



How to Leverage Legal Research for Marketing and Business Development

Wouldn't it be nice if running a successful law firm just meant delivering quality legal work? If only clients with deep pockets and meaty, billing-intensive matters rolled in on a conveyor belt like clockwork, that would be ideal.

Sadly, clients rarely walk in the door. Successful firms must engage in marketing and business development to keep the hopper full, staff paid and equity partners satisfied.

When most firms think about business development, they immediately focus on tools such as the website, PR initiatives, attorney-specific marketing plans, etc. There is, however, an underused marketing tool that firms rarely leverage — and, no, it's not an AI bot that automates business development so lawyers don't have to lift a finger (though wouldn't that be awesome?).

We're talking about legal research. Yes — the legal analysis every lawyer has spent infinite hours toiling away at from their very first law school class is a powerful marketing tool. Why? Because legal research is all about staying current on the latest developments in the law that affect a firm's clients.

Every day, lawyers gather powerful marketing insights when they access California legal research resources such as [CEB](#) as they work on client matters. Each click or page turn can reveal a multitude of current and future risks and opportunities for a firm's clients as well as potential business development touchpoints.

From enriching content marketing and PR pitches to helping a lawyer become a client or prospect's secret weapon, legal research is a marketing and business development gold mine. This white paper will review all of this to help you get more value from your legal research resources.

Using legal research to become a PR star

Any legal PR agency worth its salt — and fees — has regular chats with a firm's lawyers for updates on their work. Part of the discussion always focuses on the current matters, cases, deals, etc., on the attorney's docket and whether any will be candidates for some PR. That is just half of the PR equation, however.

The other critical aspects of law firm PR are trendspotting and newsjacking. Publicists use trendspotting and newsjacking to identify current and future issues and trends that will likely garner press coverage. They then pitch their attorney clients to reporters and editors as sources on those issues and trends to secure interviews and bylined article assignments.



An attorney's whole job is to stay on top of the challenges and opportunities facing their clients, including changes in regulations, new case law, and enforcement agency priorities.

For example, say the CEO of a certain electric vehicle manufacturer has his compensation package nullified by a court while negotiating his contract renewal with the board — and he's not very quiet about any of it. This would be an excellent opportunity for an executive compensation attorney to insert themselves into the media conversation and offer perspectives on what to do when shareholders challenge compensation packages, how to negotiate compensation when it's determined by a board, and what not to do when in sensitive negotiations. A pitch offering these insights to the right reporters could lead to interviews that result in articles quoting the lawyer in media outlets read by current and potential clients. The resulting clips would then be used on the firm's website and circulated to relevant clients and prospects. All of that is from just a bit of trendspotting, newsjacking and careful pitching.



However, coming up with those trends and issues can be challenging for many lawyers. It's not unusual to draw a blank when put on the spot in an input call with a PR pro asking pointed questions. The initial impulse might be to say, "There's nothing novel about my work. I do the same thing every day. I do good work for my clients, but that's it."

And yet, every lawyer's day is full of moments where they make a real difference for clients — they just can't see it from their vantage point in the weeds. An attorney's whole job is to stay on top of the challenges and opportunities facing their clients, including changes in regulations, new case law, and enforcement agency priorities. But in the day-to-day rush to get the work done, a lawyer may not stop and think about how all of that could be leveraged to make them a PR star as well.

Here are some ways this can work.

Getting ahead of the news

Legal research resources such as CEB usually have a robust [news section](#), a treasure trove of information just waiting to be leveraged by a PR-savvy lawyer. On the CEB site, for example, the DailyNews feature is organized by practice group, and users can immediately sort through all of the stories to focus on their area of law. The articles range from deep dives into a specific hot-button California legal issue to roundups of new laws, regulatory changes and litigation outcomes. CEB also has ongoing columns devoted to urgent and important topics, such as [the impact of climate change](#) across practice groups and what California-based lawyers must know.

