

## THE NEW MEDIA LANDSCAPE: WHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER MORE THAN EVER

By Vicki LaBrosse

The media landscape has undergone a fundamental transformation over the past decade, and for law firm marketers and PR professionals in legal tech, the shift is particularly pronounced. Traditional playbooks built around press releases, broad media lists and transactional pitching are no longer sufficient. Today, influence is fragmented; editorial teams are leaner; and the competition for attention is fiercer than ever.

Amid this disruption, one truth has become increasingly clear: relationships, not reach, are the most valuable currency in modern media relations.

### A MORE COMPLEX, FRAGMENTED ECOSYSTEM

The definition of “media” has expanded well beyond legacy outlets. While publications like the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times* and *Reuters* still hold significant influence, they now operate alongside a growing ecosystem of trade publications, independent journalists, newsletters, podcasts and LinkedIn-based creators.

For industries like legal and accounting tech, this fragmentation is especially impactful. Highly specialized audiences often turn to niche outlets such as *Law Journal Newsletters*, *Legaltech News*, *Corporate Counsel*, ILTA publications and practitioner-led newsletters for insights directly relevant to their work. These channels may have smaller audiences, but they are often far more targeted and influential.

At the same time, newsroom consolidation has left many journalists covering broader beats with fewer resources. Reporters are expected to produce more content faster and across multiple formats. As a result, they are increasingly selective about the sources they engage with and far more reliant on trusted relationships to surface credible, relevant stories.

## MAY 2026

### *In This Issue:*

[The New Media Landscape: Why Relationships Matter More Than Ever](#) ....1

[How Lawyer-Generated Social Media Content Is Shaping Litigation](#) ....4

[The Intelligence Pipeline: What Comes After CRM For Law Firms](#) ....7

[Big Law’s Next Competitive Edge: Building Internal Culture](#) .....10

[How to Run An Effective Meeting](#) .....13

[Why Law Firm Marketing and BD Must Move Beyond a Reactive, Legacy Service Model](#) .....15

## THE SHIFT FROM TRANSACTIONS TO TRUST

In this environment, transactional PR, sending a pitch, hoping for coverage and moving on, simply doesn't work the way it once did. Journalists are inundated with pitches, many of which are overly promotional, poorly targeted or disconnected from their coverage priorities.

What cuts through is trust.

Strong relationships with reporters and editors are built over time through consistent, thoughtful engagement. This means understanding what a journalist covers, how they frame stories and what constitutes news value for their audience. It also means showing up as a reliable resource, not just when you need coverage, but when you have something genuinely useful to offer.

For PR professionals in law firms, this is where expertise becomes a differentiator. Reporters covering legal operations, regulatory change, cybersecurity or AI adoption are not looking for surface-level commentary. They need sources who can provide clarity, context and perspective on issues that are often nuanced and evolving.

When you position your clients or executives as credible experts and back that up with responsiveness and insight, you become part of a journalist's trusted network. That is far more valuable than any single placement.

## WHY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER MORE NOW

Several structural shifts in media have elevated the importance of relationships:

- 1. Fewer journalists, more demand for content.** With smaller editorial teams, reporters don't have the time to sift through hundreds of irrelevant pitches. They prioritize sources they already know and trust to deliver quality insights quickly.
- 2. The rise of off-the-record and background conversations.** Many of the most meaningful interactions between PR professionals and journalists never result in immediate coverage. Background briefings, informal check-ins and off-the-record conversations help shape a reporter's understanding of a topic and influence future stories.
- 3. Increased scrutiny and demand for credibility.** In the legal industry, accuracy and credibility are paramount. Journalists are cautious about sources and more likely to rely on those with a proven track record.
- 4. The blending of media and personal brands.** Journalists are building their own followings on platforms like LinkedIn and Substack. Engaging with them as individuals, not just as representatives of an outlet, requires a more relationship-driven approach.

## THE ROLE OF EXPERTISE IN B2B PR

In legal tech, the bar for thought leadership is high. Journalists and editors are not looking for generic commentary. They are looking for insights that help their audience navigate real challenges.

This creates an opportunity for PR professionals to act as translators between technical expertise and editorial relevance.

For example, topics like generative AI, regulatory enforcement, cybersecurity risk and operational efficiency are highly relevant, but they need to be framed in a way that connects to business impact. How does a new technology affect legal department workflows? What does a regulatory shift mean for compliance risk? Where are organizations seeing measurable ROI?

By aligning expert insights with the questions journalists are already asking, PR professionals can position their clients as valuable contributors to the broader industry conversation.

## **QUALITY OVER QUANTITY**

Another important shift is the move away from volume-based metrics toward more meaningful measures of success.

In the past, PR efforts were often evaluated based on the number of placements or impressions generated. While these metrics still have a place, they do not capture the full value of strong media relationships.

A single, well-placed article in a highly respected outlet or a quote in a story that shapes industry perception can be far more impactful than dozens of lower-quality mentions.

