

Famejacking: A Primer

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You're probably not familiar with the term "famejacking." In fact, we're sure you're not since we just made it up. Even so: it's a useful concept if you're looking to get noticed.

When you're famejacking, you are taking advantage of another's celebrity in an effort to publicize yourself—but in a particular way. It's a twist on the most common method of using star power for promotion: the celebrity endorsement. Endorsements can be effective—Jim Palmer hawked a lot of underwear for Jockey, Brooke Shields helped make Calvin Klein's name, and now Tom Brady is going to do his best for Ugg (though getting men into [Britney's](#) favorite footwear might be harder than winning a Super Bowl)—but they also require a lot of time and expense, sometimes millions.

Famejacking involves using another's notoriety to your own benefit, but without their permission. Instead of paying endorsement fees to a celebrity, their popularity is, instead, "jacked."

Consider the following examples of famejacking:

- Michael Moore [certainly got noticed](#) when he posted bail for one of 2010's most controversial names, Julian Assange.
- Sarah Palin, a famejacking savant, has kept her profile up for cycle after news cycle by stoking her numerous feuds (incredibly, she has had [76 of them](#)) with celebrity personalities like [David Letterman](#), Family Guy creator [Seth McFarlane](#), and [Aaron Sorkin](#).
- Lady Gaga used the opening of the New York Mets Citi Field to [expose herself](#) (in more ways than one) to baseball fans.

Set aside, for the moment, your feelings about these controversial figures, as well as any judgments about their tastefulness. Because the fact is that while famejacking can be practiced in unseemly ways, it can also be classy, fun, and highly effective in promoting professional service providers (and not unwelcome to the celebrity being used).

To give a recent example, an entrepreneuring [legal researcher and writer](#) just used the star power of a Supreme Court advocate, Tom Goldstein, to her advantage in a promotion for her services. Knowing Tom to be a celebrity name in the legal world, she created a video addressed to him. Because her video is about Tom Goldstein, it's instantly notable—and it will live on in Internet searches for Tom's name forever.

The video plays on a previous series of funny videos that Tom, himself a savvy self-promoter, had made about his practice.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT2yZ2ZFDcU

Here's the writer's effort:

<http://vimeo.com/18571355>

The execution could be improved—the video is slower-paced and not as witty as Tom’s. Still, it’s a game effort, and it will get 10 times more views than if she hadn’t gone the famejacking route.

Maybe a video on YouTube isn’t your style. Perhaps a professional blog geared around Marvel’s superheros or NBC’s sitcom [The Office](#) (something we’ve done for a client) would be more your style. Or take, for instance, our approach when putting together a recent panel on securities law. Sound boring? It sure could have been—we’ve attended scads of panel discussions that put attendees to sleep. Instead, we famejacked. We took our [event](#) attendees to see *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* and used the popularity of the movie as draw for a discussion about changes in securities law since the time of the original *Wall Street* two decades ago.

Think about how you might use famejacking for your own practice. The key is to do it cleverly. And if it works, you’ll feel as fabulous as Lady Gaga.