journalist. If you are contacted directly by a journalist regarding issues of concern to the firm, clear the query with NAME before responding.

### **Other potential red flag situations:**

- Check your state’s particular prohibitions or limitations on testimonials before posting them online.
- Use a disclaimer if you communicate electronically about fees, awards, recent cases or case outcomes. (NOTE TO FIRM: Do you want to require prior approval for this?)
- Be aware that attorney-client relationships may be created online – this often occurs in social media regardless of whether you want it to. Use of a firm approved disclaimer may be appropriate. (NOTE TO FIRM: Some firms are building in pop-up boxes that stop someone from e-mailing an attorney until and unless they accept the required terms of a disclaimer before e-mailing information that could constitute an attorney-client relationship.)

### **PRACTICE TIP**

#### **RED FLAG SITUATIONS:**

- Get approval before responding to a negative post, post recommendations for colleagues, or responding directly to a journalist.
- Before posting testimonials, check your state’s prohibitions or limitations.
- If you communicate electronically about fees, use a disclaimer.
- The attorney-client relationship can be created online. A disclaimer of some form may be wise.

## Social Media and Social Networking Policies and Procedures: Building Your Virtual Footprint and Your Network

- Build a reputation of trust among your clients, media and the public. When you are reaching out to journalists, bloggers, clients or colleagues through social media take every opportunity to build a reputation of trust and establish yourself as a credible and transparent legal professional.
- Don't use your own personal online relationships or the firm's network to influence polls, rankings or Web traffic.
- When using social networks with your firm e-mail and professional identification, do not "friend" anyone whom you either do not actually know or with whom you have not previously corresponded.



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**When you are reaching out to journalists, bloggers, clients or colleagues through social media take every opportunity to build a reputation of trust and establish yourself as a credible and transparent legal professional.**

**NOTE TO FIRM:** Lastly, please consider the following checklist crafted by lawyer Kevin McKeown, Lexblog's VP of Client Development. It outlines factors that a firm should take into account when crafting its own blog policy and makes suggestions for how to make the most of blogging activities. We suggest you answer these questions as you seek to customize the policies and procedures we have provided to you above. This checklist is written specifically for blogs but can apply to all social media tools.

1. Who owns the blog? Firm or individual lawyer(s)? Firm ownership is suggested if using to extend brand of firm and enhance reputation of a practice group. Copyright reflects ownership decided.
2. Who will blog? One author or multiple authors in a group blog? The firm approves and identifies all authors and blogs.
3. Does the blog(s) have a specific focus or niche? The narrower the focus, the better. Articulate.
4. Does the firm need specific guidelines for blogs? Maybe not. Review existing guidelines, practices and procedures. How are e-mail newsletters, media relations and client development issues handled? With minor revisions, professional blogging may easily be covered under existing firm practices.
5. Has the firm drafted an appropriate blog disclaimer and privacy policy? Disclaimers need to state that no attorney/client relationship is being formed and no legal advice is being dispensed. See also ethics points below.

6. Does the firm need to restrict blog content? Some firms may wish to restrict blog content to be general and informational similar to e-mail newsletters and alerts. Other firms may wish to take a more progressive, and usually more successful, approach to blogging by linking to and referencing other blog posts and news stories. By doing so, you're joining the conversation as an authority in your field. Depending on the circumstances, lawyer(s) may wish to avoid taking too strong a position on a particular legal topic. Generally, you don't want to be blogging about existing clients and matters on which members of the firm are working.
7. What's the blog posting and comment policy? Most firms, subject to general oversight, let blog authors write and publish without showing content to practice chairs or marketing prior to posting. Comments from blog readers should be allowed. Not to allow comments risks embarrassment to the firm. Blog software preferences should enable the blog author(s) or another designated party to review and approve comments before going live. Expect no more than 3 or 4 comments per month. Appropriate comments may be published.
8. How frequently should blogs be updated? The most effective bloggers post new content on a consistent basis (at least once a week); whatever your posting schedule is consistency is key. Blog author(s) posting on an irregular schedule are difficult to follow. To develop a compelling voice, the author should write and post – not someone else. A post should be relatively short – a few paragraphs (200-500 words may be fine). In many cases, take no more than 20 to 30 minutes to write a post.
9. What is the role of the marketing (or business development department)? General oversight. Review blogs periodically. Encourage lawyers to ask LexBlog specific questions about best blogging practices and any technical issues. Work with PR to determine what, if any, PR or marketing will be done to promote blog. Think through how networking with other bloggers and media will be addressed. Decide who responds to media requests directed to blog authors.
10. How does the firm ensure that published blog content shares and extends the reach of the firm's intellectual capital and maintains and enhances the firm's reputation (quality control)? One of the best ways to enter social media discussions is to follow relevant RSS (Real Simple Syndication) feeds and reference other respected bloggers and their posts.



