

MUCK RACK



A GUIDE TO PITCHING
JOURNALISTS AND GETTING
MEDIA ATTENTION FOR YOUR
COMPANY OR CLIENT

HOW TO CRAFT A WINNING PR PITCH



AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONAL, THERE'S NO BETTER FEELING THAN SEEING YOUR COMPANY OR CLIENT FEATURED IN A NEWS STORY.

There's a certain rush that comes when a story graces the pages of a magazine, appears online or lands a coveted TV spot. You've earned a media placement you know will impact your company's reputation, awareness — and even better — the bottom line.

Here's the good news: from a small mom and pop shop to an emerging startup or a massive international corporation, you have the chance to develop long-lasting relationships with journalists and provide them with ideas to inform their stories and coverage.

Here's the bad news: Journalists are constantly bombarded by emails from PR professionals, [some receiving between 20-30 cold pitches per day](#). And, there's a general consensus among reporters that most — nearly 95 percent — of these pitches are flops.

Yikes!



Although these numbers may feel disheartening, it isn't shocking as [PR professionals outnumber journalists five to one](#).

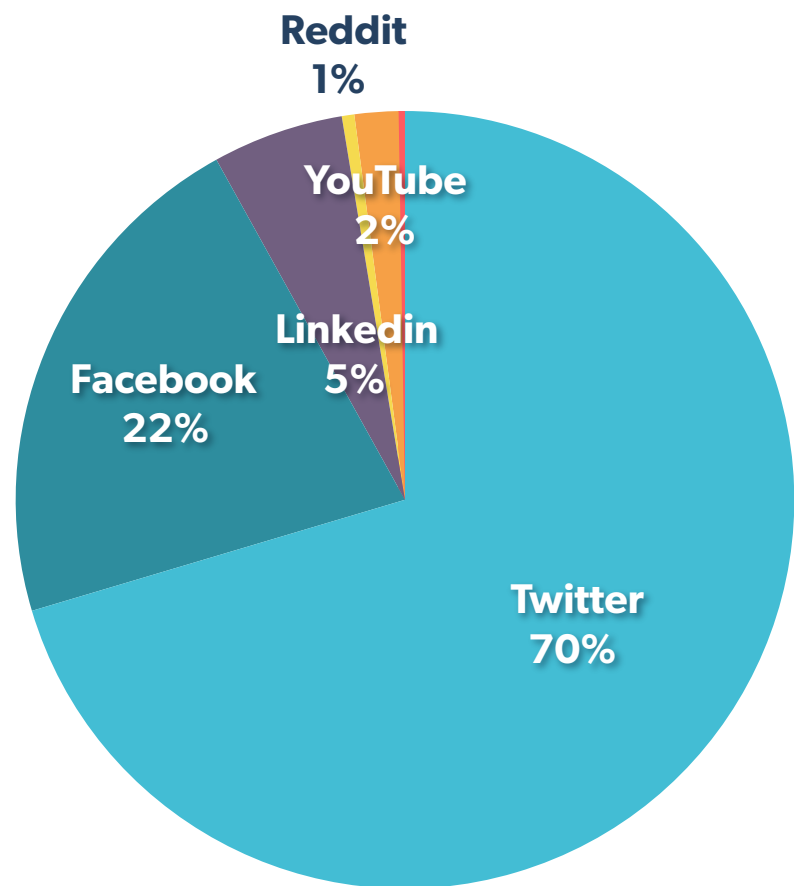
But don't be discouraged! Real relationship building is possible and we can help your pitches stand out from the crowd.

HERE'S WHAT JOURNALISTS REALLY THINK

WHICH SOCIAL NETWORK IS MOST VALUABLE TO YOU AS A JOURNALIST?

According to **Muck Rack's 2017 journalist survey**:

- The best time to pitch a journalist is between 9 and 11 a.m.
- 86% of journalists like when PR pros follow them on social media
- 22% of journalists cited lack of personalization as the main reason they reject otherwise relevant pitches
- 72% of journalists wish PR pros would stop calling them to pitch story ideas
- 78% of journalist don't like pitches with emojis
- 70% of journalists said they saw Twitter as their most valuable social network
- 72% of journalists track how many times their own stories are shared on social media
- 0% of those surveyed said they valued Snapchat as a news tool
- 72% of journalists are optimistic about the journalism profession





PITCHING 101

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE HITTING SEND

Journalists report only a mere *five percent* success rate in pitches received, so how do you write a pitch capable of avoiding the trash?

