THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CASE STUDY

How Thought Leadership and PR Build Firm Profile

How one post put a Jones Walker partner in *Newsweek*

Jones Walker is a US firm of more than 350 lawyers. In 2022 it ran a six-week thought leadership pilot with 20 attorneys on Passle. Four years on, 114 attorneys publish through the platform, the firm has more than 400 posts on its Perspectives hub, and the program has grown every year without anyone being told to take part.

Attorneys at Jones Walker were already answering hard questions in the room with clients. What the firm built was a way for that knowledge and experience to be visible in the market: a short post, approved and published the same day, shared to LinkedIn and to the legal aggregators, then often used as the pitch to the trade or business press.

This case study follows one post along that route. Bill Shaughnessy, then a construction partner, set aside 30 minutes to write about steel tariffs in May 2025. Very soon after he was interviewed and ultimately quoted in a *Newsweek* story alongside other thought leaders from S&P Global, Redfin, and the National Association of Home Builders.

A steel industry CEO read the LinkedIn post and got in touch, meetings followed, and discussion of potential legal work began.

The approach Jones Walker has taken shows how structuring your thought leadership program the right way makes things simpler for authors and more effective as a whole.

Law firms already have the insight. Knowledgeable and experienced attorneys deliver every day for clients, yet too often their expertise is unknown by the market.

The gap is process. Writing often loses out to billable work. Approval takes days or weeks, and by the time a piece clears review, the news it responded to has moved on. Firms that do publish usually stop at publishing, so the post sits on a website waiting to be found in a search or read by somebody who already knows the firm.

Jones Walker started by addressing the key reasons thought leadership stalls at firms. Ryan Evans of Jones Walker and John Hellerman of Hellerman Communications set out the argument for it in *O'Dwyer's PR* in August 2026.

The firm wanted attorneys writing on their own initiative, which ruled out a mandate and meant the program had to earn every new author it got. That shaped how the whole thing was run.

> Communications takes non-billable thinking and turns it into billable opportunity.
>
> **RYAN EVANS, DIRECTOR OF PR & COMMUNICATIONS AT JONES WALKER**
>
> *O'Dwyer's PR*, August 2026

Four key reasons firms struggle with thought leadership

These are the reasons thought leadership stalls at most firms. Each one has a habit on the next page that answers it.

Attorneys have the insight, but not the time: Writing competes with billable work, and any barriers to authors are costly.

Approvals are a bottleneck: A post that takes two weeks to clear is no longer answering a live question, and discouraging the author.

Publishing is where most firms stop: A post on the firm's own site sits there waiting to be found in a search or read by somebody who already knows the firm.

Authors stop writing if they do not see the impact of their writing, or if they do not see feedback that is relevant to them and their clients.

Jones Walker set out to change these, with a six-week pilot in 2022 launched with 20 volunteer attorneys.

Choosing the approach

Why Passle?

Passle is a thought leadership platform built for professional services firms. It gives attorneys an easy way to write, a robust yet fast review step, and distribution to LinkedIn and automated syndication to the legal publication websites.

Insights get created, managed, distributed and then reported on, faster and more effectively than the traditional process.

Jones Walker put it in front of a pilot group first. 20 attorneys over six weeks, writing about their own clients. The pilot existed to show the firm what was possible, and the impact that the right process could have.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF SUCCESSFUL THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

SELF-SERVICE PUBLICATION

Client focused insights. Authentic, helpful, timely and digestible commentary, short enough to read between meetings.

ROBUST & FAST APPROVALS

Approve and publish quickly. A simple process keeps authors engaged and the content relevant.

CREATE ONCE, PUBLISH EVERYWHERE

Use the insight to drive the PR pitch. A steady flow of what clients want to hear conditions reporters to look toward the firm.

SHOW RELEVANT IMPACT TO AUTHORS

Send the results to the author. The lawyer and their colleagues see the impact, which is what brings the next author in.

