

# Successful Media Pitches

- **Get to the point:** Keep it concise and brief, like a news story.
- **Have a focus:** Target and tailor the pitch to the reporter. Don't send a pitch about a water story to a reporter who doesn't cover those issues.
- **Know the audience:** You can't control what angle the reporter will take, who they talk to, or how they write their story. So don't try. Seek out reporters whose work you trust and whose reach dovetails with your interests/constituencies.
- **Pivot off the news:** It is much easier to convince a reporter of a story's worth if it's on a topic that is getting traction. Sometimes a pitch on an under-the-radar issue works, but you always want to tie it to something of-the-moment.

# Do's

- **Do cultivate relationships** with reporters that go beyond the transactional, short-term needs. Reporters love to talk and brainstorm when they've got time, so don't be shy about suggesting an in-person or over the phone chat that isn't all-business.
- **Do clearly communicate** your expectations about placement and timing of a story. You might have to compromise, but it's better than being at the mercy of the report (or more likely, the editor).
- **Do demonstrate a working knowledge** of the reporter's beat, outlet, coverage, and other basics. Like proper name spelling!
- **Do proactively pull** together statistics, facts, tweets, sources, etc. on a topic that will be helpful to the reporter AND help promote your organization.

# Don'ts

- **Don't bully** reporters into writing the story you want.
- **Don't offer off-the-record sources** for a story unless it's extremely sensitive/crucial to establishing trust. Most reporters are working on daily/weekly stories, not long-term investigative projects, and do not have time to waste on sources who won't go on the record, or at the very least, on background.
- **Don't call** if we don't already have a working relationship and the pitch is not urgent. Emailing or even DM'ing a pitch is better, IMO, to start. During the day, I will always answer my phone because I am usually working on a story for that day. But if it's not urgent and I don't know you, I'm going to be irritated you wasted my time.
- **Don't berate** reporters for not responding. It's not personal. Most of the time, reporters don't respond to pitches because they aren't relevant or they've simply overlooked them. There's nothing wrong with following-up in a day or two but take a gentle reminder tone.

# Op-Eds

- **Short:** Whether it's in print or online, word count matters. Most outlets want concise submissions that are under 1,000 words.
- **Timely:** It should be a view on a topic that is in the news NOW or soon to be.
- **Influential:** Outlets often look for op-eds by someone with high name recognition, or with clear experience/credentials/knowledge in the topic area.
- **Relevant:** Make sure you are pitching to an outlet that is likely to be interested in the topic, and reaches an audience you are interested in.
- **Medium:** Think about the medium (print, online, audio, broadcast) that is the best fit for your piece and consider social media/viral potential.

# General Advice

- **Read/watch/listen** to as much coverage of your issue as you can.
- **Follow reporters** you want to cultivate relationships with and get to know their work and their network.
- **Cast a wide net.** Don't just pitch the big, mainstream news outlets. Trade press offers great placement and opportunities for stories. They often have a very educated, informed and savvy audience that wants specific information about a topic.
- **Don't burn bridges.** You don't have to like everyone you work with but be professional. It's a two-way street and the same goes for reporters. Don't prolong an unpleasant experience or association, but don't go out of your way to trash people publicly. It's a small media world!