



RESOURCE INFORMATION: WHAT MAKES A PERFECT STORY PITCH?

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Social good communicators examined the latest research, best practices and tips for increasing the likelihood of "getting to yes" when proposing a story to the news media.

One member of the Good Communicators Exchange shared an example of a very successful story placement. Next, participants examined and answered the following questions. Answers were largely informed by two sources:

- Muck Rack study: [The State of Journalism 2022](#)
- NPR: [What makes a good pitch? NPR editors weigh in](#)

What is the #1 top ingredient of a “PERFECT PITCH?”

- **Surprise.**
 - A story pitch that makes an editor say, “Wow, I never knew that. Tell me more.”
 - A story proposal that changes what an editor (and their audience) thought they knew about an issue.

What are some other key components of the “perfect pitch?”

- It is short – preferably one short paragraph
- It tells a story
- It advances the media outlet’s coverage of the topic; it’s NEW.
- It fits into a crowded stream of coverage, but has something different to say.
- It has a KILLER HEADLINE and here are some examples:
 - The Radioactive Town that Poisoned Florida
 - The Great Python Hunt: Saving Biodiversity in Everglades National Park
 - Zombie Moths, Dying Gods & Murder in the Himalayas
 - The high-flying housing market is falling back to earth

How do you nail a pitch via storytelling?

- The proposed story includes basic narrative elements, such as:
 - A conflict and/or a central character
 - Something happens
 - A specific focus
 - Poses a central question
 - It has stakes (a situation that has risk and in which someone is likely to either get or lose an advantage)

On an average business day, most journalists receive 1-5 pitches and a smaller portion receive 6-10. What are the top three reasons story pitches fail?

- Bad timing (story is pitched at the wrong time of day, wrong day of the week or at a time when other trending news makes the story too low a priority to consider)
- Lack of personalization
- Confusing subject lines

What is the best method for pitching a story?

- Via one-to-one email (rather than an obvious mass email)

What's the best time of day?

- During the workweek, the earlier the pitches come, the better. Most journalists prefer to receive pitches in the morning.
 - #1 preference is between 5 a.m. and 9 a.m.
 - #2 preference is between 9 a.m. and noon.

What is the best way to both promote a successfully placed news story and thank the editor/reporter who produced it?

- Via your organization's social media, don't just self-congratulate by pointing out a story(ies) by news media outlets that you pitched. Instead, highlight quotes, facts and any new information the reporter brought to your story idea that you did not give them. Celebrate the added value/insights that came from the reporter's hard work and good journalism skills such as new research, facts and compelling interviews. For example:
 - "Great new insight by [NEWS MEDIA OUTLET REPORTER...] in his/her story on [SUBJECT] by interviewing [names and roles of interview subjects] who emphasized (or revealed) ..."

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