

PITCHING 101

Find out:

- +What makes a great pitch
- +How to connect with journalists
- +How to maximize your story's exposure

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What makes a great pitch?

Getting covered.

Period.

Companies love being recognized. A great pitch helps them cut through the clutter in journalists' inbox and actually end up as "front page news."

Key concepts for great pitches

+**Personal.** The journalist feels like you understand their job and their beat. You follow them on Twitter. You're "in."

+**Real.** The journalist understands you are not pitching fluff or hype or sales.

+**Accurate and complete.** Everything the journalist needs to write the story is in your pitch email—access to executive interviews, availability of photos, the release itself. The perfect pitch says W2M has everything they need to quickly put together an honest, accurate, timely and newsworthy story for the journalist. We become their super secretary. SERVE THEM.

Before you pitch

When you prepare to pitch for a client (or for yourself if you are reading over W2M's shoulder here!) you're putting a great deal on the line. It's not just a matter of print; it's getting print right, and getting print that makes a difference.

Most frequently, the first step in a pitching process is having a finalized, approved press release in hand. Press releases ought to be newsy, tell a newsy story, or make an announcement. If not, then you might want to do a little thinking or revision before you start reaching out to journalists! They want news, they live on it.

You also might have a story idea that a client wants pitched to an editor. That's fine, too; we'll explore how both methods work in this guide.

Setting up the list of editors and journalists

Setting up the list of editors/journalists. The list is important. The list is all--knowing. Well, not exactly. But the list is where the magic starts.

What is this mysterious list? It's a collection of the right editors and publications your client wants to be published in and, hopefully, others that you have suggested as well (you've put this together already, right?). You want to find the quickest way to get the right news to the right editors, in an organized fashion.

There are two schools of thought when it comes to editorial lists. One is that bigger is better: the more contacts you have, the longer the list, the more likely the press release will be sent out. Set your email to merge, and you're golden, right?

Not exactly. The second school of thought is that targeted, specific approaches make better personal connections and, therefore, better results. (Keep in mind that press releases that are distributed already cast a pretty big net, and many editors don't look kindly on emails that appear to be macroed----beware, you can be relegated to the spam bin!)

If you have a huge list, with lots of great prospects, and the client is on retainer, consider pitching in rotation. Spreadsheets are your friend in this case----take notes regarding various publications, and consider ordering them in order of focus, as well (highest first).

Organize your assets like great weapons you have at hand

Your press release is just the beginning. Do you have photos? Illustrations? White papers? Organize everything you have (or the client has) before you begin your assault on the Publication! Every photo, white paper, article, etc. makes it easier.

Know the secret fear of journalists

Journalists are afraid of two things:

+**Embarrassment.** They do not want to print rubbish or be taken for fools. They

call it "a retraction" and it ruins careers. So they need you to show them that this client is on the level and real.

How? Reference stats and prior pubs. Like "our Inc 500 listed client, our client #220 on Forbes, our client recently published in the Wall Street Journal..." Frequently sprinkle these bona fides in your pitch to reassure the fearful that we represent the industry leaders (which we do).

+**Being irrelevant.** Journalists are deeply steeped in the knowledge that how the world is framed, is how the world is scene. They take this responsibility seriously. They aspire to make a difference in the world just like you do. So make sure YOU LET THEM KNOW that you KNOW they are relevant.

Best ways to do this:

a. honest compliment on a previous story they've written and YOU HAVE READ;

b. shared insight—check out their blog and see if you have something in common
If their work makes a difference to you in some way, chances are they can respect that perhaps your work could make a difference to them.

There's nothing that journalists and editors hate more than people throwing information at them when they've clearly had no experience with their publication.

The online assault

Find the link to the press release (if it's distributed already). Beneath the release you'll see a series of links. Log in to twitter or your favorite platforms like LinkedIn, and make an announcement about the press release, with a link. Make the headline catchy. Encourage others to do the same. This helps rankings, and if done right, can even bring journalists to you.

