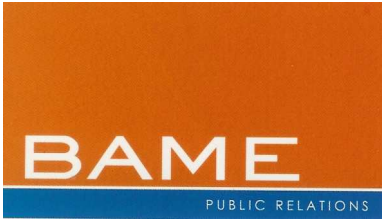


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Warning! This is Not a Real Interview

Cheryl Bame, Principal, Bame Public Relations

It happened again. He bypassed the firm's marketing and PR department and went right to the attorney. He disguised himself as an 'editor' from an 'editorial department' of what seemed like a legitimate media outlet. In reality he is working for an online publication that offers articles at a price (1-Page Article \$1200 and 1/2-Page Article \$500).

These kinds of publications prey on attorneys who don't know the difference between a real PR opportunity and pay-for-play "opportunity." Luckily, the attorney contacted me to tell me about it and I quickly responded to decline the offer.

So often I hear from law firms who buy expensive ads in publications like Forbes, thinking they are getting a reporter to write about their firms, when in reality the firm has to write the copy and the resulting article has a big ADVERTISING stamp at the top.

I think firms need policies in place that state that all calls involving interviews go directly to the firm's marketing and/or public relations departments. If your firm doesn't have a department, then find someone who can help you determine whether it's worth your time and money to respond to interview "opportunities." That way, you can vet the opportunity to determine whether it's a legitimate PR opportunity or an advertising sales pitch. And, this policy needs to go the firm's secretaries too, who typically book time in the attorneys' schedules to talk to reporters and editors. If there is any question about an interview request, check out the About section on the publication's website. It should tell you about the publication. And, check out the web or email address. If there is .org, .info, or anything other than .com, it is not a real media outlet — unless it is the Associated Press, of course.

While not all paid opportunities are bad, they are not true PR opportunities, in which a real reporter working for a real news outlet is seeking a third party commentator to talk about a real news event.