

Insurance issues

Micro-annuities, marriage insurance,
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Also:

- Solo...no more
- The "E" in PESO
- Attracting female clients
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resources for advisors

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



Earned media. In the third installment of her series, Marie Swift continues to examine the PESO Model as a means of establishing a marketing plan. This time, she focuses on “earned” strategies: public relations, media relations, and/or credibility marketing. Pages 14-18.

“Earned media is a long-term plan. It took about three years for me to gain traction after becoming intentional with working with the media.”

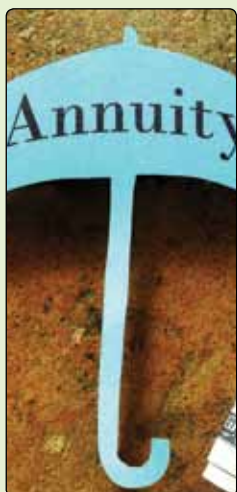
—Carolyn McClanahan



The future of insurance. John A. Logan looks at two possible new insurance products that might be on the horizon: micro-annuities and divorce insurance. Pages 20-22.

“It’s good news, of course, that so much money is being directed at a historically status quo-loving industry, at least from a consumer’s point of view.”

—John A. Logan



Inherited annuities (updated). Mark Maurer responds to an advisor’s question by updating his article on inherited annuities from 2008. Pages 26-27.

“Advisors will no doubt have clients inheriting annuities from parents or other relatives. Knowing which questions to ask about those annuities and the unintended consequences to avoid are important value-add services that advisors can give their clients.”

—Mark Maurer

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Oozing credibility

Adding a healthy dose of “earned media” to your marketing plan is perhaps one of the best things you can do to impress the right people and earn share of mind

Earlier this year, Lauren Gadkowski Lindsay, CFP®, director of financial planning at Personal Financial Advisors, LLC, in Covington, LA, wrote a piece about funeral instructions that was published on Financial Planning magazine’s website called “Spelling Out Funeral Wishes Keeps Clients Comfortable.”

“I was thrilled,” Lindsay said, “mostly because I could finally show to my mom that my English degree was not totally in vain.”

All kidding aside, Lindsay’s piece is a great contribution to the profession—there is a lot of good information in her piece. It also positions her as a credible, caring professional who is concerned about more than just her clients’ money. The piece lives online and is easily discoverable by current and prospective clients.

The personal satisfaction of seeing the first published piece must have stirred something inside Lindsay, because just two months later she submitted and published a second piece for Financial Planning, this time on the professional and firm benefits of volunteering (“Roll Up Your Sleeves: Volunteering Locally Can Pay Off”). Because her work as an advisor is promoted by the charitable organization or school, it’s great professional exposure for her. But as she points out in her article, that’s not why she volunteers. “Serving on a board just to list it on one’s biography isn’t an authentic reason to volunteer,” Lindsay

says. “And it is easy to tell who isn’t being genuine when they take part in volunteer activities.”

Side note: volunteering is another form of public relations, because you don’t pay for the exposure, you offer your time and expertise in return for the free exposure.

Hitting the right buttons

Lindsay says that in spite of being time-crunched and “being terrible” at doing anything with her media hits, she does get quoted quite a lot since she sends comprehensive answers to the journalists—usually a few sentences or paragraphs of ideas. “If they need more, they reach out to me, but some just use my email to quote me in articles,” Lindsay says (which is exactly what I am doing as the writer of this article for the NAPFA Advisor magazine).

“I am now in the database of many journalists, and they reach out when they need a person. I get published in something about once a month since I respond to NAPFA press requests as often as I can. I show up in Google searches, so this gives me credibility with prospects who search online,” Lindsay says.

Lindsay confides in her emailed comments to me that she doesn’t often know when she is published and sometimes finds out by a friend reading and sending her the piece. And she feels less than adept at what to do with the pieces after they are

published by the media outlet.

If relevant, she sends the published pieces to clients in an eblast (which is good, in my opinion), but she is sure there are better things she could be doing. For instance, should she put it on LinkedIn? (The answer is yes.)

She also puts the articles on the firm’s website. This is good because it creates a “wow factor” when people visit the site, and adding keywords and relevant links to one’s site improves search engine page rankings.

After publication of the funeral wishes piece, many other financial planners contacted her. She kept their info, but asks, “What should I do with it?” I’ll answer that question here: If the firm is recruiting or looking to add next-gen talent, these types of inbound communications can open the door to a relationship.