Similarly, a trusted relationship with a key reporter can lead to ongoing opportunities: inclusion in trend pieces, requests for commentary and access to early-stage stories.

For PR professionals, this requires a more strategic approach focusing on the right outlets, the right journalists and the right narratives.

## **THE INTERSECTION OF PR, SEARCH AND INFLUENCE**

As AI-driven search and generative engines reshape how information is discovered, the role of earned media is evolving. High-quality coverage in credible outlets is increasingly influencing not just human audiences, but also how AI systems surface and prioritize information.

This adds another dimension to media relationships. When journalists trust your insights and include them in their reporting, it amplifies your visibility across multiple channels, not just the original publication.

In this context, relationships are not just about securing coverage; they are about shaping the narratives that define your industry.

## **A MORE HUMAN APPROACH TO MEDIA RELATIONS**

At its core, the shift toward relationship-driven PR reflects a broader trend: the increasing importance of authenticity and human connection in a digital-first world.

Journalists are not just gatekeepers. They are partners in storytelling. They are looking for sources who understand their audience, respect their craft and contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

For PR professionals, this means moving beyond scripts and templates toward more genuine, informed engagement.

It means listening as much as pitching. It means adding value, not just asking for it. And it means recognizing that the strongest relationships are built over time through trust, credibility and shared understanding.

## CONCLUSION

The media landscape will continue to evolve, shaped by technological change, shifting audience behaviors and economic pressures on news organizations. But amid this uncertainty, one principle remains constant: relationships matter.

For law firm marketers and PR professionals, investing in those relationships is not just a best practice; it is a strategic imperative. In a world where everyone is competing for attention, the voices that are heard are the ones that are trusted.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Vicki LaBrosse** is managing director and global director of public relations at Edge Marketing, where she provides strategic communications counsel to executives in the legal, accounting and professional services sectors. Known for her strong media relationships and strategic insight, she helps organizations navigate complex, competitive landscapes and elevate their industry influence.

[\(BACK TO PAGE 1\)](#)

---

# HOW LAWYER-GENERATED SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT IS SHAPING LITIGATION

By **Angelique Ciliberti**

Lawyers are aggressively using social media platforms to shape perceptions of product safety. The latest trend? Posting videos titled “Things I’d Never Use As A Product Liability Lawyer.” The format is simple: a lawyer lists consumer products, from pesticides to cosmetics to over-the-counter medications, and warns viewers to “avoid” them. The videos often include inflammatory statements about the products and imply that these products are known to cause cancer or other serious harms, even when the scientific basis is contested.

This content is catchy and accessible; it is also a growing ethical and professional concern. This article examines how lawyer-generated social media content is reshaping litigation and outlines practical steps that in-house and defense counsel can take to address the resulting litigation risks.

## SHORT-FORM LAWYER CONTENT IS FUNCTIONALLY ADVERTISING

Make no mistake: these videos are a form of attorney advertising. They spotlight the types of cases the lawyer handles, invite potential claimants to self-identify, and position the lawyer as an authority on product safety, all while avoiding explicit statements like “call now.”

These videos are created without contextual framing, disclaimers, or scientific nuance that would be mandatory in any other advertising medium. Worse, they often blur the line between allegations and established scientific fact.

The algorithm's role compounds this issue. Unlike a TV commercial, these videos do not announce themselves as advertising. They arrive uninvited in a user's feed blended seamlessly with cooking clips, parenting hacks, and cat memes. Stripped from the traditional cues of advertising, many viewers have no idea they are being targeted with lawyer marketing, increasing the risk that viewers will treat the statements as objective safety guidance rather than advocacy from litigators with a stake in the narrative.

### **THE COMMENT SECTIONS AMPLIFY THESE RISKS**

The problem is not limited to the videos. The comment sections for these posts often become echo chambers of fear, misinformation, and medical speculation.

For product manufacturers and their counsel, the comments can be more damaging than the original posts. The accumulation of thousands of user statements with unverified causal claims and emotional reactions creates a crowdsourced narrative that allegations are established fact. The more people express fear in the comments, the more the algorithm pushes the video to new audiences. This dynamic transforms a single post into a self-reinforcing cycle of misinformation.

### **THIS TREND HAS REAL CONSEQUENCES FOR LITIGATION AND PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING**

The public often cannot distinguish between legal theory and scientific consensus. When lawyers authoritatively warn consumers to avoid a product, audiences assume that: 1) the risk is established; 2) the science is settled; and 3) regulators agree.

In many product liability contexts, these assumptions are rarely accurate. Regulatory agencies frequently reach conclusions that diverge from litigation-driven narratives, often continuing to permit products on the market based on their own risk-benefit assessments. At the same time, the underlying scientific literature is rarely uniform; studies may produce mixed or inconclusive results, rely on differing methodologies, or identify associations that fall short of establishing causation. Against that backdrop, causation itself is often hotly contested, with experts on both sides advancing competing interpretations of the same body of evidence. When lawyer-generated content flattens these complexities into definitive-sounding warnings, it transforms disputed allegations into perceived fact. The result is a collision of litigation advocacy and misinformation with real consequences for both public understanding and the litigation process.

