

Seven Quick Tips for Attracting Media Attention

By Betty Alexander

1. **Remember that there's a difference between PR and stalking.** Junior media relations people, in particular, can get a bad reputation for calling repeatedly. When you have a story to pitch, limit yourself to two tries: one by phone and one by e-mail. If you try twice and the reporter you're targeting still doesn't get in touch...
2. **Keep in mind that the problem is not that the reporter doesn't like you.** It's that something about your story didn't work. So don't think: I've got to woo this reporter harder to make him like me. Think: I've got to come up with a better story for this reporter. One possibility: Wait a few weeks and come back with improved sources or angles that build on the previous idea. If you don't hear back then, you've done everything you can and that story's over for you and that reporter.
3. **Get to know the reporter's coverage—and use what you learn to your advantage.** These days it's remarkably easy to use a search engine or news database to find out what a reporter has been covering. Then you really get a sense of where that person's interests lie and what angle will get the best reception.
4. **When you pitch, think exclusivity.** One key to success is to offer the reporter something valuable that you haven't offered to any other media. Maybe it's a chance to meet with an industry CEO, learn about influential customers in your field, or get fresh statistics from a researcher in your profession.
5. **If one reporter doesn't return calls, but you feel the story does have merit, feel free to pitch it elsewhere.** Just don't pitch it to the reporter's editor—journalists hate PR people who go over their heads.
6. **If your boss or board is intent on getting into one particular high-profile outlet—the *New York Times*, CNN News, or whatever—get the higher-ups to agree to a timeline of six to nine months.** Then you don't have to feel pressured to hound the reporters. Instead, you can spend your time honing strong story ideas, researching the formats and needs of your target outlet, and crafting the perfect pitch. Eventually, one will work for both the reporter and you. (Probably—nothing is guaranteed!)
7. **Remember that nothing beats a good old-fashioned phone call.** Being able to hear the other person's voice and react instantly to what he says is a major advantage when you have a minute or less to form a bond. Popular and convenient as e-mail may be, there's no substitute for human contact when you want to convey excitement about your latest story idea.