As for finding out when one’s pieces or quotes are published, I recommend that every firm set up Google News Alerts for (a) their company name and (b) their individual names—you want to be the first to know whenever your name comes up on another website.

The “E” in PESO stands for “earned”

If you read my foundational piece, which ran as the January 2016 Advisor cover story, you’ll recall that my series this year is all about marketing strategies and

tactics, and that I am breaking the series into four modules:

- P**aid
- E**arned
- S**hared
- O**wned

The PESO Model (paid, earned, shared and owned) is a great way to “bucket” out any marketing plan. This installment of the Marketing Playbook will focus on “earned” strategies, also known as public relations, media relations, and/or credibility marketing.

Poster child for earned media

One poster child for earned media is Carolyn McClanahan, M.D., CFP®, of Life Planning Partners, Inc., in Jacksonville, FL. Because she is in the press so much and is a good user of social media, the press now

reaches out to her directly as a resource. She never has to go looking for attention. In addition, people in the community tell her they appreciate that she is out there trying to spread good information—this perception automatically puts McClanahan in the “good guy/white hat” category.

“About 10 percent of our clients come from reading about us in the media directly,” McClanahan says. “However, the bigger boon is that our current clients love seeing us in the press. They share this with their friends.”

The majority of the firm’s clients come from referrals from current clients, and McClanahan says she believes that the support derives from its commitment to education and fiduciary operations. “We spend zero dollars on marketing, and our client waiting list at one point was a year. We now have our waiting list down to four months. We refer one to two clients a week to other advisers in the area,” she says.

McClanahan does leverage her media mentions on social media or her website. “We put the larger media pieces on our website,” she says. “We always promote the pieces on social media. Reporters are now being measured by their social media outreach and ‘hits’ on their pieces, so if you help promote the articles and mention the reporter in your social media, they are more likely to reach out to you for more stories.”

The key to working with the media, according to McClanahan, is to help them be their best—they are on tight deadlines, so answer them immediately and be succinct with your answers. If you can’t help them with their story, point them to another expert. By developing a reputation as a problem solver for journalists, more will come calling.

“Reach out to journalists only if you have a good idea for a story or to comment on a piece they’ve done,” she says. “Do not ask to see the story before it goes out. Don’t pester them—they are required to produce a lot of work and don’t have time to waste.”

Not always sunshine and roses

Has anything ever gone wrong? Well, yes, but not all that often.

“A couple of times, stories I’ve been

in have not been flattering,” McClanahan says. “For example, a story on CNBC discussed the assistance we give our clients with Obamacare tax credits. I was willing to share the story because I don’t think tax credits are working how they are supposed to and are so easily manipulated. However, I am a fiduciary for our clients, and it is my job to work in their best interest. The story made me sound like a pariah gaming the system.

“Basically, I told the reporter that I have thick skin, and I thanked him for raising awareness and anger so maybe the system will change. The key with doing any story is to not be attached to the outcome. However, I may be more careful when working with this reporter in the future.”

McClanahan encourages other NAPFA members who would like to see their names in print (or hear their voices on the radio or see their face on TV) in the following ways:

- Even if you have a general practice, develop an expertise in something to talk about in the media.
- Be positively controversial on social media.
- Always be kind to others.
- Stand up for what you believe in.
- Be active on social media—follow journalists and their publications and comment on their stories

The bottom line, McClanahan says: “Earned media is a long-term plan. It took about three years for me to gain traction after becoming intentional with working with the media.”

Working with a professional PR team

Joseph Belfatto, managing partner at Massey Quick, a top-ranked wealth management firm (Barron’s, Financial Times, CNBC, and Financial Advisor magazine lists) based in Morristown, NJ, has a different take on things.

When the firm began thinking about ways to capitalize on the RIA’s 10th anniversary, it immediately thought of PR as a way to build credibility and visibility with the ultra-high-net-worth clientele it serves, as well as with strategic partners on the East Coast. The firm knew it did not have



“We spend zero dollars on marketing, and our client waiting list at one point was a year.”
—Carolyn McClanahan

the expertise in-house to accomplish its credibility and visibility goals, so it hired an outside PR firm.