All DailyNews stories have links to applicable CEB resources for additional information, interpretations authored by leading legal authorities and case law. That allows users — and potential PR stars — to brief themselves on the relevant issues.

Coupled with daily scans of both mainstream and trade media, looking at CEB's news section is a solid way for lawyers to stay ahead of the news and keep tabs on potential stories where they could serve as a source. The curation is a real asset for busy lawyers who want to do PR but don't have a lot of spare hours in the day to spend poring over regulatory filings and court decisions to surface potential trends. Leveraging CEB's DailyNews for this is an innovative PR hack that will pay dividends.

Standing out: using legal research to develop helpful and novel pitches

PR has always been a numbers game — and it's getting more so every day. Shrinking ad revenues have gutted newsrooms and editorial staff. Now, too few reporters are trying to cover too many stories while recording short videos, writing SEO-enabled copy and possibly dancing on TikTok for clicks.

It's exhausting and made even more so by a constant onslaught of PR pitches from publicists eager to have their sources quoted. Successfully competing for a harried journalist's attention these days means being different from every other pitch pinging their inbox — and offering genuine help.

On the surface, that might seem like a tall order. How different can you be when commenting on a legal issue? There's only the law and what it says. And why is it my job to help the reporter do theirs?

- 01 You'll stand out by being different
- 02 You'll stand out by being helpful. Simply put, the more work you can do for a reporter on the front end, the more likely they will interview you.



Here's how that looks and where legal research can come in handy.

California has some of the most complicated regulations in the country regarding affordable housing — and new laws are added all the time. The state is also very serious about addressing the housing crisis. In late 2023, California asked to intervene in a lawsuit on the side of plaintiffs challenging a decision by the city of La Cañada Flintridge to deny a project that would create 80 mixed-income housing units. This announcement was a great opportunity for land use attorneys and municipal lawyers familiar with affordable housing regulations to serve as sources for any related media coverage.



Suppose one attorney sent a brief email offering his availability for interviews with affordable housing reporters. He gave his contact information plus a quick one-sentence descriptor of himself as an affordable housing lawyer.

However, another lawyer took a bit more time. She turned to CEB to read [the DailyNews story](#) on the case and the state's filing and pulled up the relevant state, county and municipal regulations in CEB. Then she reached out to reporters and not only described her background and why it was applicable but also provided a brief background on the case, outlined what the relevant regulations say and included a pithy quote.

Who do you think the reporter would call? Exactly. It's the second lawyer. She took maybe 15 minutes to mine CEB for the information she needed to stand out to the reporter and show how she could help.

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Nailing urgent media interviews

Part of the deal with PR is accepting that you will likely do some urgent interviews with reporters who are on deadline. That can be a daunting prospect for anyone, let alone lawyers who are used to knowing all the facts and being prepared. Trial lawyers probably have more experience thinking on their feet in the heat of the moment, but any lawyer will feel pressure in a tight-deadline media interview.

Some reporters will provide questions ahead of an interview if they can. Other times, the lawyer will have a sense of the general topic of the interview but not specific questions. Regardless, even if there are only 15 minutes to prepare, much can be done to get up to speed — especially if you have solid legal research resources.

A reporter will be looking to an attorney source for context and meaning. They'll want plain language explanations of confusing legal issues and dry case law to help their audience understand what's at the heart of a story. Interview preparation should involve a quick review of the appropriate background, including relevant statutes, court decisions and interpretations. Gathering that information on short notice is a tall order, but plugging key terms into a legal research system such as CEB will reveal what's needed. Then, it's just a matter of skimming, taking a few notes on a Post-it as a memory aid and waiting for the reporter to call.

A good media source is an informed media source. Leveraging legal research will set up a lawyer to impress even the toughest reporter and maybe land a coveted spot on their go-to source list.