Ask yourself the following five questions before hitting send on your pitch.

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE HITTING SEND

1. IS MY PITCH ACTUALLY A STORY?

While this may be surprising to you or your client, the brand or product you're pitching is not interesting on its own. (Sorry!)

That's why it's necessary to get creative when crafting a pitch worthy of a journalist's time and attention.

It starts with finding a human interest angle — people relate to good stories.

Weave whatever it is you're trying to promote, whether it's your company, product or service, into part of a broader, more captivating story to gain the reporter's interest.

Even further, consider how this broader story will look and feel to that reporter and more importantly, their audience. How will it be received? What sort of story will that journalist create based on the information provided?

Spending the time up front will pay out big time later.

Example: Say you're the PR person for a hotel hoping for coverage of the property's 25th anniversary. Instead of pitching the anniversary angle to a journalist, dig deeper. What if instead you pitched the story of the bellhop who has worked at the hotel since the day the doors opened? Offer up an interview with this individual. Now you have an interesting story *and* you've driven home your key message that the hotel is celebrating 25 years. Boom!

2. IS MY PITCH TIMELY, UNIQUE AND RELEVANT? HAVE I EXPLAINED WHY CLEARLY?

It's not enough to create a compelling story in a vacuum. When drafting your pitch, be sure to also consider what is going on in the world around you.

Make sure your story is:

- **Timely:** Does your story connect to a news-y or trending topic?
- **Unique:** Is your story actually interesting? Has it been told a million times before?
- **Relevant:** Is this topic important to the journalist and their audience? Does it solve a problem or offer a potential solution?

In your pitch, tell the journalist why they (and their audience) should care about the story you're pitching. Make that important connection, and you'll be well on your way.

Example: Say you're the communications professional for a historic site hosting a naturalization ceremony to swear in new citizens to the United States. Currently, immigration is a hotly-debated topic, so instead of simply pitching the ceremony, address the controversy! Offer up an expert from the historic site to comment on why it's important to welcome new citizens to the country, despite what's going on in the world around us. Now you have yourself a timely story!

PITCHING 101

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE HITTING SEND

3. IS MY PITCH COMPLETE?

You've spent a lot of time putting together a great story idea and you've done your homework to know it will be well received, but your work doesn't stop there.

You need to ensure your pitch is complete.

While we recommend pitches be concise, you also want to offer up enough information to gain the interest of a reporter.

Consider including a link to a DropBox or Google Drive folder of supporting images, graphs, documents, etc. You can also choose to hold off until the reporter replies to offer up images and more information to send further assets.

Be sure to explain the best way to reach you to set up an interview with a spokesperson.

You want to start the conversation, and pique a journalist's interest just enough to warrant a reply so that your email can get the ball rolling.

4. HAVE I PROOFREAD MY PITCH?

This might seem like a no-brainer, but it's an important step in the pitch writing process that many PR pros tend to skip.

Consider this: If this email pitch is your brand's first impression on a journalist, you have to make it a good one. One of the quickest ways to turn off a trained journalist is with a poorly written pitch or introductory email riddled with typos.

Find a second set of eyes to look over your work before sending, whether it's your client, a colleague or a friend. They'll help you find errors you may have missed otherwise and save face with the reporter later.

5. AM I SENDING MY PITCH TO THE RIGHT REPORTER(S)?

How can you be sure your pitch will interest the reporter(s) you email? Do your homework!

Would you want to send your story on a hot new tech tool that's going to be a game-changer for financial analysts to a travel writer?

(The answer is no, people!)

Read a reporter's previous articles thoroughly to see their point of view, understand their writing style and see how they communicate with their audience.

Finding the right journalists to pitch can be a challenge, so let's dive a little deeper.



HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT JOURNALISTS TO PITCH

PICTURE THIS:

You've spent hours of your day (possibly longer) gathering quotes from sources, crafting a compelling pitch and triple checking your email for errors.

Your pitch is finally reporter-ready!



