

## 10 Great Ways to Make Friends with the Media

Although traditional media outlets continue to shrink, coverage in such outlets is still an important part of any marketing campaign.

Generating publicity coverage requires creativity, grunt work and dogged determination. Most importantly, it requires learning to “work and play well” with the media, meaning journalists, reporters, editors, producers and bloggers.

Fortunately, a lot of dealing with these professionals is just common sense. Think about how you like to be treated and treat them the same way.

Specifically, here are 10 techniques that can help you make friends with the media. Get a PDF version of this information [here](#).

### **Do your homework.**



Before contacting a journalist, make sure you know the following about your product or service, market, and the person you’re contacting.

Your product or service

- Its purpose” — the “pain” it stops or the “gain” it provides
- Its features and benefits
- Its major differentiators
- Its target customers

The market for your product or service

- Its size and growth rate
- Its issues and trends
- The competition (Hint: the main competition might be the status quo.)

The target media outlet

- The types of stories it covers
- Its target audience
- Its frequency (both online and in hard copy, if appropriate)
- Its tone (e.g., serious, lighthearted)

The journalists covering your industry

- Their names and titles
- Their beats and typical topics
- Their familiarity with your industry and company
- Their contact preferences

Once you have this information, you are ready to go to the next steps.

### **Remember the 80/20 rule.**

Eighty percent of your coverage will come from 20 percent of the journalists. Decide which ones are most important to you and pay close attention to them.

Comment on their articles, blogs and reports even when you are not pitching a story. Respond to their tweets. Retweet them. Follow them on Facebook and LinkedIn. Send them information, story ideas or other resources even if the material is not connected with your company or product.

These are great ways to both introduce yourself, and make friends before you need them.

## **Develop your pitch carefully.**



Fine-tune your pitch. Make it clear why readers or viewers would care about the subject. Identify the conflict, the controversy, the human interest. Tell a story. Show how your product or service can help people improve their health, make better investments or save time. Don't just list features and benefits.

As part of this process, explain how your pitch or story fits into a bigger picture. "Here is what is happening in the industry. Here are the major trends. The major players." You'll save the journalist time and effort, and position yourself as a good information source.

## **Make the journalist's job easy.**

Do a lot of the journalists' work for them. If appropriate, have statistics available. Be ready to identify industry "influencers" and other gurus who might provide context and insights.

Prepare visuals, including video if your story warrants. (See upcoming tip.)

Train your spokespeople and make them available. Depending on your industry and the news, your spokespeople could include corporate executives, customers, industry analysts, salespeople and other knowledgeable resources.

## **Don't waste the journalist's time.**



Make it easy for the journalists to “get” why you’re contacting them.

When emailing, put your topic in the subject line. If your company is not well-known, use a generic phrase rather than the company name.

Before phoning, get your pitch down to about 20 seconds or 20 words. That’s about all the time you’ll have. Practice your pitch out loud, and stand and smile when talking. It helps.

After giving your pitch, ask the journalists if they would like more information. If so, get it to them quickly. (Note: This scenario suggests you actually reach the person. That’s more and more unusual. However, you can leave voicemail messages.)

Of course, if you’re tweeting your pitch, you are already constrained to 280 characters (Twitter’s new character count), so brevity is a given.

### **Contact the media the way they want to be contacted.**

PR resources such as Cision and MyMediaInfo provide professional PR consultants information on the media’s contact preferences. However, these resources are expensive.

If you don’t know how the journalists want to be contacted, email them. That’s the safest place to start. Also check whether the outlet has an online form to submit tips and story ideas. If so use that first, and email later if you don’t get a response.

Once you connect, ask the journalists how they want to be contacted. They'll appreciate the fact that you ask.

### **Media train your spokespeople.**



Few people are naturally good at interviews and almost everyone needs some training. Contract with an experienced PR professional to provide that training. Run through any presentations or demos, and do some practice interviews. Review any questions you think the media might ask. Preferably videotape the practices for later reference.

Do not skip or skimp on media training. It is essential.