Pitch e-mails that don't get pitched

You think we are busy? Editors are BUSY. Everyone wants a piece of their hide. They don't want to hear you blather for three paragraphs (or two minutes on the phone) before getting to the point. **You need to tell them, right away, why you're contacting them and why your article/press release will fit in their magazine, newspaper, or blog, or whatever.**

How do you know if it will? Most publications have editorial calendars available for perusal on their websites; crosscheck these, find the best fits, and then contact the journalists.

Do NOT waste their time.

Repeat: DO NOT WASTE THEIR TIME. Your reputation as a professional, our client's reputation, and Write2Market's reputation are all on the line there. Example:

How not to start your email:

*Dear <Journalist>
Today, <client> announced...*

Not a good way to start. It's boring. And

no one cares about our client (or you, for those reading over our shoulders!). The journalist cares about their TOPIC and their READERS being INFORMED.

Try instead to say something along the lines of specifics that show why it matters to the readers RIGHT NOW, "I have a great story idea/lead/press release that will fit perfectly in your <issue> of <publication> about <subject> because of the recent news about <x>. It's about how..."

There's nothing that journalists and editors hate more than people throwing information at them when they've clearly had no experience with their publication.

Be succinct, be clear, be helpful. Your ultimate goal is not necessarily to get a publication to run each and every press release you give them, but rather create a relationship so that they'll turn to you with questions when they need research. You, and by extension your client, become the trusted source, and can score with some really big features in turn.

Okay, so----that said: hit send, or make the phone call.

Some metrics to help you figure out where you are landing:

Excellent pitch

20% or more of the list responds

Average pitch

10% respond

Poor pitch

Less than 10% of the list respond

Keep contact, and get on the ball

No matter how good your practices, if the client is contacted by the journalist and can't respond in a timely manner, nothing will happen. Make sure your source (our client) understands the importance of being a media contact and can respond accordingly. If not, then the journalist or editor might not reach out again, and that's a recipe for failure.

You also need to make sure when editors email and call you that you're on top of things. Always be friendly, outgoing, and as helpful as can be. SMILE. Joke. THANK THEM FOR THEIR TIME. Make working with you the best part of their day. Seriously. Do this a few times and *you'll feel like you're catching up with friends when you have a release to send.*

Remember:

- +Turn off the email so you're not distracted while you are pitching
- +Clear your desk and your mind of everything but how much this story matters to someone...who? REACH THEM
- +Focus on the journalist and their need for you to craft a clear reason to run the story
- +Reach out with all your energy—it'll come back
- +Smile, have fun, joke a little bit and be the pro you know you are—you're putting the strings in the news industry (Yes you are!)

Email example of pitch

Dear Allie,

Good morning! I noticed that in your December issue you'll be conducting an executive interview with a telecom vet, and thought I would reach out with a story suggestion for you. Consider interviewing Terry Addington at CarterBaldwin Executive Search, who was just recently named to the CTIA Board of Directors. Mr. Addington is a telecommunications industry veteran.

From his recent release:

Addington's distinguished 23-year career as a leader in the wireless telecommunications industry includes appointments as President and CEO of First Cellular of Southern Illinois until its sale to Alltel in 2006, Chairman of the Board of the Cellular Telecommunications and Internet Association (CTIA), and President of the Rural Cellular Association (RCA).

Mr. Addington served on the Board of Directors for CTIA for ten years as a carrier with First Cellular of Southern Illinois until 2006, where he also served as chairman.

You can read today's release in its entirety below.

To contact Mr. Addington, you can schedule an interview with Jodi Delikat (jdelikat@carterbaldwin.com, 678-448-

0000) at CarterBaldwin, or let me know (natania@write2market.com, 404-419-6677 x 108).

And if I can help you contact another source in the telecom industry, just let me know—we're very connected to execs there! Looking forward to your article--

Best Regards,

Natania Barron
Write2Market on behalf of CarterBaldwin

“...If I can help you contact another source in the telecom industry, just let me know--We're very connected to execs there!”

CONTACT US

ABOUT WRITE2MARKET

We create recognizable industry leaders. Our clients are visionaries in their industries who want to get the headlines their expertise deserves. Our Triple A Industry Leadership approach guarantees the access, awards, and awareness they need to reach the top.

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