

Want to Send a Press Release?

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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5 Tips to Ensure Yours is Effective

Entrepreneurs and businesses, interest clubs and civic groups, authors and even proud parents – they all have a message they want the press to help share. They may be interested in contributing an article or column. They may have a great story they'd like a reporter to tell. Or, they have a product or book that can help readers solve their problems.

As media outlets devoted to providing news and information to their readers, the press -- newspapers, magazines and their online counterparts -- want to help! But, too often, the people interested in getting print coverage thwart their own efforts by making simple mistakes.

Here are some things to consider before sending that email:

• Pay attention to deadlines: Newspapers are generally daily or weekly; magazines may publish weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually. Both plan their feature content ahead of time. For papers that may be from a few days to two or three weeks ahead of publication. Magazines may be working on their May issue in February. Either way, working in advance is vital. If you're hoping to time your story idea or article to coincide with a season or special event, consider when you'd like to see it published and work backward from that date. It also helps to comb the publication's website for information on deadlines and policies regarding unsolicited material.

• Read the publication: Once you understand what sort of

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content the publication uses, in what format and in which sections, you can tailor and target your pitch. Say you, as the owner of a children's art gallery, want to provide back-to-school tips for helping inspire creativity. You can A) Send an article full of tips to the main editor listed on the website, or B) Read a few issues of the newspaper or magazine and find out if and when it publishes a parenting page or an arts page, and who the editor is. (You can also see if it uses a question-and-answer format, bulleted tips, or longer articles.)

- Pay attention to the news: Knowing today's issues, trends and breaking news can help you make your pitch timely and current? Most publications look for a "news hook" – a way to give a piece context because it relates to something happening now. There have been lots of news features on the Mormon religion, for instance, since Mitt Romney began campaigning for the GOP presidential nomination. Romney being Mormon gives publications a reason to write about that religion. He's a great news hook. Does your business offer solutions for people to help beat the recession? If it's in the news and you can speak to it, don't hesitate to get your pitch together and send it off today.
- Be concise: Often, a few sentences describing your story angle and how it relates to a timely topic is enough. Avoid burying the important information in a long narrative or in glowing paragraphs about how wonderful your idea, product, book or company is. Instead, present the information in a way that respects your contact's time. Brief is best.
- Make the important information easy to find: If editors have to search for dates, your contact information, or local relevance, they may give up – even if they're initially interested in your pitch. Think of the information you would need if you were considering writing a story or publishing what has been provided. The vital information should be present and clearly visible.

Even if you don't make these common mistakes, catching the interest of an editor can be difficult. Remember to paste your pitch into the body of your email – don't send it as an attachment, which may get it flagged as junk mail. Follow up with a polite phone call ("Just wanted to make sure you received my email regarding an article I can write for you"). Getting print coverage is possible, so don't give up!

About Marsha Friedman

Marsha Friedman is a 22-year veteran of the public relations industry. She is the CEO of EMSI Public Relations (www.emsincorporated.com), a national firm that provides PR strategy and publicity services to corporations, entertainers, authors and professional firms. Marsha is the author of *Celebritize Yourself: The 3-Step Method to Increase Your Visibility and Explode Your Business* and she can also be heard weekly on her Blog Talk Radio Show, EMSI's PR Insider every Thursday at 3:00 PM EST.