When prospective jurors encounter these narratives online before they ever step into a courtroom, the effects are not easily undone. Repeated exposure to confident, one-sided messaging can shape baseline beliefs about a product's safety long before any evidence is presented, making those views feel like common knowledge rather than contested claims. As a result, voir dire becomes more challenging, as jurors may not recognize their own exposure to attorney-driven content as a source of potential bias or may be reluctant to question information they have absorbed through social media. The cumulative effect is an increased risk of tainted jury pools, where jurors enter the courtroom with impressions that may influence how they evaluate evidence and expert testimony.

### **WHAT DEFENSE AND IN-HOUSE COUNSEL SHOULD BE DOING NOW**

These dynamics raise important ethics questions, particularly because the content often functions as attorney advertising while appearing to viewers as safety guidance. For in-house and defense counsel, the immediate challenge is how to navigate an environment where lawyer-generated social media content is shaping public perception in real time. The following considerations offer practical guidance for how counsel can account for these developments in ongoing and anticipated litigation.

- **Treat viral lawyer content as part of the litigation environment.** In some instances, viral content may also signal the emergence of new litigation theories or the early stages of new claims against a product. Counsel should monitor these narratives for early insight into emerging allegations that may later surface in complaints and expert reports. Even after cases are filed, short-form content can continue to provide useful insight into how these issues are being framed publicly. Social media narratives about product safety are increasingly functioning as a form of pre-litigation advocacy, influencing how potential claimants, witnesses, and jurors understand the issues before any case is filed. Counsel should remain attentive to how these narratives evolve, including recurring themes and misconceptions that may later surface in pleadings or expert testimony.
- **Integrate social media exposure into jury strategy.** Traditional voir dire questions about prior knowledge of a case may be insufficient where exposure comes through generalized, non-case-specific content such as “products to avoid” videos. Counsel should consider developing questions that probe exposure to social media content about product risks more broadly, using straightforward descriptions of how jurors are likely to have encountered this information. For example, counsel might ask whether prospective jurors have seen videos or posts warning consumers to avoid certain products or suggesting that particular products are linked to health risks. Where appropriate, juror questionnaires and jury consulting strategies should also account for the role of algorithm-driven content in shaping baseline beliefs about product safety.
- **Incorporate social media narratives into discovery strategy.** Where appropriate, counsel should consider whether and how lawyer-generated content and related online engagement bear on issues such as notice, reliance, or the development of claims. Discovery requests may seek information about a plaintiff’s exposure to social media content concerning the product at issue, as well as communications or materials that reflect how such content influenced their perceptions or decision-making.
- **Build a record of how these narratives are created and disseminated.** Preserving examples of widely viewed content that presents disputed allegations as established fact may be relevant to motions practice, including efforts to address potential juror prejudice. For example, counsel may consider systematically capturing viral videos, associated comment threads, and engagement metrics (such as views or shares) to demonstrate the scale and reach of particular narratives. These materials can then be used to support requests for expanded voir dire, juror questionnaires, or other measures designed to address pretrial exposure.
- **Evaluate whether egregious content raises professional responsibility concerns.** Existing rules already prohibit false or misleading communications, and in extreme circumstances, public-facing statements by lawyers that blur the line between allegation and established fact may warrant closer scrutiny. For instance, where a lawyer repeatedly characterizes contested scientific claims as definitively established, or disseminates statements that risk tainting the jury pool, counsel may consider whether the conduct should be brought to the court’s attention. While such measures will not be appropriate in every case, they should not be categorically overlooked where there is a meaningful risk of prejudice to the proceedings.

## CONCLUSION

Short-form video platforms are transforming attorney advertising in ways that blur the boundaries between advocacy, scientific claims, and public health messaging. Lawyer-created content warning consumers about products they would “never use,” amplified by thousands of user comments, can shape public perception long before any claim is tested in court.

For product manufacturers and their counsel, the practical implications are already significant. These narratives may influence how claims develop, how plaintiffs understand their alleged injuries, and how prospective jurors view product safety before trial begins. As lawyer-generated social media content continues to shape the informational environment surrounding products and litigation, defense and in-house counsel should account for these dynamics in how they monitor risk, develop case strategy, and prepare for trial.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Angelique Ciliberti** is a Senior Associate with Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP, in the Washington, DC office. Angelique focuses her practice on complex commercial litigation, primarily mass torts and product liability actions involving pharmaceutical drugs and other consumer products. She can be reached at [angelique.ciliberti@arnoldporter.com](mailto:angelique.ciliberti@arnoldporter.com).

[\(BACK TO PAGE 1\)](#)

---

## THE INTELLIGENCE PIPELINE: WHAT COMES AFTER CRM FOR LAW FIRMS

*How AI Is Transforming Relationship Signals Into Revenue Opportunities*

**By Todd Miller**

For decades, firms have invested in CRM systems with the expectation that better data and more attorney adoption would translate into better business development. In practice, that assumption has never fully held up.