Working with a group of PR professionals has had many benefits for Massey Quick, according to Belfatto:

- Media training, strategy consulting, news release creation and distribution, pitching to the media, and creation and placement of articles in both industry and trade publications.
- Improved social media strategy and rebuilding of the firm's website on a fresh, modern platform.
- A "shopping list" so that Massey Quick (MQ) could eventually equip and set up its own in-office video studio.

The PR firm experience was very hands-on, Belfatto says. PR staffers flew in on multiple occasions to MQ offices in New York City and visited the New Jersey headquarters to help with strategy and implementation of the firm's marketing plan.

Also, when MQ hired an employee to serve as marketing director about a year ago, the PR firm shared everything it knew

about working with the media, positioning the firm, creating content, and building a strong online presence. MQ is now at the point where the employee will be taking over the functions that the outsourced marketing and PR firm has been providing over the past two years.

"It has been very successful relationship," says Belfatto. "We've learned so much and accomplished much of what we wanted. The goal was to raise the profile of the firm and be seen as a leading source for wealth management services and financial planning advice in the New York/New Jersey area.

"We compete against well-established banks and trust companies, Wall Street firms, and very high-level boutique RIAs for our high-net-worth and sophisticated clientele. Being visible and credible is extremely important to Massey Quick, our strategic partners, and clients who refer business to us."

Sometimes hard to measure

Regardless of the success, Belfatto admits that "sometimes it's hard to measure where the referrals and growth comes

from, but grown we have and we see our PR firm as a part of the team effort."

Visibility through public relations and positioning online are a necessity for financial firms that are serious about building and maintaining market share, he believes. But it's only one part of the package.

"It's kind of like upgrading your office space or installing a big flat screen monitor in the conference room or entertaining clients at the best restaurants and venues, doing philanthropic work in the community, wearing the right clothing, etc. It's hard to precisely measure the impact that a good first impression and ongoing visibility makes. The old saying, 'out of sight, out of mind' is applicable here," Belfatto says.

"I can tell you that our website and 'In the News' page looks great. And that we are gaining traction building a following on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. When you visit our website, you will see some of the best media placements that our PR firm made happen."

A short list of the firm's accomplishments includes:

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- A feature about MQ partner Les Quick building a house for Habitat for Humanity in The Wall Street Journal (think: good guy/white hat).
- An in-studio video interview at Financial Times of Belfatto talking about the Massey Quick business model and its next-gen initiatives (think: recruiting).
- A big photo of two MQ partners, Les Quick and Christopher Moore, above the fold, in The New York Times. The article talked about the importance of working with a financial advisory firm that has a solid succession plan in place (think: perception of stability).
- Articles written by chief investment officer Stewart Massey for US News & World Report on the economy, investing, and market dynamics (think: proven expertise).
- An opinion piece the PR firm helped write and place in Financial Planning magazine on why every financial firm should embrace community service (think: thought leadership).

- Video interviews at The Wall Street Journal in which Belfatto spoke about estate planning and charitable giving and in which one of the other partners, Chris Moore, spoke about investments and market volatility (think: proven expertise).

“We’ve seen a big spike up in our search engine presence,” Belfatto says. “Strategic partners and clients tell us they have seen us in the news or are impressed when they visit our website or see our lacquered plaques when they visit the office. Being seen in credible media outlets also gives our social media team lots of great things to put on our Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts.”


Something to talk about

There’s an old Bonnie Raitt song that says, “Let’s give them something to talk about.”

Giving clients and influences something to talk about might be one of the biggest benefits of upgrading your practice by working with a PR firm or getting serious about doing it yourself. You’ll have lots of things for people to talk about—things

that position you and your firm in a positive manner and to share with those they’d like to introduce.

Sometimes it is easier to send a link to an article or a website than it is to make a direct referral. But the implied endorsement is there—perhaps multiplied by two if you include a third-party media piece that accompanies the note or is mentioned in conversation.

I’ve seen this succeed time and time again over my 20-plus years working with financial firms. PR, done right, can produce great dividends. Jump on in—the water’s just fine. Adding a healthy dose of earned media to your marketing plan is one of the best things you can do to impress the right people and earn share of mind. 

Marie Swift is president and CEO of Impact Communications, a full-service marketing communications firm that has worked exclusively with independent financial advisors and allied institutions for 20-plus years. NAPFA Members are entitled to a 10-percent discount off Swift’s “Media Mastery University” or “Lucky 10 PR Plan.” Learn more at ImpactCommunications.org.

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