



5 Tips to Getting Media Coverage

By Lisa Toller

Journalists are barraged with hundreds of emails, phone calls, and faxes every day from well-meaning business owners, nonprofit executives, and public relations professionals who pitch story after story without any regard to what the journalist really needs: something his or her readers will find interesting. Here are a few keys to getting the media to sit up and pay attention to your story...

1. Think like a journalist

To understand what journalists want, you have to consume as much news as possible, including local TV news, talk radio, newspapers of all types, and more. Like everyone else, journalists have their particular slants, writing styles, and areas of interest. Find one whose reporting is appealing to you and who would be a good choice to cover your story.

2. Create a media list

Start by keeping a list of the names of journalists, media, and contact information of those that are writing stories about organizations similar to yours. Try to gather as much information as you can about their preferences, deadlines, preferred method of contact, etc. Most journalists prefer to receive news via email without any attachments.

3. Write a compelling story pitch

A pitch is a short (often, just a paragraph or two) attention-grabbing story about something newsworthy. Here's an example of an effective pitch that NewLevel Group prepared for VOICES (Voice Our Independent Choices for Emancipation Support), the nation's first youth-led center for foster youth.

A group of ten youth all aging out of the foster care system have taken matters into their own hands. Across the nation, heartbreaking stories have been told about what happens to hundreds of foster kids who turn 18 and are put out on the street. They are expected to learn -- almost over night -- how to live as an

adult: find a job, locate almost non-existent affordable housing, and manage very limited resources.

By capitalizing on a national trend, the pitch was much more interesting to local and national journalists.

In addition to preparing the pitch, have a list of experts on the subject for the journalists to contact, photographs, background information, and biographies – everything the writer will need to create the story. Make his or her job as easy as possible!

4. Practice, then pitch

Practice reading your story several times. Identify a dozen journalists from your media list who might be interested in the story and call them on the phone. The best time to call is early in the day and early in the week, but the reality is that journalists are extremely busy all the time. If you get their voicemail, leave a message with your pitch. Pitch your story quickly and concisely. You can also email them the pitch (make sure to add a strong subject line to get their attention) and then follow-up with a phone call.

5. Be persistent but don't be a pest

Depending on how time-sensitive your story is, plan on making a follow-up phone call or sending another email within a day or two of your original pitch. If you don't get any response after the second attempt, assume that the story wasn't of interest and move on to another journalist.