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Feeding the beast: using legal research to inform content marketing

Content. Content. Content. That's the drumbeat refrain you'll hear from law firm marketers as one key ingredient in the business development mix. Content has always driven marketing efforts from the early days of law firm tombstone ads in local newspapers. Today, content is the bedrock of any law firm's business development strategy — from website bios and news updates to client alerts and blog posts.

Good content marketing is more than just throwing up words on a website and calling it done. A lot of strategy goes into writing that content to ensure it meets a firm's business development goals and reels in new business.

As with PR, legal research resources should be a cornerstone supporting any content marketing efforts. Below are just a few ways legal research can help.

No more blank-page syndrome

Nobody likes to sit down to a blank page and blinking cursor, not knowing what to write about, especially content marketers. You can spend hours conducting careful research on your target market, but that means nothing if you don't have any ideas for content.

Enter legal research resources such as CEB. There are enough content ideas there to sustain a content marketing program indefinitely. Where are those ideas? Well, the [DailyNews section](#), as we noted above, has its finger on the pulse of what's happening right now across many [California practice areas](#). A quick scan of that will give you topics galore to explore in your content that targets current and potential clients. Then there's the wealth of information available in [Secondary Sources](#) and [Practitioner](#) — not to mention all the California [cases](#), [statutes](#), and [rules of court](#) resources that come with a CEB subscription.



Address the unique needs of your clients and prospects

The biggest marketing mistake that law firms make is trying to be all things to all potential clients. This leads to many "random acts of marketing" that spin wheels with no results. The key to successful marketing, including content, is finding a firm's niche and zeroing in.

What this means for content marketing is identifying the specific work a firm wants to be known for and the clients who will need that work. The deep dive doesn't stop there, however. The next step is to drill down into what motivates those clients to seek legal assistance, what keeps them up at night, what risks they face, how they can take advantage of opportunities and the biggest challenges in their way. The answers to those questions form the basis for a firm's content strategy.



Turning those answers into content involves — you guessed it — research. This includes speaking with the lawyers doing the work and scouring other sources of information, such as CEB.

For example, a California law firm with a growing land use practice wants more developer clients, particularly in key municipalities or counties. In talking with the firm's lawyers, the marketing team finds out that staying on top of regulatory changes is a headache for developers, who risk having projects denied if they haven't followed everything to the letter. CEB's regulatory resources — including detailed county-by-county information — will be an asset to the firm's content marketing efforts. There, all in one place, is enough information to write a series of blog posts or even a white paper informing real estate developers of everything they need to know to get their projects through.

Of course, that can't be just a dry law review-style recitation of the regs. A good writer will make the topic come alive and back it up with solid research from CEB's resources. Of greater importance is positioning that content to reach a very specific potential client audience by providing information that's immediately useful and an indication of the help they'll receive if they hire the firm.



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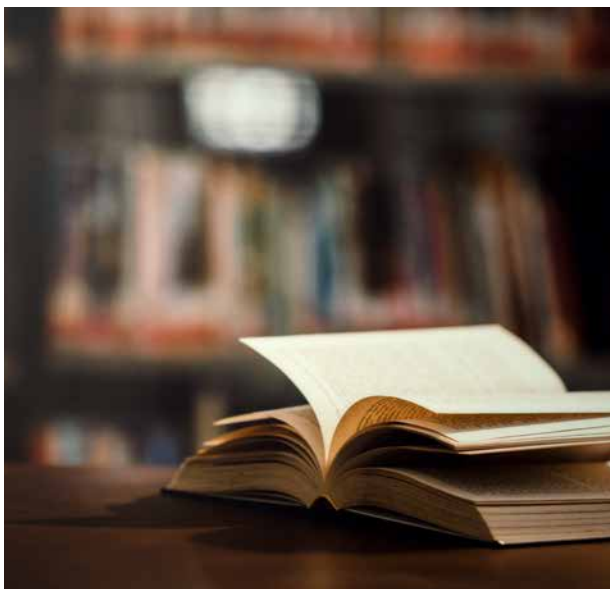




Ace business development with legal research

When business development coaches work with attorneys, they stress the importance of developing, expanding and maintaining a network. Easier said than done, of course — especially for those that lean introvert. Not everyone is a natural networker or can work the room at a Chamber of Commerce mixer.

