

# SAYLOR COMPANY

## PUBLIC RELATIONS COUNSEL

### **Helping Lawyers Manage Clients and Crises**

Many attorneys would prefer to try their case in court, not in the court of public opinion. But there may be no choice if, for business or reputational reasons, clients need protection in the public arena. In such cases, it's essential to have a PR team that is collaborative and understands the importance of a communications strategy that supports the legal approach.

The growing influence of websites and cable news, and the rapid spread of information across time zones and borders, has made it far more difficult to contain and control a story once it has leaked into the public domain. And the damage can be significant; from the tainting of the jury pool to a reevaluation of financial risk and increased regulatory burden.

For these reasons, devising a communications plan that supports, rather than undermines, the legal strategy is critical. Lawyers today are managers of a complex team tasked with solving a variety of problems, from constructing the best legal strategy to preserving their client's reputation. They depend on forensic auditors, jury consultants and, increasingly, public relations experts to help secure victories inside and outside the courtroom. As with any specialist, choosing the PR consultant with the right set of skills is critical.

### **Is Knowledgeable About the Law**

Effective PR support for legal situations requires an understanding of the law – such as issues of confidentiality, discovery and privilege – and having a PR expert who can work alongside the lawyers to achieve the best possible outcome for the client. Sometimes, the legal and communications strategies are at odds. This is often true in times of crisis, when a simple “I’m sorry” could be viewed as an admission of guilt. In those situations, it is up to the PR experts and lawyers to help their client determine what to say and when to say it. Or simply craft the best strategy for keeping their client out of the news.

### **Understands the Changing Media Landscape**

Clients involved in a high-profile legal battle no longer have the luxury of waiting until the next news cycle to make a decision. All news, but particularly bad news, travels quickly, thanks to the Internet. The growing influence of websites and cable news, and the rapid spread of news across time zones and borders, has made it far more difficult to deal with a story once it has leaked to the public. News is being broken by bloggers working around the clock and journalists are under pressure to file stories more quickly, leaving them less time to do research and fact-check. Protecting assets and reputations on a global scale also requires an understanding of how the media operates in different cultures and how culture might impact the way a story is read and understood.

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### **Uses the Media, Internet to Your Advantage**

A compelling story can change the outcome of a case. But translating a complex legal strategy into a powerful narrative isn't easy, whether it is part of a closing argument or a statement to the press on the courtroom steps. Thanks to the technology revolution, there are a myriad of options for getting a story into the public arena, whether it is through The New York Times Website, a blog posting on Huffington Post or a Twitter feed on someone's cell phone. WikiLeaks was a dramatic reminder that the traditional media no longer controls the story, although it retains tremendous influence.

### **Thinks Globally**

As the leaders of China and Iran have discovered, it is no longer possible to keep information from leaving a country or even a continent. Protecting assets and reputations on a global scale requires an understanding of how the legal systems work in different parts of the world and how the legal arguments might be presented by media in different countries and cultures. In some countries, for example, the laws covering court reporting is very restrictive. Coverage of legal battles is often presented in nationalistic terms, if involving parties from different parts of the world.

Decades of experience with some of the nation's leading media organizations and PR firms have given Saylor Company principals the tools to out-research, out-report and out-strategize the opposition. We have experience navigating across borders, time zones and legal systems, having worked with more than 20 foreign governments. We help lawyers look good, by ensuring that they and their clients are in control of their message, no matter how complex or controversial.

### **Evelyn Iritani**

**Saylor Company, Public Relations Counsel**

For more information, go to [www.saylorcompany.com](http://www.saylorcompany.com)

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