

The 6 Most Important Tips You Must Know To Successfully Pitch YOUR Story to the Media

1. Right Audience.

Who is your target audience and where do you need to be to interact with you or your firm? Are they watching TV? Listening to the radio? Spend time to find out what appeals to your audience (Potential customers). Much of your time will be spent in finding the media that your potential customers are watching, reading or listening.

You want to determine who is most likely to be your customer who would actually need your service or agree with your idea. Once you have identified your audience and what they are watching or reading, you will then need to create and customize your pitch according to the media outlet.

For example, if you are a Personal Injury Lawyer, you should not spend time pitching a producer at the local TV news station. Instead, you are more likely to have success with pitching a newsworthy story to the producer who handles health and or lifestyle topics.

2. Right Media Outlet.

Research to establish the shows (Local radio, local television, newspapers and magazines) of where your audience would be watching, reading or listening. Identifying the right outlet (Again, based on your target audience of who is likely to be your ideal customer) is what will largely determine the type of success that you have in pitching your story. Don't waste your time on an outlet, venue or show that does not match your type of business, or your target audience.

Also, unless you have prior media experience, a sensational story, are a well known celebrity, or the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, do not spend your time contacting major media outlets, or news networks. Instead, begin with your local media outlets as many national outlets pull good stories from local outlets. Research and create a list of relevant media (Radio, TV, newspapers) that is geared towards your core customer, considering factors such as content, target demographic, and circulation.

3. Right Reporter.

Take the time to create your own “Media Hot File” of reporters who match your topic and concentrate your efforts on working with these reporters. Most news organizations have a list of their staff, their beats and their editors available. If you don’t know who to call, find the specific beat or desk (business, news, editorial, sports, etc.) and an editorial assistant (Newspaper, magazine), associate producer (TV), or news director (Radio) should be able to help you find the correct reporter who would be best for your story. For each show, newspaper or magazine, be sure to note similar stories, blogs and topics written by your selected reporter. Once you have located similar articles or stories to your story, note the reporter's information (Email or social connections), as you will contact this reporter to pitch your story idea.

4. The Right Pitch.

Create a Compelling Newsworthy Angle or Pitch. Having a good story is a critical first step that must be solid BEFORE you contact the reporter. The best stories are the ones that pass the “Hey Bert” test – stories that are so interesting or dramatic that you feel compelled to tell someone (a friend, relative or co-worker). The idea is that you want to help the reporter uncover an interesting and great story. However, what may be "newsy" in the business world or within a company may not be "newsy" to us or to the public. If your pitch is good, meaning that it's newsworthy, it may be just what we need for a story. What makes something newsworthy? Controversy, anniversaries, civil unrest (e.g. Protests, Demonstrations, Rallies, Labor disputes), human interest, strange bedfellows, superlatives (first, biggest, etc.), charity, and factual/industry data or information (Research studies). Your subject should fall into one of the before mentioned categories and should be interesting to the audience of the TV, radio, newspaper, or blog (Whatever your selected outlet).

If your announcement concerns another new business, product or service, this is not news (Unless you are a well known person or an established business) - you need to create a hook to make your story or idea interesting. Always think about what problem your business, product, service or idea can solve – this is how to make your yourself newsworthy and thus, successful at capturing the attention of the media. NEVER use sales copy or sales language (Buy now, special offer, purchase, etc.). Another way to be newsworthy is to create or participate in charity events, such as a local Food Drive, donation program, charitable event, or worthy cause. The idea is not about your business, product, service or idea – this angle is about your involvement/visibility in the community – an almost guaranteed way to become newsworthy enough to receive coverage.

Finally, if a topic isn't newsworthy or smacks of a self promotional sales letter – no matter how important – the story most likely will not receive coverage. Remember, you need to develop an effective hook or a spin to your story that would not only appeal to reporters, but also to their audience – tell them why they should care about what you're offering – solve a problem.

5. The Right Email.

80% of your success is that all attention getting headline or subject line. Don't attach your pitch or anything until you have had some interaction with the reporter/media personnel and they know who you are.

Your pitch must be in the body of the email. Also, be sure to double check to make sure your pitch is directed to the appropriate person or area—As perfectly crafted as your idea may be, the food critic won't care about latest changes in the Tax Code, but may care about your new restaurant that features a special gourmet menu for Diabetic diners in a popular restaurant row section of the city. Have a short paragraph introducing yourself and your company, including contact information. Again, keep your pitch short and sweet.

Here is what to include in your Pitch Letter using clear and concise language:

- Attention Grabbing Headline
- A 3-4 sentence overview of your idea for a story or feature;
- Why it's important to their readers/viewers or how it benefits the community;
- Any extras you'd like to include (contest, donation, product images, etc.)
- Brief introduction of who you are and why you matter (Local expert or business owner);

Note: Include all contact information in your pitch (Mobile phone is strongly recommended), as well as any background/ research of any relevant information or web sites that a reporter might find useful – help the reporter write the story and you will gain a friend. The pitch will help give the reporter a better idea of what the story is about and why it would be a good subject for the audience. If your pitch is about an event, send the information at least 3 weeks in advance, a day before, and the day of the event. (Yes, we need a lot of reminders).

6. Be Creative.

90% the media doesn't want to talk to a lawyer they want to talk to an expert that will inform and entertain their audience. You can just be a personal injury lawyer or you can be an expert that talks about the latest safety recalls for XYZ motors. You can just be a tax lawyer or you can be an expert that talks about how the new tax plan is going to help or hurt local business owners.

Anyway, I hope this helps. If you have questions send me an email;
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You Were Created To Succeed!
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