

Modern law firms know that fostering a culture of inclusion is key to retaining top talent, especially lawyers from underrepresented groups. In recent years, many firms have made changes to areas like recruiting, mentoring and professional development programming to increase the sense of belonging for all members of the firm. These are good first steps.

But true inclusion requires an assessment of all aspects of the firm, and that includes your system for distributing PR opportunities. When we ask clients about this, we often hear, “we don’t really have a system” or that opportunities to write articles, speak with reporters and otherwise represent the firm are distributed “informally” or based on “merit.” While firm leaders might view this as a fair approach, the truth is that informal networks are not inclusive, and what counts as “merit” is sometimes more a product of access and privilege than individual achievement.

Ask yourself: Who are our rising stars and the future faces of our firm? What trailblazing or game-changing skills and perspectives do they offer? How do they help differentiate our firm from our competitors?

Here are four ideas for making your PR strategy more inclusive:

1. Nominate lawyers from underrepresented groups for awards that are not DEI focused. Winning an award can earn honorees social media shoutouts, media interviews, speaking opportunities at conferences and events, and more. Leveraging the recognition that comes with awards unrelated to DEI initiatives enables honorees to build their profiles based on their practice and experience and not just their identity status.
2. Update lawyers’ bios. Attorney website bios are often neglected. Once you’ve identified your firm’s superstars, make sure their bios are updated with language that highlights their full range of skills. Are their recent matters up to date? Are their awards and other accolades showcased? Make sure the copy accurately positions their talents.
3. Identify key reporters and set up introductions. Research reporters who are writing about topics or practice areas in which your standout lawyers have expertise, then schedule an introductory meet-and-greet or a formal interview. Check out publications’ editorial calendars to see when they’ll highlight a topic that allows your lawyers to share their insights and preview the services they can provide. Legal media desperately needs more diversity in sourcing, and brokering these relationships is one way to make that more likely.
4. Produce thought leadership pieces. Provide editorial support for pitching and drafting thought leadership articles authored by these lawyers and place them in key industry outlets. Once these pieces are published, plan to promote them widely across the firm’s internal and external channels.

With a little thought and planning, your PR strategy can work in concert with the firm's overall plan to become a more inclusive organization that truly supports its next-generation talent.