

Who else wants Oprah as a client?

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When the Texas cattlemen drew bead on Oprah Winfrey the talk show maven looked for the best local representation she could find. Local in this case was Texas and she retained the prestigious firm of Jackson Walker L.L.P. The firm has 7 offices in various cities in Texas

and worked with the now famous Dr. Phil McGraw. Years of relationship networking and a strong reputation in his field led Oprah to nationally respected public relations guru, David Margulies, President of Dallas based Margulies Communications. His firm wrangled the publicity surrounding the Queen of Talk defending herself against the Cattle Barons in the Texas showdown.

“90% of lawsuits are settled several years after the allegations are made. However, the damage is done at the time of the allegations,” said Margulies. “A company or celebrity name is valuable and one of the few assets you can’t insure.”

The publicity in another celebrity trial - the Anna Nicole Smith and Marshall family dispute - is being handled by David Margulies as well. In this case he represents the Marshall family. Given the bombastic public persona of Anna Nicole, presenting the position of the Marshall family would seem to be like whistling in a tornado. I asked David how he manages publicity for these high profile cases as well as some of his less famous clients.

“What we need to understand is the end game. With Oprah it was a freedom of speech issue. We have to simplify things for the media. If they can sue Oprah, they can sue you. Once we got that message out, we didn’t have to worry,” said Margulies. The Anna Nicole – Marshall hearing is going on this week. See if you can pick out the end game sound bites on the evening news.

The end game can be quite different for a corporation. “Hugely successful businesses don’t publish their success to avoid inviting competitors. They want to keep their name out of the paper. We do this by making sure to respond as quickly as possible when the media calls. The media may not have facts correct. We like to get to them before they have invested a lot of time. We are not trying to spin but we are trying to get the correct information out. When we offer evidence that their information is not correct they just lose interest. Sometimes the situation is more complicated than they realized,” said Margulies.

Take a look at the Best Practices this top level PR firm uses to create success and see how many can be adapted to your business:

1. Margulies Communications understands the process both from the media aspect and how businesses work. Many PR people do not understand both sides but it’s important to understand what the media is going to do with a particular story. The media has its own little society – its own ways of doing and approaching things. “It is difficult to think like someone in the media. For example, when I was a journalist I saw a huge apartment fire and I thought, darn there is a great story and I am missing it,” said Margulies.
2. Understand what clients are concerned about. You have to get into their head and into their organization to find out what their boss is looking for. Everybody has a boss. What is it you really need? What is your end game? What do you want us to accomplish? Because you can’t look at everything and have a one size fits all.

“For example, take our client Southwest Airlines. What makes Southwest successful? Things people miss is how disciplined they are financially. People look at Southwest and notice all the fun they have,” Margulies said. “When we work with them, we really do enjoy them. However, something important to notice is that they are very conservative when it comes to finances and it benefits them. Another important issue is that their executives are comfortable with who they are they don’t have to keep up with other airlines – they set their own standards.” Really getting to understand clients makes for good publicity management and good business.

Margulies Communications has famous clients and clients who prefer not to be famous but the best practices are the same - build relationships and be interested in and understand the client.

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