

Publications

Client Alert: A Reporter's Call: Not One to Ignore

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We understand that incoming calls from reporters and media outlets can be scary. It's natural to not want to comment and, instead, ignore the reporter's call. "No comment" or no response typically carries a negative connotation in news stories and leads readers/viewers/listeners to think that the person or company is hiding something – whether they are or not. But, Vorys' Strategic Communications team is increasingly producing public relations and communications plans for companies that help smooth over potentially negative media coverage.

Here are three reasons why we rarely recommend ignoring reporters' calls:

- Even if you cannot say anything of substance publicly, it is still better to release a short statement that shows your cooperation. These statements often allow us to "bridge" to messaging that can benefit you. Even the slightest participation can alter public perception in a positive way.
- Reporters can be relentless. If they're determined to get a response from your company, they'll hunt until they find someone willing to talk. This could be a staff member in the parking lot or a former (and potentially disgruntled) employee. Issuing a company-sponsored statement oftentimes will call off the hunt.
- Before you issue a statement, you can use the opportunity to solicit more information from the reporter. This allows you to determine the nature and direction of a story, which is an opportunity that doesn't present itself if the call is ignored. This is valuable information because, with a story looming, you nearly always have other vital communications that need to be addressed. Have you let your board know? What about internal communications? How about other stakeholders, such as business partners, vendors and suppliers? If a news story is coming, preemptive communication is typically recommended.

The **Vorys Strategic Communications team** regularly counsels Vorys' clients on crisis and strategic communications matters. Whether responding to a reporter's inquiry or coordinating a comprehensive PR

approach, Vorys can help make sure these tactics align with your legal and business strategy. Contact your Vorys attorney for more information.