CRM platforms depend on ongoing manual input — contacts logged, relationships updated, interactions recorded. But attorneys are not data stewards. Their time is driven by client work, deadlines, and billable demands. As a result, the most valuable relationship intelligence remains fragmented across inboxes, calendars, and individual experience.

The issue is not just incomplete data. It is missed opportunity.

Across practices, offices, and partner relationships, firms operate with limited visibility into where meaningful connections exist and when those connections signal real business potential. In an environment shaped by confidentiality, decentralized client ownership, and individual working styles, the idea of a fully captured “single view of the client” remains difficult to achieve.

The question is no longer how to improve CRM adoption. It is whether the underlying model is fit for purpose.

### FROM ACTIVITY TO INTELLIGENCE

Traditional CRM systems are built around activity. The assumption is that if enough information is entered and maintained over time, insight will emerge.

In reality, activity does not produce insight.

What firms need instead is a system that generates intelligence — one that works with how attorneys naturally operate, rather than requiring them to change behavior.

This is where the concept of the Intelligence Pipeline emerges.

The Intelligence Pipeline is an AI-enabled model that transforms passive relationship data into active, actionable opportunity. Rather than relying on attorneys to identify and log potential business development signals, the system continuously captures, analyzes, and interprets relationship data across the organization.

It shifts the role of technology from recording activity to delivering insight.

## HOW THE INTELLIGENCE PIPELINE WORKS

At its core, the Intelligence Pipeline operates across four continuous stages:

- **Capture:** Relationship data is gathered from natural workflows — email, calendar, and communication metadata — without requiring manual input.
- **Enrichment:** Contacts and organizations are continuously updated with external data, including roles, affiliations, company attributes, and changes over time.
- **Signal Detection:** AI identifies meaningful events — such as job changes, company growth, leadership transitions, and transactions — that indicate potential legal needs.
- **Opportunity Surfacing:** High-probability opportunities are delivered directly to attorneys with context, rationale, and recommended next steps.

This represents a fundamental shift: opportunities are no longer discovered through effort — they are delivered through intelligence.

## THE POWER OF SIGNALS

At the heart of this model is the concept of signals.

Signals are the observable changes that indicate potential need: a contact moves to a new company, a client expands into a new market, a leadership change occurs within a key account, or a transaction is announced.

Individually, these signals are easy to miss. Collectively, they represent a continuous stream of opportunity.

AI changes the equation. By continuously analyzing structured and unstructured data, the Intelligence Pipeline identifies patterns, prioritizes relevance, and translates signals into actionable insight.

Instead of asking:

- What's happening with my contacts?
- Is there an opportunity here?

The system volunteers:

- This is happening.
- This matters.
- This is why you should act now.

## **PRECISION OVER VOLUME**

Traditional business development often emphasizes volume — more outreach, more events, more activity. But volume does not ensure effectiveness.

The Intelligence Pipeline enables a different approach — one grounded in relevance, timing, and context. It allows attorneys to focus their efforts where they are most likely to produce results, improving both efficiency and outcomes.

## **THE ROLE OF DATA INTEGRITY**

AI-driven intelligence is only as effective as the data that supports it.

Incomplete, outdated, or inconsistent data limits the system's ability to detect meaningful signals and generate credible recommendations. This introduces a critical shift — not toward more data entry, but toward better data integrity.

For firms, this means prioritizing:

- Automated data capture
- Automated enrichment
- Automated normalization and validation

The goal is not to ask attorneys to do more. It is to ensure the system does more on their behalf.

## **RETHINKING THE ROLE OF CRM**

For years, firms have asked: how do we get attorneys to use CRM?

The Intelligence Pipeline reframes the question: how do we generate value from relationship data without requiring constant manual engagement?

When systems deliver timely, relevant, and actionable insight, engagement becomes a byproduct—not a requirement.

## **A NEW MODEL FOR GROWTH**

The shift toward intelligence-driven business development is already underway.

Rather than relying on fragmented data and individual effort, firms can move toward systems that continuously surface opportunity, improve coordination across teams, and align with how professionals naturally work.

For years, firms have tried to improve outcomes by asking attorneys to do more — log more, track more, manage more.

The Intelligence Pipeline represents a different approach: deliver more.

Deliver insight.

Deliver timing.

Deliver opportunity.

Because in a relationship-driven business, the firms that win will not be the ones with the most data—they will be the ones who know what to do with it.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Todd Miller** is the Chief Executive Officer of TRĒ AI, the relationship intelligence engine powering the next era of growth for modern firms. A seasoned entrepreneur and transformative executive, Todd has founded and successfully exited multiple technology companies, generating more than \$1 billion in cumulative revenue. Prior to TRĒ AI, he led innovation initiatives at organizations including Ziff Davis and Knight Ridder. Connect with Todd on LinkedIn [here](#).