### BLOG POLICY CHECKLIST

Use the checklist crafted by lawyer Kevin McKeown, Lexblog's VP of Client Development. It outlines factors that a firm should take into account when crafting its own blog policy and makes suggestions for how to make the most of blogging activities

1. Who owns the blog
2. Who will blog
3. Specific focus or niche of blog
4. Guidelines for blogs
5. Blog disclaimer and privacy policy
6. Blog content
7. Blog posting and comment policy
8. Frequency of blog updates
9. Role of the marketing and blog oversight
10. Quality control



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## Your Media Policy

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### [FIRM NAME]'S MEDIA POLICY

At [Firm Name] we value our relationships with reporters, editors and bloggers, as we understand the role that media coverage plays in the perception of our firm by current and prospective clients, as well as many other audiences in the wider community. At the same time, reporters and bloggers have a job to do, and their agendas and goals for covering [Firm Name] may not always be the same as ours. Because of this, we have carefully developed a firm-wide policy governing how to manage contacts from the media. Its purpose is to maintain our relationships with reporters, editors and bloggers by being as helpful as possible, while ensuring the firm's messages and positioning are properly communicated.

Below is the firm-wide policy governing how to respond to proactive contact from journalists and bloggers. [Note: The firm has separate policies governing staff and attorney use of social media and firm communications during crisis situations. Please refer to those for additional guidance.]

### RESPONDING TO CONTACT FROM REPORTERS AND BLOGGERS

At [Firm Name], we give a high priority to contact from the media. Media inquiries generally involve either requests for interviews about the firm and our clients, or requests to interview attorneys as subject matter sources. Each requires a slightly different communication technique.

#### I. Media Requests About the Firm or Clients

At any given time, media may be pursuing stories about our firm. These may be about positive topics (new hires, pro bono work, community involvement, firm donations), or reporters and bloggers may be asking for

comments from the firm regarding clients or sensitive internal matters. Regardless, all media requests about firm matters should be immediately referred to the designated firm media representative(s). At [Firm Name], we have designated the following individual(s) as firm media representative(s). They are the only personnel authorized to comment on firm matters.

### [FIRM NAME] MEDIA REPRESENTATIVE(S)

[Provide list of approved firm media representative(s) (managing partner(s), senior management member(s), marketing contact(s), outside PR contact(s). Include both e-mail and phone contact information.]

If you receive a phone call from a reporter asking for comment on a firm matter or a firm client, politely tell them that you will direct their inquiry immediately to the firm media representative(s) and that they will hear back as soon as possible. In addition to their name and the media outlet they work for, ask for their deadline. This is important as we want to be sure to respond to reporters in a timely manner so as to maintain credibility and relationships. Also make note of the nature of the reporter's inquiry and the information they seek. Pass all of this information on to the designated firm media representative(s) via e-mail or phone as quickly as possible.

**NOTE:** It is possible that a reporter calling for an interview about a sensitive internal matter or a firm client will try to secure information from anyone who answers the phone. It is important to refrain from making any comments to a reporter that could be used in their story. Stick to the "script" outlined above: take their information and assure them, politely, that they will receive a call back from the appropriate individual(s) in time for their deadline. Do not engage the reporter in conversation or idle chatter.

### II. Media Requests to Interview Attorneys as Subject Matter Sources

Having our attorneys quoted as trusted sources in the media and in blogs on issues, topics and trends relevant to our clients' business is crucial to maintaining [Firm Name]'s positioning in the marketplace. Clients and prospects rely on research when choosing new counsel and when making decisions regarding renewing their contracts. A significant source of their research comes from media mentions of our attorneys. Attorneys who are quoted as subject-matter sources are viewed as credible authorities on the topics they are quoted speaking about. The media act as a third-party "endorser," which enhances our attorneys' – and thus the firm's – reputation. Therefore, it is extremely important for such interview requests to be handled quickly and efficiently, with the reporter's needs in mind.

