

## 9 Tips to Effectively Pitch Trade Publications

As many marketers know, having your company, product or executive appear in an appropriate trade publication is great marketing. Not only do you reach the publication's audience directly, you can also point your prospects to the piece or make use of reprints or Web links. Media coverage means legitimacy.

For many years I had been on the pitching side of making news, responsible for reaching out to the media to convince them to notice my organization, product or idea. In the process I have drafted hundreds of press releases and created too many email queries to count. I thought I had the game down pat. Until I started to write magazine articles regularly, that is.

The sad news is the vast majority of people don't play the game correctly. I cringe when I think back to some of my own wicked blunders. The good news is I'll tell you a few tips so you can be more successful.

-- Hint: tip #9 is the most important.

By the way, the so-called experts - PR Agencies - are the worst offenders. If you use an agency, pass this paper on to them.

### **TIP #1 > Shotgun approaches can do more harm than good.**

Journalists hate getting junk in their in-box as much as anyone. When email queries come in for companies and products unrelated to what I cover, all it does is harm the reputation of the sender. Unfortunately, some PR people send an untargeted press release or query to hundreds or thousands of reporters at a time. Today, for example, I got a press release on money laundering in Europe. Nice release, but I don't cover it.

### **TIP #2 > Target your pitch to a specific publication. Better yet, target an individual journalist.**

Taking the time to read a publication and then crafting a unique pitch to a particular journalist can work wonders. Mention a specific article they wrote and then explain why your company or product would be interesting for the journalist to look at. Make certain the subject line of the email is targeted so the note gets opened. Recently I got a perfectly positioned pitch for something I was working on and I called the PR person back within minutes to set up an interview.

### **TIP #3 > Send email as plain text with no attachments.**

These days, it is a rare journalist indeed who opens an email attachment they don't expect - even from companies they recognize. Yet many people still send press releases out as email attachments. Don't. Send plain text emails. If you're asked for other information, you can send as

attachments, but clearly reference in the email what you're sending and why so the journalist remembers asking for it.

**TIP #4 > Use email subject lines that make sense.**

Subject lines should, in fact, contain some reference to the subject of your PR or marketing email. If it contains a story pitch, how about saying something like "Story Pitch on Web site Content." If it contains a press release, how about "Press Release: Our Company Releases [insert description here]." Many PR pitches look like spam because of the convoluted subject lines and I often delete legitimate pitches thinking it was spam.

**TIP #5 > Help the journalist to understand the big picture.**

Often it's difficult to understand how some widget actually fits in, particularly with B2B offerings. You make a journalist's job much easier if you describe the big picture trends of why this particular thing is interesting. Often this helps attach a mention of your product or company in wider trend pieces or columns the journalist might be writing in the future.

**TIP #6 > Explain how customers use your product with case studies.**

It's OK to know how a vendor claims a product works. But it's much better to hear about a product in action from someone who uses it. If you can set up interviews with customers or provide written case studies of your product in action, it will be much easier to understand.

**TIP #7 > Lose the gobbledygook.**

I receive several dozen press releases in an average week from companies that want me to write about them in a magazine article, upcoming book, or my blog. I'm interested in what companies are up to, but I'm just too busy to decipher press release gobbledygook. I normally give a press release ten seconds to catch my attention, but the surest way to get me to delete a release in frustration is to write in a way that I just can't understand.

**TIP #8 > Follow through promptly.**

Recently I agreed to an interview with a senior executive at a large company which was set up by an eager PR person. We agreed on date and time. But I never got the promised follow-up information via email, which was supposed to include the telephone number to reach the executive. Duh. The interview didn't happen as planned. Make certain you follow up as promised.

**TIP #9 > Don't forget it's a two-way street – journalists need you to pitch them! They want to know what you have to say.**

Recently, a comment on a new trend by an executive from an information company resulted in a brilliant idea for a magazine column. I was delighted because it made my life easier. Thinking of column subjects is hard work and I need all the help I can get. The executive's company fit in perfectly with the column idea and his product will be used as the example of the trend he told me about. Without the conversation, the column would never have been written. We need those ideas to do our job. Please.