

Will it Fly?® Educational Brief

Module: PR Pitch

Section: Verbal Contact and Responses

Even though email will likely be the usual means of communication between you and the media contact/journalist, you should have a condensed version of the pitch that is ready to give over the phone in approximately 20-30 seconds. This concise pitch can also come in handy if you should be face-to-face with your contact.

Also, make sure you have spokespeople (two or three is probably a safe number, in case of travel, etc.) who are prepared to give this pitch over the phone, have practiced it, and are ready to answer questions that the pitch may raise.

Preparing an internal Q&A document can help guide your spokespeople, and make them feel more comfortable in fielding questions. Basically, no matter what you or they have to say, make sure that it's said simply, and to-the-point: Beating around the bush, or overusing cliches and hyperbole, effectively tell the reporter that you have nothing pertinent to say.

Know your story well. You'll need to know how to revise your pitch when objections come up: And they will come up. You don't want to be in the position where you don't have an answer. Have practice sessions, where you and the spokespeople (and other members of your staff) pelt each other with questions so you can get used to providing off-the-cuff answers.

Journalists/media contacts, like anyone else, have personal preferences about how to contact them. While researching online, obtaining contact info through a specialized service, or via a variety of other techniques are solid practices, if you do get them one-on-one, don't forget to ask about their preference. Not only will this verify the information you have, but also help you avoid looking pushy.

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If your verbal pitch develops into a request for additional info, always remember to ask if a reporter is on deadline. In most cases, they will appreciate your being considerate. Your aim is to get a relationship going with them that will benefit your company. Since they regularly confront people that get on their nerves, your being considerate could end up being valuable.

When pitching to reporters that you do not know, be up front: Say "We haven't spoken before," instead of pretending to know the reporter. If you do otherwise, the journalist will miss the first valuable minutes of your pitch in trying to figure out who you are, and will be irritated. However, if you've gotten to know them, be a little more relaxed, particularly with your tone of voice. In turn the journalist will end up being more relaxed with you, which could improve your chances of getting published.
