

### MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS CORNER

*One of the questions I am most often asked relates to the area of public relations and particularly how media is handled in law firms as it impacts marketing and business development. To answer those questions, I am pleased to introduce a new series that will feature interviews with top law firm in-house public relations professionals. These interviews will be conducted by the public relations team of Jaffe Associates.*  
— Elizabeth Anne “Betiayn” Tursi, Editor-in-Chief

**Meet Joshua M. Peck, Senior Manager, Media Relations at Duane Morris in Philadelphia**

**By Vivian Hood**

Joshua Peck’s path to law firm public relations, and to Duane Morris, began with his career as a reporter for Newhouse Newspapers in Michigan, and then Gannett Newspapers in New York’s Westchester County, where he won several reporting and writing awards. His freelance work has appeared in diverse publications including *The New York Times* and the *Jerusalem Post*. Joshua worked as a press secretary on a Congressional campaign in 1988, then for the New York State Senate, and then moved into broader communications work with a philanthropic organization, and then with the firm Rubenstein Associates in New York. His focus on law firm work sharpened with his move to Jaffe Associates, where he rose to become Director of the PR staff. He has worked in-house at three firms — Kirkland & Ellis, Hughes, Hubbard & Reed (as CMO), and now at Duane Morris.

A subgroup of the firm’s Marketing and Business Development depart-

**Vivian Hood**, Vice President, Public Relations for Jaffe Associates, has developed and implemented law firm public relations strategies for more than 9 years. Based in Jacksonville, FL, she can be reached at 904-220-1915 and hoodv@jaffeassociates.com.

ment, the Media Relations group was just a team of one when Peck joined the firm in February 2004. Now, he has a full-time assistant and a full-time intern from Drexel University. If he needs additional support, help comes internally from a former legal journalist who now works in the Department’s Communications group.

Peck says that the firm’s public relations strategy supports — and is driven by — the firm’s marketing agenda. “Those areas of the firm we see as most amenable to growth through the tools of general marketing and business-development approaches are those on which I also put the most emphasis,” he says. “In no order of importance, three priority practices are trial (litigation), corporate and intellectual property.” But, he adds that he will never dismiss any opportunity to pitch a story with great media potential, even if the attorney’s practice falls outside those priority areas. With more than 600 lawyers in 19 offices, and more locations to come, the firm offers Peck a bounty of stories to share with the press.

When it comes to outsourcing public-relations services, Peck says that almost everything is done internally; however, on a few occasions he has used outside PR firms for special projects. “When we announced the expansion of our insurance coverage practice and simultaneously strengthened our California presence by merging with the former Hancock Rotherth & Bunshoft LLP law firm in San Francisco, we engaged an outside PR firm to help.” Peck has also outsourced for some media training, and plans to do so again with an international PR firm to announce future foreign expansion efforts by the firm.

In hiring outside agencies, Peck looks for specific ideals in the relationship. “They have to be responsive and fast, and keep me apprised of whatever they’re doing with an appropriate level of detail. They need to understand from me when, and how, to interact with our attorneys. Also, it helps to be imaginative

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## Marketing

### The Law Firm®

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## Media

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and come up with tactics that I might not have considered. One outside PR purveyor surprised me with an unusually strong talent for ghostwriting, nicely capturing the 'voice' of the putative lawyer/authors."

Despite being an increasingly hot topic among law firms and the public relations community in general, blogs play a minimal role in Peck's day-to-day PR activities. He prefers a more traditional "pick-up-the-phone" approach. "I really don't think [blogs] have caught on with the business community enough for me to focus my efforts there."

The number of successful placements he and his group regularly generate for the firm are true testament to the value of media relations. He listed several recent examples of media placements he achieved. "We recently received great national coverage of our representation of the Web site DontDateHimGirl.com, including a segment on the CBS Early Show and an item on *The Wall Street Journal* law blog. Also, the *New York Law Journal* just wrote an article about our very friendly attitude to new moms, focusing on the firm's flexible maternity leave policy. And, in connection with our merger and the expansion of our insurance practice earlier this year, we have since then placed a number of

very good articles in national insurance and business magazines, including *Crain's Business Insurance* and *National Underwriter*. Also, we arranged for a lengthy interview between Bloomberg News and a co-head of our IP litigation practice to discuss his ideas on recent Supreme Court decisions, and secured a nice profile of the practice ... but I should say that because of the great cooperation I've gotten from the lawyers, good 'hits' are an everyday affair."

Encouraging the firm's partners to engage in Peck's services has come easy to him, especially through the delivery of a speech and PowerPoint presentation that explains his role, and more to the point, the attorneys' opportunity to capitalize on his work. His approach of answering the question "What's in it for me?" catches their attention, and he has been very successful in obtaining press-worthy matters from the attorneys as a result. He delivers his speech frequently, at least once a month, either geographically or by practice group. If he speaks directly to a group of litigators in Boston, it can also be seen by other litigators throughout the firm via video conference.

A dependence on Web-based technology is reflected in the public relations tools that support his daily activities, all of which help make his job easier. He receives several Web-based services, he says. "Lexis,

Bacon's and Westlaw are essential, plus I subscribe to a number of daily information services in the industries we serve, like Advisen for the insurance business, and all the Portfolio Media Law360 outlets. I also occasionally use PR Newswire."

As founder and president of the Law Firm Media Professionals group that meets monthly in New York, Peck realizes the importance of networking and belonging to professional industry associations. He is also active in the Delaware Valley Law Firm Marketing Group, and to a lesser extent, active in the Legal Marketing Association (LMA), and two public relations organizations — the Philadelphia PR Association, and the Philadelphia chapter of PRSA.

Practicing public relations since 1988, and specifically servicing the legal industry since 1994, Peck has seen the industry undergo a number of changes over the years.

"Certainly, we now have much more of a focus on Web-based media. It's definitely an established news source for the business community, and therefore more of a focus for me." He also notes that, "law firm PR as a tool is now seen as instrumental and integral to a firm's business strategy, much more so than it was 10-15 years ago. That's especially true of Duane Morris."