Networking is not rocket science, however. The key is to get good at showing your personality, knowledge, and talent. And, while you can't walk into an industry event and rattle off California court rules of procedure (people will flee your presence), there are ways to show potential clients you would be the perfect fit for their legal work.



Become an expert on a prospect

Even though a California lawyer may have practiced in a specific area of law for decades, every potential client is different. The lawyer may have to quickly get up to speed on a prospect's industry and specific risks, challenges and opportunities to demonstrate an awareness of their needs. The potential client may also have some case history that their prospective counsel should know.

This requires research and a reliable, easy-to-use source of accurate information. Leveraging legal research resources such as CEB will make quick work of that study and help inform initial conversations with prospects and RFP responses.

Be a font of useful information

That new information can also be repurposed to demonstrate how a lawyer will be an indispensable resource for a potential client. A great way to prove your worth to a prospect is to show what it would be like to work with you. This includes the basics regarding timely responses and your overall tone and demonstrating how invaluable you'd be as their outside lawyer. CEB is your superweapon here.

As noted in our other sections, most lawyers are in and out of legal research databases daily or weekly, reviewing documents crucial to their work. Why not make that time part of business development as well? All of the information a lawyer will review during their work might also interest prospects with similar needs. Even better, a lawyer's natural inclination to spot and mitigate risks blends seamlessly with business development. What better way to earn the respect and trust of a prospect than reaching out with timely information regarding risks they might not have considered or known about?

You can go about this in several ways.

- 01 The first is good if you've established a one-on-one relationship with a prospect. Maybe you've met them at an industry event, and they've asked for more information, or you have gone as far as responding to an RFP. Regardless, the relationship is there, and it's time to nurture it.

Firing off a quick email that leads with "Hey, thought you might want to be aware of this ..." is a great way to continue conversations. Just be sure you aren't merely stating the risk and signing off. You must offer concrete, practical advice to the recipient so they can understand how you'd address the issue for them as a client.

- 02 A second approach is to use legal research to form the backbone of an email marketing strategy. This is a good way to reach prospects interested enough in your firm to sign up for newsletters (which you have a form for on your website, right?) but haven't yet reached out. The same rule applies here as one-on-one emails: be helpful. So many firms send out client alerts that are dry and boring rehashes of a regulatory change or case result and do not provide practical advice. That's a one-way ticket to the trash folder — or even getting marked as spam. So, use your legal research to spot risks and developments and outline what potential clients should do immediately after reading your email. That's what you send — and it will impress prospects (and your current clients to confirm they've made the right choice in law firms).



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Dominate the speaking circuit

Speaking at industry events and on webinars is another excellent business development tool. While public speaking is not for everyone, it is a great way to showcase your knowledge in front of an audience of potential clients.

The trick with speaking is coming up with topics. Conferences are always taking speaker submissions, but you have to stand out. Past speaking experience is an asset, but getting on an itinerary without that is possible if you put together a strong proposal. Again, legal research resources such as CEB can help identify the issues, risks, and opportunities that will be on attendees' minds. Since a great presentation also relies on examples, citing relevant content (cases, regulations, analysis) from CEB in a proposal is ideal. Get granular with a speaking proposal, showing the exact elements you'll address and what insights you'll provide attendees to show conference organizers you're worth the slot.

Legal research: a law firm business development secret weapon

If firms are not leveraging their legal research tools for marketing and business development, they are ignoring a crucial strategic asset. California firms that draw on CEB's resources will stand out above their competitors in the marketplace. Solid, reliable legal research should form the cornerstone of any California law firm's marketing and business development strategy, as well as the efforts of individual attorneys.

If you'd like to know more about the resources available through CEB to supercharge your marketing and business development, [get in touch today for a free demo](#).