[\(BACK TO PAGE 1\)](#)

---

## BIG LAW'S NEXT COMPETITIVE EDGE: BUILDING INTERNAL CULTURE

By Patricia Nagy

What happens when the operating system that ran a profession for 50 years quietly breaks, and nobody rebuilds it?

You get Big Law in 2026. Lateral churn at record volumes despite record signing bonuses. AI rollouts sitting unused on the desktops of the lawyers they were bought for. Merger integrations stalling on the ground while the press releases land cleanly. And an industry that, in the year of its highest profits since 2008, cannot stop arguing about whether people should be in the office.

The revenue numbers, on their face, look like a triumph. Profits up 13%, the best demand year since the global financial crisis, tech spend up nearly 10%, direct lawyer compensation up 8.2%, mergers up 18% year over year.

Read those lines together and you would think the legal industry had reached the top of a mountain it intends to live on for a decade (*see*, [2026 Report on the State of the U.S. Legal Market](#)), but the cultural operating system of Big Law broke in 2020 and it has not been rebuilt.

Big Law culture, before 2020, ran on proximity. Apprenticeship in hallways. Mentorship in doorways. The senior partner who walked past your desk and saw what you were working on. The associate who learned how to handle a difficult client by overhearing how the partner two offices down handled hers. The lateral who absorbed the firm's unwritten rules by being adjacent to people who already knew them. The merger that integrated because two sets of lawyers ate lunch in the same cafeteria for a year.

That system worked beautifully. It also had a quality that made it almost invisible: it was free. It did not require a strategy, a vendor, a budget line, or a meeting. It happened automatically because everyone was in the same building. Nobody at any firm has ever had to defend the ROI of hallway proximity, because nobody had to pay for it. Then, in March of 2020, it disappeared. And it has not really come back.

The four-day mandate is, when you read it honestly, an attempt to reinstall the old operating system by force. Get everyone back in the building, and the apprenticeship will resume, the mentorship will resume, the

culture will resume. The premise is that proximity was the system, and bringing proximity back will restore the system. It will not. The firm is not the firm it was in 2019.

It is bigger. It is more dispersed across more offices. It has absorbed laterals at a pace that did not exist five years ago, and many of those laterals have never spent meaningful time inside the firm's actual culture. It has merged with other firms whose people did not grow up speaking its language. It has rolled out technology — AI, knowledge management, matter management — that the workforce does not understand at the level required to use it well. It runs across time zones, secondments, client sites, regional offices, and hybrid schedules that mean the partner you need is in the office on a different day than you are.

Bodies in chairs four days a week does not solve any of that. Even at full proximity, even at five days, the firm of 2026 is structurally too distributed, too layered, and too recently assembled for hallway osmosis to carry the cultural load it carried in 1995. The old transmission mechanism is not just damaged. It is undersized for the firm that now exists.

Read the news of the last 12 months through that lens, and the entire industry suddenly makes sense.

Law firms accounted for [roughly 10.5% of U.S. office leasing through Q3 2025](#), about double their pre-pandemic share, while almost every other industry shrank its footprint. [Cooley moved to four days in office on January 1](#). Paul Weiss and Skadden have made similar moves. Sullivan & Cromwell is at five. The industry is spending its way back to a building it thinks contained the operating system. It did not. The building was the venue. The operating system was the proximity, and the proximity was undersized for what the firm has become.

Mergers are up [18% year over year](#). Each one is a bet that two firms can become one firm, which has always required a working cultural transmission mechanism — the thing that turns two intranets into one voice, two town halls into one source of truth, two unwritten partner-review codes into one. Without that mechanism, the merger is an org chart, not a firm. Most current integration playbooks were written for a world where proximity did the integration work for free.

Tech spending rose nearly 10%, faster than any other line on the operating side. Most of it is going to AI. Most of the AI is sitting unused. Lawyers are not failing to adopt the tools because they are resistant. They are failing to adopt because the firm has no working transmission mechanism through which to communicate, in a way that lands, what shipped, where to find it, what is sanctioned, and how their colleagues are actually using it. The AI is not the problem. The carrier for the AI is.

Lateral hiring is at record volumes, with record signing bonuses. Firms are losing those laterals at the eighteen-month mark, not because the recruiting failed but because the experience that follows recruiting cannot deliver on the pitch. There is no proximity-driven onboarding to absorb a lateral into a firm whose people are scattered across four days, three offices, and a dozen practice groups. And nothing else has been built to replace it.

And underneath all of it, the [associate attrition rate has hovered near 20% in recent years](#) — a number the industry has come to treat as weather. It is not weather. It is what happens when associates can no longer feel the firm around them.

Here is the part of this conversation the industry has not yet had with itself.

If the old cultural operating system ran on proximity, and proximity has been broken for six years and is not coming back at the scale required to carry the load — what is the new transmission mechanism?

It is not the building. The building is the venue. It is not the mandate. The mandate is a wish. It is not the partner retreat, the values poster, the all-hands email, or the 1L summer program. Those are artifacts of a culture, not the carrier of one.