Below are specific guidelines for staff, associates and partners regarding handling these types of media inquiries.

**Staff:** Unless specifically designated, non-attorney staff members are not permitted to give media interviews. Many staff members are responsible for answering phones at the firm, however, and therefore play a key role in fostering our relationships with media. If you receive a call from a reporter, take down their name, the name of the outlet they work for, the details of their request, and their deadline. Tell the reporter they will hear back from someone as soon as possible, and in time for their deadline. Be courteous, respectful and professional, but do not engage in conversation or idle chatter.

If the reporter calling wishes to speak with an attorney with whom you work, pass the request and all of the information you collect on to that individual. They will decide what next steps to take. If the reporter does not ask to speak with a specific attorney, or someone you know, forward the request immediately to the list of individuals noted above. They will decide what next steps to take.

**Associates:** Unless specifically designated, associates at [Firm Name] are not permitted to give interviews to media. The exception may be if you are working with the firm's marketing or PR staff on proactive media outreach, or if you have been cleared to speak on specific topics by your immediate supervisor or practice group leader. If you receive a call or e-mail from a reporter looking to speak to an attorney with the firm regarding a specific topic that is not about a client or internal matter, follow the steps outlined above for staff.

If you are cleared to speak with media on specific topics, and the reporter is calling regarding one of those, follow the steps outlined below for partners.

**Partners:** All partners at [Firm Name] are expected to take on some marketing responsibilities. This may or may not include working with the media and doing interviews on topics related to your area of practice. If you have chosen to participate in the firm's PR efforts, you may receive interview opportunities from internal or external PR personnel. They will provide you with all of the information you need to do the interview, including – if appropriate – background on the reporter, the subject of their story, the information they seek, the kinds of questions they want to ask, and previous articles they may have written. PR personnel will also handle scheduling the interview and any follow-up. They are also available for just-in-time media training to help you develop messages and strategies for the interview.

You may also receive inquiries directly from the media, either to your direct phone or e-mail, or via a staff member or associate. Below are guidelines for handling this type of media contact:

- Check for client conflicts and obtain client approval if necessary before providing substantive information to a reporter. If the subject of the interview is something that would concern a client, or if the reporter is asking about a sensitive client issue or an area that presents a potential conflict, contact the firm's marketing

and/or ethics personnel to ensure the interview is permitted. You may also need to seek specific client approval if you are talking about a client matter such as a litigation victory. If in doubt, it is always better to secure permission than to move ahead with an interview that could potentially cost the firm a client or raise other issues.

- If you receive information about the media request from a staff member or associate and you feel comfortable getting back to the reporter to do the interview, do so. Be sure to respond to the reporter in time for the deadline. If the information you receive is incomplete, or you would like counsel regarding the interview opportunity, contact the firm's marketing department or PR personnel. They can follow up with the reporter and secure additional information, arrange the interview, or politely decline on your behalf if the reporter wishes to discuss something that is either outside of your area of knowledge or you are not comfortable addressing. It is also advisable to alert marketing and PR personnel that you are doing the interview, regardless of whether or not you require their assistance. They will be able to handle any follow-up stemming from the interview and track for the story.
- If you are contacted directly by a reporter, either via phone or email, do not feel pressured to do the interview right away. It is perfectly acceptable to ask for the reporter's deadline and tell them you will call them back. Even if it is just 15 minutes later that you make that call, it will give you time to mentally prepare for the interview, check for conflicts or sensitivities, and seek any help from the marketing department or PR personnel. Also ask for more specifics about the reporter's story and the questions they want answered, if you want, but refrain from answering them until you are sure you want to do the interview. Be sure to call the reporter back in time for their deadline, even if it is just to decline the interview. This will help foster your relationship

## PRACTICE TIP



### MEDIA POLICY

Your firm needs a media policy governing how to respond to proactive contact from journalists and bloggers.

Stipulate the following:

- Who talks to the media.
- Provide a list of approved firm media representative(s).
- Guidelines for staff, associates and partners regarding media inquiries.

with them. You may also elect to have a firm PR representative call the reporter back to decline the interview.

As noted above, [Firm Name] values its relationships with reporters and the coverage it receives in the media. By following the above guidelines, you can help ensure that media inquiries receive the prompt, appropriate attention that they deserve and that they are handled properly.

When anyone in the firm is asked a general question about the firm they may always refer the member of the media to our website as another public source of general information.