### **Be persistent.**

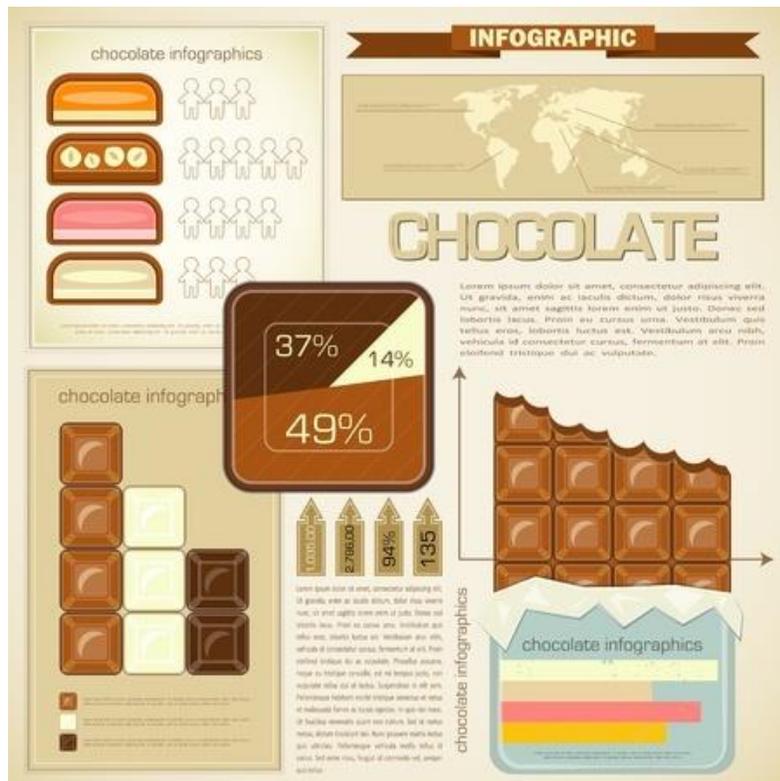
Frankly it is rare for journalists to respond to pitches. However, if you have a good story, don't let that hold you back. The trick is managing that delicate balance between being persistent and being a pest.

In general, assume you will have to contact a journalist at least six times to get his or her attention. Here's a typical scenario if I'm pitching a good story

- Day 1: Send an email.

- Day 2-3: If there is no response, phone and leave a message.
- Day 4-5: If there is still no response, phone again (multiple times if needed) and don't leave a message.
- Day 6-7: Send another email.
- Day 8-9: Phone again and leave a message.
- Day 10-11: Send a final email and phone one last time.

**Provide good visuals.**



Only a few years ago, words were the king and queen of publicity. Not anymore. Today visual content is at least as important—and probably more important—than words. Many websites now are basically visuals with long photo captions.

It makes sense. Studies show that visuals increase comprehension and attention. According to the Visual Teaching Alliance, our eyes can register 36,000 visual messages per hour; 90 percent of information transmitted to the brain is visual; and the brain processes visuals 60,000 times faster than it processes text.

The upshot is that good visuals dramatically increase your chance of grabbing a person's attention in the first place, and of increasing comprehension and retention thereafter. So make visuals a top priority.

### **Be honest.**

This should go without saying, but never lie or misrepresent the facts. Outside of any moral and ethical considerations, honesty is good business. If you lie, chances are good you will be found out and you will never regain the trust of those journalists again.

As stated earlier, the nice thing about dealing with journalists is that a lot of it is just common sense. Follow these guidelines and make friends with the people who can make a big difference to your publicity success.

Learn more about public relations, content marketing and other marketing and communications topics at [www.communicationsplus.net](http://www.communicationsplus.net). And sign up to be notified about new information about content marketing and related topics (bottom of the page).

### **About the Author**



Kay Paumier works with B2B companies to get the word out and get the leads in through content marketing, public relations and other marketing services. She has a long track record of helping companies be more successful by increasing awareness of their products and services. Her clients praise her ability to grasp the big picture, deal with the details, and do everything in between. More information is available at [www.communicationsplus.net/about](http://www.communicationsplus.net/about).