The new transmission mechanism, increasingly, is technology. Not technology as a tool the firm buys. Technology as the connective tissue that does the work proximity used to do for free — moving information consistently across offices and time zones, making people findable to each other, surfacing what colleagues are working on, telling the same story in the same voice on the same day to a partner in Manhattan and a senior paralegal in Charlotte. Communications infrastructure, workplace experience platforms, the internal channels through which a firm actually knows itself. The thing that used to happen in hallways now has to happen on purpose, through systems that have been deliberately designed to carry a cultural load they were never originally asked to carry.

Most firms are not yet thinking about technology this way. They are thinking about it as a productivity layer, a procurement category, an IT line item. The firms that pull ahead in the next decade will be the ones that recognize technology has become something else: the operating system itself.

This is what made the Legal Marketing Association's annual conference in New Orleans this month read differently than it did three years ago. The program was full of sessions about internal audiences. *Building High-Value Relationships: How the Internal Client Journey Advances Marketer Influence. After the Parade: Turning Lateral Hires into Long-Term Wins. Change Management + Lawyers. Consolidation is the New Normal. Innovating from the Inside.* The conference theme was *Tradition Meets Transformation*. The people whose job is communication, the people closest to how a firm transmits anything, are the first ones in the building to have noticed that the transmission mechanism is broken — and they are quietly turning toward the work of building its replacement.

The TR/Georgetown report does not predict which firms will hold their peak and which will slide. It cannot. What it does say, in language that should make every managing partner pause, is that the growth firms are enjoying right now has expanded the cost base — talent, technology, real estate — faster than the operating model has adapted to support it. That gap is not closed by another lease, another mandate, another lateral, or another tool.

It is closed by deliberately rebuilding the operating system for the firm that actually exists, rather than the one that existed in 2019. The cultural transmission mechanism that used to be free now has to be built. And the firms that build it first will be the ones whose 2025 peak was the start of something, rather than the high-water mark of something ending.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Patricia Nagy** is the founder and Chief Strategy Officer of The Proxy Agency, a full service marketing agency for legal and professional services firms. The Proxy Agency develops revenue-generating strategies, executing a full marketing funnel approach that is proven to increase sales qualified leads, conversion rates and meet any revenue or growth goal.

[\(BACK TO PAGE 1\)](#)

# HOW TO RUN AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

By Sharon Meit Abrahams

Attorneys spend a significant portion of their professional lives in meetings. These include internal firm meetings, client strategy sessions, committee gatherings, board governance discussions, and litigation team conferences. While meetings are essential to coordination and strategic alignment, poorly structured meetings increase cost, reduce efficiency, and impair decision-making. Time spent in unproductive meetings is not neutral — it directly affects client service, firm profitability, and professional morale.

Consider your most recent meeting. What was its real purpose? Did it produce a defined outcome? Was the time used effectively? These questions often reveal that many meetings occur by habit rather than necessity.

## PURPOSE-DRIVEN MEETINGS: WHEN SHOULD LAWYERS MEET?

Meetings should occur only when the objective is clear and cannot be accomplished more efficiently through written communication or delegated action. In legal settings, legitimate meetings generally serve one of five purposes: information sharing, action planning, decision-making, problem-solving, or strategic planning and accountability review. If a meeting does not clearly fall into one of these categories, it likely should not be held.

Meeting discipline aligns directly with professional obligations under the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct. [Rule 1.1 \(Competence\)](#) requires lawyers to maintain efficient systems and exercise sound professional judgment. [Rule 1.3 \(Diligence\)](#) requires timely and attentive service. Inefficient meetings undermine both.

## WHY MEETINGS FAIL: COMMON BREAKDOWNS IN LEGAL SETTINGS

Meetings in law firms and legal departments typically fail for predictable structural reasons. They lack a defined purpose, a written agenda, advance planning, or active facilitation. Often the wrong people are invited, materials are not distributed beforehand, and discussion proceeds without control or time limits. Without structure, meetings devolve into informal conversation rather than productive professional process.

The professional risks of ineffective meetings are significant. Missed deadlines, poor delegation, confusion in client strategy, inefficient billing practices, and diminished morale frequently stem from unclear internal coordination. Ethical considerations are also implicated. [Rule 1.5 \(Fees\)](#) of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct cautions against unreasonable fees, which may include charges inflated by inefficiency. [Rule 5.1 \(Responsibilities of Partners, Managers, and Supervisory Lawyers\)](#) requires partners and supervisors to establish systems that ensure compliance with professional obligations — meeting structure is part of that system.

## PREPARING FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS: LAWYER AS PLANNER

Preparation is the foundation of effective meetings. Before scheduling a meeting, the organizer should define the objective in a single clear sentence and identify what decisions or outcomes are required. Only necessary participants should be invited, and all relevant materials should be distributed in advance. Roles should be assigned, typically a chair to guide the discussion, a recorder to capture decisions and action items, and, when appropriate, a timekeeper to enforce discipline.

