

# MPF

**Managing  
Partners'  
Forum**

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**BRIEFING ON**

**DEALING WITH MEDIA**

**7 MAY 2002**

An email survey was sent to 180 UK-based managing partners on 22 April 2002. Our thanks go to PR guru Tim Prizeman of Kelso Consulting for drafting the questions.

30 returned the survey by the due date –  
63% from law firms; 24% from accountancy; and 13% from property.

## **FINDINGS**

- The role of the MP in dealing with the media is as follows: 77% see their role as overall ownership of their firm's brands and reputation; 50% as the figurehead for their firm's dealing with the media; 40% have overall management responsibility for the PR function; 30% have active operational involvement in dealings with the media; 27% approve all PR-related expenditure; and 23% authorise press releases.
- The prime benefit to the firm of dealing with the media was seen by 73% of MPs as increasing awareness of the firm's brand across business audiences relevant to the whole firm; Other benefits cited were: extra credibility when competing against larger firms (11%); generating business leads for specific practices (8%); assisting recruitment and/or employee morale (8%). Dealing with the media as little as possible and minimising negative coverage were not mentioned.
- The management information regularly used by MPs to assess the effectiveness and/or volume of PR activity includes: compilations of press cuttings featuring their own firm (90%); gut feel (53%); benchmarking of coverage against competitors (23%); analysis of business leads (20%); Market research of recall of coverage (17%); timesheet or other analysis of PR team's time (3%); nothing (3%).
- 57% of MPs are not satisfied that they get enough information to assess the effectiveness of their firm's PR activities and function. Only one third are satisfied, with 10% unsure.
- 90% of MPs enjoy dealing with the media, with only 3% not involved with the media at all.

## **SELECTED QUOTES**

### ***Top 50 accountancy firms***

"It would be useful to find a PR agency that REALLY understood the needs of a multidiscipline, national professional services practice and the issues faced by such a practice in a mature market. Nobody need apply unless they can help us to increase our growth rate above 20%!" *Tony Stockdale, Bentley Jennison*

"We need to ensure we are continually seen at the forefront of business activity in our geographic area in order to sell our expertise and services. As we grow, we are increasingly reliant on PR activity to get the message across to a larger audience." *Clive Stevens, Reeves & Neylan*

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“We subcontract our PR activity and have no intentions of changing it. My concern is the measurement of the effectiveness of PR.”

## *Top 100 law firms*

“In recent years, I have become more reticent in dealing with the specialist legal press as there has been so much distorted reporting that I have almost given up trying to predict what angle they are likely to take - most often I now conclude it isn't worth the risk of providing any information at all.”

“PR is a key part of a firm's brand and needs to be treated as a priority. Lawyers are not always natural PR animals and, of course, sometimes restrained or constrained by client issues and so on. With PR, you have to take the rough with the smooth, but can be very irritating when have to deal with misreporting or dealing with a scoop which actually causes internal issues or just plain misrepresents the position. No changes - just an ever increasing need to get involved and to manage the process.”

“Our spend on public relations is minimal. Our strategy is to achieve coverage in specific business areas and geographic locations. We do not currently anticipate major changes to this strategy.” *Nigel Bell, Director of Business Development, Penningtons*

“I am sick of the sniping and bickering between the firm's in-house marketing team and our external PR agency.”

“The basic business of a law firm is unexciting and PR is really for the benefit of the client rather than the firm.”

“As a significant player in the US, but a new entrant to the European market, brand awareness in Europe is a significant issue for my firm. We are currently focused on developing a PR strategy that will help us build brand awareness, particularly in those practice areas that we have targeted.” *Maury Shenk, Steptoe & Johnson*

“We are seeking to increase the coverage of our firm; unfortunately the media are captivated by the magic circle firms.”

## *Leading surveyors*

“We are going to appoint an experienced PR manager with good track record and qualifications to lead PR & marketing, reporting to the management board.”

“Currently outsourced - we are going to bring it in house.”