

## There's More to Writing a Legal Article Than Writing

*By Bob Weiss and Amber Vincent*

Writing can be an effective tool for young attorneys who are looking to make a name and build a book of business. But, most lawyers fail to capture full value of the time and effort they devote to writing an article. The key to any type of writing is to keep your reader in mind. To really capitalize on the client development potential of writing a legal article, you must take this rule of thumb even further by making your writing an interactive process. You also must have a plan for putting the finished article into potential clients' and referral sources' hands.

Before you start writing, contact several clients and referral sources and explain what your article is about and where your article is to appear. Ask them what additional issues or angles they think should be added to the article. Contact not only people whom you regularly contact, but also those with whom you have lost touch or would like to establish a relationship. As leading lawyer coach Mark Mariah has said, articles are "catalysts for conversations." Also, invite your colleagues to suggest people whom you might contact for additional input.

After your article is published, obtain copies and send them to clients and referrals sources with a handwritten note or letter and ask your colleagues to send copies to their contacts. In the note or letter, ask readers for feedback and suggestions about other articles they would like to see from you. Consider asking recipients if they know of anyone who might be interested in receiving a copy of your article. Surveys show that top rainmakers are far more likely to ask for introductions to potential clients than colleagues who generate less business.

Finally, consider into what other formats your article might be adapted. For example, one of our firm's clients wrote an article on vicarious liability for a bar publication that we broke into four distinct segments and recorded as a series of CDs and podcasts. Our firm is sending the CDs and podcasts to referring counsel quarterly over a one-year period. After a year, the recording will be featured on the firm's Web site. How might your article translate into video, podcast, or a personal or firm blog post?

Alternatively, blogging is an extremely effective client development tool that can increase your Internet visibility and be less time consuming than writing a published article. Blogs can put your name and expertise in front of readers in one of the most competitive arenas in the writing world today: Internet search results. People surfing the Internet for legal assistance want to know what you have to say, and a blog is a great way to show them that you know what you are talking about.

The key to blogging is to keep it simple and conversational. When a situation arises that would be good for the public or blog subscribers to know about, report on it or offer commentary in a simple blog post of a few paragraphs or even two or three sentences. Ideally, a blogger who is trying to gain a following and potential clients would blog three times or more per week. If you are just starting out as a blogger, try posting one blog per week until it becomes second nature and you realize how easy it really can be.

Remember, writing an article and marketing it effectively is an interactive process, and incorporating these best practices into your publishing efforts will increase the chances of bringing in new business for you and your firm.

---

*Bob Weiss and Amber Vincent of [Alyn-Weiss & Associates](#) in Denver, Colorado, can be contacted at and [weiss@themarketinggurus.com](mailto:weiss@themarketinggurus.com) and [vincent@prdenver.com](mailto:vincent@prdenver.com).*

---