If you have any questions about this policy or working with the media, feel free to contact [Name, title, contact information].

## **Crisis Communications Policy**

### **[FIRM NAME]'S CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

During a crisis, it is critical to develop and follow a plan. As you know, the traditional and online media, as well as other online influencers, play an important role in how our firm is perceived, both internally and externally by our clients, prospects, laterals and recruits, and the general public. This policy will help us manage our reputation when we are faced with sensitive situations. If you have any questions about this policy, please contact [Name, title] at [e-mail and phone number].

### **ESTABLISHING THE TEAM**

The crisis communications team will consist of firm leadership, essential attorneys and appropriate staff. Once formed, this team will develop a comprehensive plan for managing all crisis communications – both internal and external. The plan will include:

- Selecting and preparing the media representative(s). No one is authorized to speak with the media except for the designated representative(s). No matter how experienced the

media representative is, he or she must participate in a prep session on the particular details of – and approved messaging for – the specific crisis.

- An organizational chart of the team will be prepared with descriptions of the role of each team member. Firm management will appoint a team leader and alternate team leader.

### **DEVELOPING A PLAN**

- Gathering information
  - Create a summary of basic crisis details
  - Consider all audiences to be considered in communications planning
  - Consider the timing of all communications
  - Consider the media channels of all communications
- Gather all updated firm information in one place, including: fact sheets pertaining to the specific situation, general firm fact sheets, and documents on the firm itself. These documents should always be kept up to date and ready for any emergency.
- Determine what elements of the crisis the firm will comment on and what elements will be left for commentary by others. In the event of a crime, for

### **PRACTICE TIP**

#### **CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

**THE TEAM:** Firm leadership, essential attorneys and appropriate staff.

**THE PLAN:** Gather all information and consider audience, timing and media channels of all communications. Synchronize internal and external messages.

**AN ONLINE STRATEGY:** Monitor all social media and develop approved online content that can be used to respond to online commentary if appropriate. Utilize DSEO (defensive search engine optimization.)

example, there may be others outside of the firm who will act as representatives for certain elements of the crisis. Spell out the plan to work with the media on a specific crisis, deciding all available options and affected audiences and which approach is the best option. Outline the best strategic option in detail. Include a time line for deliverables. (Note: ([Name] in our [marketing/ communications] department is the contact person for all media inquiries, but is NOT the spokesman/ spokeswoman.)

- Written communications. Decide what is necessary and prepare media statements or press releases as appropriate, as well as any internal communications.
- Synchronize internal and external messages. Prepare all internal communications (written or verbal) with the same messaging as the external communications, and announce the news to the media as soon as possible after it is communicated internally.

## AN ONLINE STRATEGY/PLAN

It should include:

- Assigning an individual to monitor all social media and online publications for mentions of the crisis issues in real time. Consider Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
- Defensive search engine optimization – have a resource at the ready to implement DSEO tactics as appropriate.
- Developing approved online content that can be used to quickly respond, if deemed appropriate, to online commentary.

**Important!** Stick to the plan, but be aware that there are outside factors that may influence timing. Once a

detailed internal and external communications strategy has been developed, stick to it, but understand that we may need to be flexible with our timing. In the past one could not allow media inquiries or rumors to dictate the timing of the plan; however, we now need to be wary that rumors can spread like wildfire via social and other media, and remaining silent until we are ready may only give the rumors a bigger head start. While we may need to adjust timing, the one thing that we should not need to adjust is our messaging. We will determine all possible questions that we might receive ahead of time and be prepared to respond when appropriate with a defined list of messages that will be used to deflect any potential questions that may be asked.

Any attorney or staff member who is contacted by a reporter or blogger must NOT answer any questions, instead:

1. Say: “Thank you for contacting our firm. Let me take your information and I’ll make sure the right person gets back in touch with you.”
2. Ask for the reporter’s full name, affiliation and contact information
3. Refer the reporter to [Name] in our [marketing/ communications department] at [phone] or [e- mail]
4. Immediately alert [Name] in the [marketing/ communications] department and pass along all relevant reporter information.
5. [Name] will evaluate the inquiry and work with the designated firm representative to address the reporter’s needs.

Following the guidelines set forth in this policy will ensure that the firm is prepared if/when a crisis situation occurs.



**During a crisis, it is critical to develop and follow a plan. This policy will help us manage our reputation when we are faced with sensitive situations.**

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