HOW THE PROGRAM GREW

Six-week pilot, 20 attorneys ▶ **Results shown to the firm** ▶ **Practice groups opt in** ▶ **114 attorneys today**

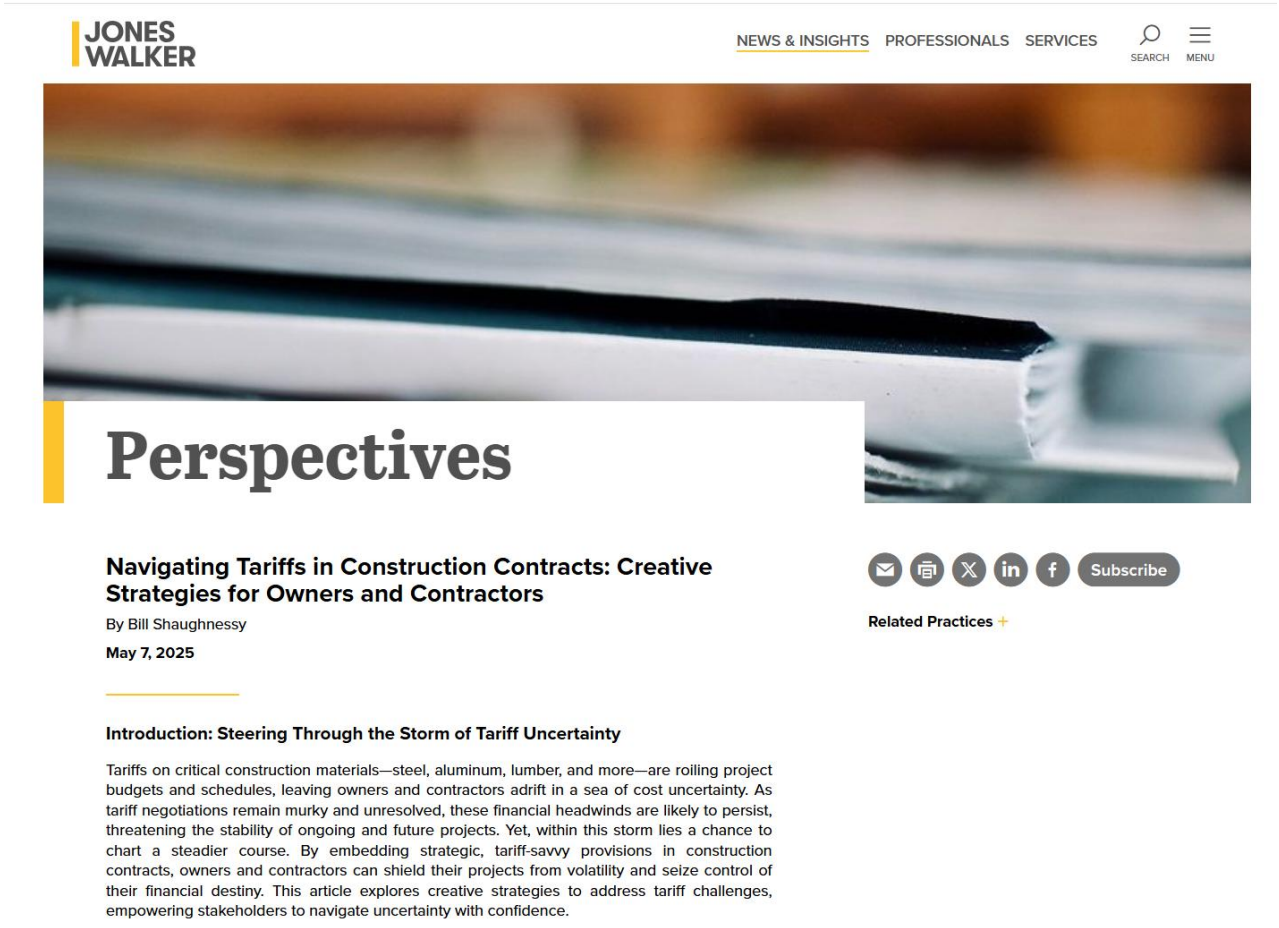
Other practice groups asked to join as soon as they could see what the pilot group was getting back, and that is still how the program recruits. By scaling on success, Jones Walker has been able to build a culture of showing what the firm is capable of to the market.

One post that shows how it works

In May 2025, Bill Shaughnessy, then a Construction Partner at Jones Walker, wrote about the impact new steel tariffs would have on the building industry. The construction market was in limbo as to what these new tariffs meant for contracts already signed.

Bill wrote his answer as a short post in about thirty minutes. The firm approved and published it just a few hours later.

The post is effective because insight comes out of Bill's own knowledge and experience, and it answers a question clients were asking at the time. It is also short and digestible. A general counsel can read it between two meetings and know what to do next, or, even better, reach out to the author directly.