The agenda functions as a contract among participants. It should clearly state what will be discussed, why it matters, who owns each topic, how much time is allocated, and what decision or deliverable is expected. When structured in this way, the agenda promotes clarity and accountability. This preparation supports [Rule 1.4 \(Communication\)](#) and [Rule 5.3 \(Supervision of Nonlawyer Staff\)](#) under the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, ensuring that both lawyers and staff understand expectations and responsibilities.

## **CONDUCTING THE MEETING: STRUCTURE AND CONTROL**

The first five minutes of a meeting are decisive. Effective chairs begin on time, confirm the purpose, review the agenda, and establish behavioral expectations. This sets a professional tone and signals respect for participants' time.

Each agenda item should follow a consistent progression: introduction of the topic, clarification of relevant facts, focused discussion, identification of a decision or next step, and assignment of accountability. No item should conclude without clarity about who is responsible for what action.

Time discipline is essential. Off-topic matters should be placed in a “parking lot” for later consideration. Discussions should be time-boxed to prevent drift, and when debate becomes repetitive, the chair should call the question and move toward resolution. These techniques support diligence and efficiency, consistent with [Rules 1.3](#) and [3.2](#) of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct, which emphasize timely action and expediting legal proceedings.

## **LAWYER AS LEADER: FACILITATION SKILLS AND PROFESSIONALISM**

Meeting effectiveness depends heavily on leadership presence. The chair must project confidence, maintain composure, and guide discussion intentionally through voice, posture, and clarity of direction. Authority is established not through dominance but through consistency and structure.

Engagement techniques ensure balanced participation. Facilitators may use round-robin input, direct questions to quieter participants, summarize key points, and redirect discussion when it strays. Skilled facilitation also requires managing difficult dynamics — such as dominating personalities, side conversations, emotional conflict, unprepared attendees, or debates that lack closure. Early, respectful intervention preserves professionalism and momentum.

Professional conduct during meetings reflects broader ethical obligations. [Rule 8.4\(d\)](#) of the ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct addresses conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, and [Rule 2.1](#) emphasizes the lawyer's role as advisor exercising independent judgment. Structured, respectful discussion is essential to fulfilling both responsibilities.

## **BUILDING A LONG-TERM CULTURE OF EFFECTIVENESS**

Sustainable improvement requires cultural reinforcement. Firms and boards should establish clear meeting standards: start and end on time, require preparation, limit discussions to one conversation at a time, and design agendas around decisions rather than vague updates.

Continuous improvement should also be incorporated. At the close of significant meetings, participants can briefly assess what worked well, what dragged, and what adjustments should be made in the future. These small refinements, consistently applied, transform meeting culture over time.

## CONCLUSION AND TAKEAWAYS

Effective meetings are not incidental to law practice, they are integral to it. Structured meetings produce clear decisions, defined accountability, efficient client service, and alignment with professional responsibility.

When lawyers approach meetings with intentional preparation, disciplined facilitation, and ethical awareness, they enhance both performance and professionalism. The objective is not to eliminate meetings, but to ensure that every meeting justifies the time invested in it.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Sharon Meit Abrahams** is a legal talent development expert with more than 25 years of experience teaching networking skills to lawyers and law students. A member of the Board of Editors of *Accounting and Financial Planning for Law Firms'* LNJ sibling, *Marketing the Law Firm*, she provides her coaching and consulting through Legal Talent Advisors, LLC.

[\(BACK TO PAGE 1\)](#)

---

# WHY LAW FIRM MARKETING AND BD MUST MOVE BEYOND A REACTIVE, LEGACY SERVICE MODEL

By **Patrick Smith**

Pitches, RFPs, collateral materials, media placements, client identification and assessment. There are a lot of things that the marketing and business development (MBD) teams in law firms do to drive revenue. Twenty or so years ago, law firms actively started using the business processes that many corporations do when utilizing these teams, and to great effect.

But times change, and it would be hard to find someone to say that this current iteration of Big Law is less dynamic than most of its previous incarnations. That dynamism extends to the departments that help drive revenue, and as marketing and business development mature in the age of heightened competition, consolidation and (potentially) commoditization, many firms will find they need to take a good, hard look at who is doing what in those departments and where they are spending their time.

A new [white paper](#) by legal industry consulting firm Calibrate looked at 80,000 hours of time-tracked MBD hours and surveys and interviews with over 2,800 Am Law 200 partners and firm leaders. The conclusion the white paper came to was relatively simple in concept: “MBD is being asked to deliver something fundamentally different than it was designed to provide.”

“The data confirms what we have been studying for a decade, and that data is consistently clear in that any perceived issues with marketing and business development aren’t about talent or effort, but rather are structural,” said Lindsay Hamilton, managing principal at Calibrate. “They are utilized more than ever, busier than ever. But many firms are running them on legacy operating models that were built for a different era of legal growth.”

When asked whether larger firms and those with more resources were immune, Hamilton said the findings were pervasive across smaller and larger firms.

