

Scoring PR: Creating Business Development Gold with a Gamified Earned Media Program

Use partners' egos to your advantage by instilling a points-based system for earned media.

BY JOHN HELLERMAN

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Imagine this: A mid-level partner walks into a networking reception at a major industry conference. She's surrounded by GCs, bankers and other high-value prospects. But nobody knows who she is. She smiles, introduces herself and hands over her business card. Maybe someone politely nods. Maybe someone says, "Oh, Smith & Jones, I've heard of you all." But chances are, unless she's at all the events, is nationally recognized or recently in the news, her introduction ends with the handshake.

Now imagine something different....

That same partner walks into the room and someone spots her name badge. "Wait!" They say, "Didn't I just see you quoted in *American Banker* about the new CFPB rulemaking?" Or: "I think I just read your article in *Law360* — you nailed it on the non-compete issues."

The conversation starts before she even opens her mouth. She's not just a name on a card anymore — she's a recognized expert, someone worth spending some time with.

That's the power of earned media. And when you can quantify it using a simple, points-based system, it becomes something even more powerful: trackable, comparable and, yes, gamified.

Benchmarking: Score What Matters and Turn PR into Competitive Intelligence

Consider a points-based PR system that assigns points value to results, not effort, not hours, not potential, but actual, tangible earned media results. For instance, consider assigning a point value to each type of media relations outcome scaled by its assumed value to the other outcomes (and create a mechanism to account for significantly above average results):

- Interview (relationship building) = 900 points
- Quoted = 1,900 points
- Published Byline or Q&A = 2,300 points
- Profiled/Awarded = 5,500 points
- Speaking or Op-ed = 6,000 points
- Very Important Placement (i.e. in top 1% outlets like *The Wall Street Journal* or *The New York Times*, keynote slots, etc.) = 2x points

Here's where things get interesting: That scoring changes everything as it now indicates what's important, and because points measure actual results, they become a common currency across attorneys, offices and even competing firms and their partners. This system enables marketing professionals and firm leadership to benchmark their PR investment in a way that easily makes sense to lawyers.

Gamification: Feed the Ego, Fuel the Results

Let's be honest: Lawyers are competitive. Whether it's courtroom wins or deal closings, they want to be the best and be seen as the best. So why not harness that ego to drive your marketing outcomes?

By scoring it, PR stops being vague. It stops being a “nice to have” marketing activity and, with points, becomes a strategic business development tool.

Want lawyers to participate in your media relations program? Offer them an Apple Watch for getting 6,000 points. Some will get there by speaking at a conference while others might opt to stay put and write an article and get quoted a few times. But, similar to buying gross rating points for an ad buy (where you can buy several little ads or one big one), everyone with 6,000 points will likely have put in the same effort and achieved the same business development effect. That certainty and “gamification” can then be racked up for friendly internal and — deadly serious — external competition.

Want to know which partner has generated the most external visibility in the last quarter? Check the scoreboard. Want to see how your Chicago office stacks up against your Las Vegas group? Look at the points breakdown.

Want to evaluate if your firm's media output is keeping pace with your competitors? Now you've got a baseline for comparison that is much better than typical hit counts and share of voice measurements. For instance, imagine adding up your partner's current point-value of media over the past two quarters versus a competitor's and finding a deficit of 5,000. You now know exactly how much you need to invest in your partner, and, importantly, when you can stop and apply your resources to others. Too often, firms oversaturate one market instead of perfectly selling in two.

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It's also a fun, low-cost way to boost engagement and turn a sometimes-passive group into active PR participants. More importantly, it creates momentum. As soon as a partner lands a quote in *Bloomberg* or *The Wall Street Journal*, you can anticipate emails from their colleagues asking: “How do I get something like that?”

You scale the value of earned media firmwide not by convincing everyone at once but by sparking just enough ego-driven competition to make PR contagious.

PR as Business Development Fuel

The best part? This isn't just about vanity. When attorneys are featured in respected publications or when they publish thoughtful bylined content, they have ready-made conversation starters. These placements give them a reason to reach out to existing clients, follow up with prospects or reconnect with dormant leads. Earned media is credentialing that works wherever attorneys need it. They can drop a link to something relevant into a follow-up email or post it on LinkedIn and record who engages for additional targeting. It is PR that works because it supports the core function of every lawyer's job: bringing in and retaining business. The flywheel starts once partners experience the power of earned media firsthand; they always want more.

Your Turn: How to Start Scoring PR Like a Pro

If you're part of a small or mid-sized firm, don't assume that premium PR is out of reach. By using a points-based system, you can:

- Control your budget with precision.
- Reward results, not just activity.
- Benchmark your firm's performance internally and externally.
- Turn lawyer egos into engines of visibility.
- Build a culture of recognition, participation and business development momentum.

Whether you start with a few partners or roll it out firmwide, this model makes earned media measurable, motivating and scalable. When your lawyers walk into the room with credibility already earned and visibility already built, they're not introducing themselves — they're being remembered. And just like that, the conversations and the opportunities begin. That's the difference PR makes between showing up and standing out.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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