JONES WALKER

NEWS & INSIGHTS PROFESSIONALS SERVICES SEARCH MENU

Perspectives

Navigating Tariffs in Construction Contracts: Creative Strategies for Owners and Contractors

By Bill Shaughnessy

May 7, 2025

Subscribe

Related Practices +

Introduction: Steering Through the Storm of Tariff Uncertainty

Tariffs on critical construction materials—steel, aluminum, lumber, and more—are roiling project budgets and schedules, leaving owners and contractors adrift in a sea of cost uncertainty. As tariff negotiations remain murky and unresolved, these financial headwinds are likely to persist, threatening the stability of ongoing and future projects. Yet, within this storm lies a chance to chart a steadier course. By embedding strategic, tariff-savvy provisions in construction contracts, owners and contractors can shield their projects from volatility and seize control of their financial destiny. This article explores creative strategies to address tariff challenges, empowering stakeholders to navigate uncertainty with confidence.

Navigating Tariffs in Construction Contracts, published May 7, 2025 on the firm's Perspectives hub under Bill Shaughnessy's own byline.

From post to national coverage

A thought leadership piece cannot be a success unless it reaches the right audience. Through Passle the post was syndicated to Mondaq and also routed to email newsletters that several key reporters subscribe to. All of it happened in the same few days.

The Business Development Manager for that author, the firm's PR team, and the firm's external PR partner were able to start from the post, pick the media targets, and build a strong pitch. Sometimes the target is a bylined article, often a reporter already on the trend. Starting with a post expedites the process of winning that PR placement.

MAY 7

Published
Live on the firm's Perspectives hub.

MAY 8

Distributed
Out to Mondaq.

MAY 21

Pitched to media
The firm sent the post itself to a *Newsweek* reporter already covering the broader issue.

JUNE 7

Quoted
Newsweek runs its tariffs story and quotes him in it, thirty-one days after publication.



Newsweek, June 7, 2025. Shaughnessy is quoted alongside thought leaders from S&P Global, Redfin, and the National Association of Home Builders.

> We've seen attorneys generate more interest than they can reasonably handle from well-timed placements.
>
> **RYAN EVANS, DIRECTOR OF PR & COMMUNICATIONS AT JONES WALKER**
>
> *O'Dwyer's PR*, August 2026

The business impact

The post in our example was read by a steel industry CEO, who saw what Bill could bring to the table and got in touch. Meetings followed between the firm and that company, and discussion of potential legal work began.

That same post, written in about thirty minutes, also put Bill in *Newsweek*. A single piece of thought leadership reached the national press and a prospective client.

The successes of this post, and others, encouraged other attorneys to become authors. One of them was a Practice Co-Leader, whose first two posts were converted to bylined articles and picked up by trade press.

After the third post, the firm had to cap the media inquiries coming in.

THE JOURNEY OF A POST

A steel industry CEO read it ▶ **Meetings followed** ▶ **Potential legal work discussed**

JONES WALKER TODAY

114	400+	350,000+	31
ATTORNEYS PUBLISHING	POSTS SINCE 2022	CONTENT VIEWS	DAYS TO NEWSWEEK

Alongside their owned channels, the publications that have carried Jones Walker attorneys off the back of their posts have a combined reach in the millions.

How Jones Walker made this a repeatable process.

Feedback to lawyers is key.

The program runs on results reaching the author. When a post produces a byline or a read from a name the lawyer recognizes, the firm sends that back to them. Their colleagues hear about it. The next author is born.

That is what makes the fourth habit matter as much as the first. Sending results to the author is what produces the next insight, which is why the four sit in a cycle rather than a line.

Four years in, Jones Walker has more than 400 posts and 354,341 recorded views. The 114 attorneys now publishing all arrived the way the pilot group's neighbors did, by watching somebody else's post do something useful.

For a firm of more than 350 lawyers, that is close to a third of its attorneys writing in public about what could possibly impact their current clients or attract new clients, with no content calendar telling them to.

What you can learn – a step-by-step guide

Whether you are starting a thought leadership program or trying to get more out of one that already runs, there are plenty of best practices being pioneered at Jones Walker.

FOR PROGRAM MANAGERS

1. **Start with a pilot**
   Prove the concept and show the impact before you ask the firm for anything.

2. **Remove the barriers**
   Bill's post went up the day he wrote it. A slow turnaround kills the habit.

3. **Show the author the impact**
   Colleagues seeing what a post did is what turns a handful of authors into a program.

FOR AUTHORS

1. **Write to a real client need**
   Bill's post came authentically from knowledge, experience, and vision, as an answer to a real client need.

2. **Be helpful and short**
   Clients want clarity on something keeping them up at night. They do not want to spend the night reading it.

3. **Publish while it is live news**
   A good post now is useful.
   A perfect post too late is useless.