“The thinking was there may be more operational maturity in larger firms, but the data shows this is not the case,” she said.

Hamilton went on to say that the pace of change for MBD, not unlike for Big Law in general, makes “the default position increasingly and urgently unsustainable.”

Keith Whitman, the chief operating officer at Finnegan, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, said the responsive structure is dated and isn’t the best use of MBD time, for them or the firm.

“Some firms that designed their business services 20 years ago haven’t really evolved,” he said. “We have seen some operational changes in how departments are structured, but mostly they are structured to support attorneys reactively, not proactively.”

Whitman said teams often spend too much time on surveys, client requests and other reactive work. He said that work is important, but not as important as revenue-driving activities.

“Firms still need that,” he said, referring to surveys and the like. “But MBD teams can now help drive targeted client strategies. They are in a perfect position to surface cross-office, cross-practice collaboration.

Kimberly Rennick, the chief business development and marketing officer (CMBDO) at Thompson Coburn, said data from the survey proved what she had seen in action in her years in the industry.

“That is data confirmation of what my peers and I have either seen or are seeing,” she said. “Firms should be putting their MBD efforts into the highest and best places for growth, shortening the sales cycle.”

That can often take the form, both Rennick and Hamilton said, of rejiggering who gets how much attention from MBD.

“In the absence of strong governance and structure, a subset of about 5% of attorneys at a firm drive 44% of all attorney-facing time and attention,” she said. “And that further feeds into responsiveness being of primary importance rather than having MBD focus on new markets and industry deep dives. That isn’t the right lens to look through.”

What was more concerning to Hamilton wasn’t necessarily the allocation of a disproportionate amount of effort being directed at a small subset of attorneys, but rather the relative importance of some of those attorneys to their firm’s bottom line.

“Even more concerning, we regularly find that 5% are not the individuals or growth areas that law firm leaders want their limited marketing and business development resources allocated.”

This feeds back into the responsiveness model, where MBD is gauged on how quickly they help in a reactive way, which is dependent upon who reaches out.

Hamilton said that there has been some appetite from firms to have a formal evaluation done that shows where time is being spent, and by whom, on their MBD teams to help alleviate those concerns, but changing any existing system is never easy.

“There are ways to deliver services that are both efficient and effective,” she said. “But often CMOs and other leaders are put into a position where legacy operating models don’t allow for autonomy and alignment.”

Much like it would not behoove a senior partner to do more menial legal work, it is not necessarily advisable to have a reactionary service model that allows that very sort of action to play out in MBD.

“MBD can do more,” Hamilton said. “But with a concierge legal services model, it isn’t strategic.”

\*\*\*\*\*

**Patrick Smith**, based in New York, covers the business of law, including M&A and corporate work, leadership, marketing innovation and the ways law firms compete for clients and talent. He can be reached at [pasmith@alm.com](mailto:pasmith@alm.com) or on X at [@nycpatrickd](https://twitter.com/nycpatrickd).

[\(BACK TO PAGE 1\)](#)

---

# MAY 2026

## Volume 32, Number 5

### EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

[Steven Salkin, Esq.](#)

### BOARD OF EDITORS:

**Sharon Meit Abrahams** | Legal Talent Advisors, LLC | Plantation, FL

**Bruce Alltop** | LawVision Group LLC | Boston

**Debra Baker** | GrowthPlay | San Diego

**Mark Beese** | Leadership for Lawyers | Evergreen, CO

**John Buchanan** | Sheppard Mullin | San Francisco

**Elyse Desmarais** | Goulston & Storrs | Boston

**Nicholas Gaffney** | Zumado Public Relations | San Francisco

**Vivian Hood** | Jaffe | Jacksonville, FL

**Ari Kaplan** | Ari Kaplan Advisors | New York

**Yuliya LaRoe** | LeadWise Group | Miami

**Stefanie Marrone** | Kaplan Hecker & Fink LLP | New York

**Brenda McGann** | Zumado Public Relations | Los Angeles

**Randi Rosenblatt** | Upward Stride | New York

**Stacy Zinken** | Paladin PBC | Minneapolis, MN

The publisher of this newsletter is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, financial, investment advisory or other professional services, and this publication is not meant to constitute legal, accounting, financial, investment advisory or other professional advice. If legal, financial, investment advisory or other professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

**TO ORDER THIS NEWSLETTER, CALL:**  
800-756-8993

**ON THE WEB AT:**  
<https://www.lawjournalnewsletters.com/marketing-the-law-firm/>

Editorial email: [ssalkin@alm.com](mailto:ssalkin@alm.com)

Circulation email: [customercare@alm.com](mailto:customercare@alm.com)

Reprints: [www.almreprints.com](http://www.almreprints.com)

© 2026 ALM Global, LLC. All rights reserved. No reproduction of any portion of this issue is allowed without written permission from the publisher.

**PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY:**  
Law Journal Newsletters

1617 JFK Blvd, Suite 1665, Philadelphia, PA 19103