Before hitting send, pause and think about the best recipient for your story idea. Journalists can easily tell when a pitch isn't personalized and is sent to multiple people.

How can you be sure your amazing pitch won't fall on deaf ears?

HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT JOURNALISTS TO PITCH

YOU HAVE TO DO YOUR RESEARCH.

For PR pros, homework is a career-long journey.

You may remember this tip from PR 101, but a good PR pro is often a news hound.

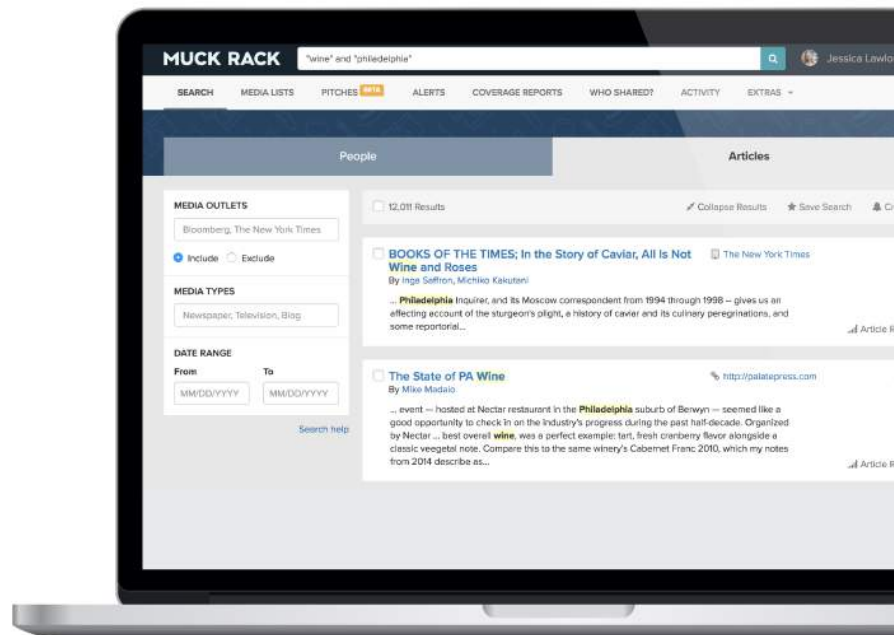
You should be consuming as much news you can get your hands on. Not only will this help you develop a better ear for newsworthy story ideas, it also helps you become familiar with journalists in your niche or industry.

TOOLS LIKE MUCK RACK MAKE SORTING AND FINDING THE RIGHT JOURNALIST TO PITCH SIMPLE.

Here's an example. Let's say you're the PR representative for a winery near Philadelphia. You want to share the news about a brand new wine launching this season, but you're not sure who this story might interest.

Using Muck Rack, search key terms like "wine" and "Philadelphia." That search brings up two different forms of results. The first is people, and the results include journalists who have both keywords in their titles, Twitter bio or recent tweets. Directly from this page, you can add a journalist to your media list!

The second form of results is articles, and has recent articles featuring your keywords.



Search by key terms to quickly and easily find the *right* journalists

Bingo! You now have a highly-relevant list of journalists to browse (you still gotta do that homework!) and articles to peruse to help you get closer to your target reporter.

You can easily add these journalists to a media list to save your work, continue organizing key contacts and ensure your data is fresh.

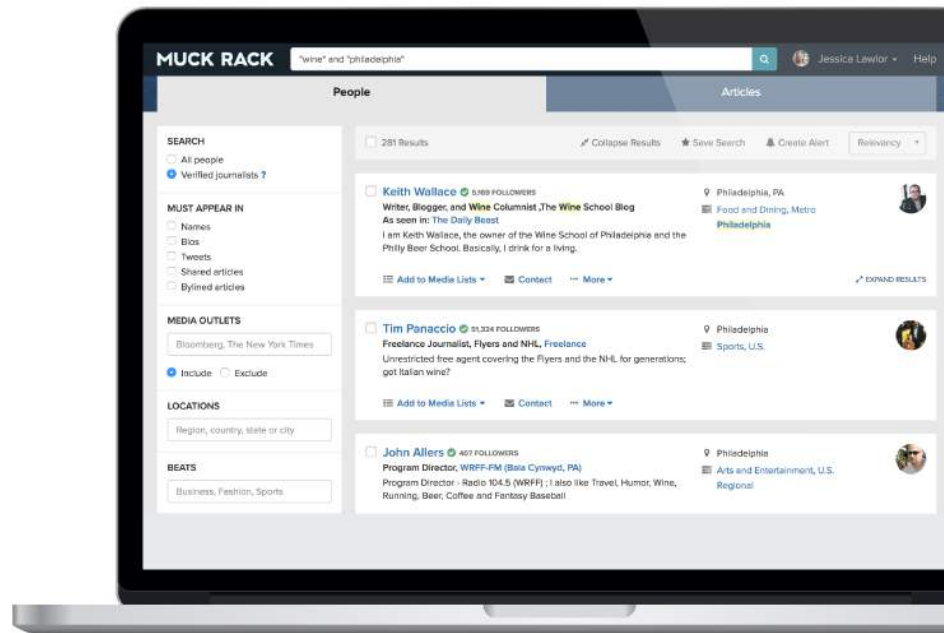
HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT JOURNALISTS TO PITCH

CASE STUDY:

Here's a story from Lauren Stralo, Media Relations Specialist at Lehigh University, about how she uses Muck Rack to find the right reporters to pitch:

I use Muck Rack's search feature to find those reporters covering the beats I'm pitching.

For example, after identifying the correct reporter for a possible story at the New York Times, I sent off my pitch. He responded, "Fascinating. Can't get to this idea now, but please send me more in the future." It wasn't a media hit, but thanks to Muck Rack, I know I pitched the right person and now I know who to pitch in the future. And he knows that when I do, he can open up my email and be assured that I'm not sending him an email that will waste his time.



Worry not...If you don't have access to a tool or platform like Muck Rack, your job becomes more challenging, but not impossible.

You can use Google, Google News and Twitter to narrow down the field. You'll have to do more sifting and reading, but can often achieve similar results, though it will take you more time.

Search for journalists covering the beats you're pitching



PITCHING DO'S AND DON'TS

Now that we've covered the pitching basics,
here are some important do's and don'ts.

PITCHING DO'S AND DON'TS

1. DON'T SEND OUT A MASS PITCH.

The days of sending out blanket emails are over, and this lazy approach will not garner the results you want. Journalists know when your pitch isn't targeted, and you'll quickly burn your relationship before it starts.

Take the extra time and effort to personalize each pitch with the journalist's name and perhaps a reference to a recent story they've written — it'll be worth it when you get a response.



2. DO MAKE A PERSONAL CONNECTION.

With the help of Muck Rack, you've already found the right journalists and read through their recent work. Muck Rack journalist profiles pull in the reporter's Twitter feed and allow you to search for any company or keyword that appears in their tweets or recent articles.

Use that knowledge to make a personal connection with the reporter in your pitch.

3. DO KEEP YOUR PITCH SHORT.

Journalists are busy. They don't have all day to spend in their inboxes reviewing long press releases or opening attachments.

Start with an email, and keep your pitch short and sweet. We recommend 2-3 short paragraphs.

4. DON'T PITCH SOMETHING THAT ISN'T ACTUALLY NEWS.

Journalists don't like that, and they will call you out on Twitter.



PITCHING DO'S AND DON'TS

5. DON'T FOLLOW UP RIGHT AWAY (BUT DO FOLLOW UP EVENTUALLY).

Respect a reporter's time and right to decide if they are interested in covering the story or not.

Give them a few days to review the pitch, and then follow up via email.

If you don't hear from them after a follow-up, assume they aren't interested in what you're offering at this time.

6. DON'T CALL A REPORTER.

We know the phone pitch is a highly-debated topic among PR pros.

However, our recent survey found that 72% of journalists wish PR pros would stop calling them to pitch story ideas.

If you do choose to call a reporter, be sure to ask "Is now a good time?" before launching into your pitch.

You never know when a reporter may be on deadline, or if you're interrupting a personal event.

7. DON'T PITCH A REPORTER ON TWITTER (WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS).

Think of Twitter as a place to build relationships, but most of the time, it's not a good idea to tweet your pitch directly to the journalist.

Some exceptions include:

- If a journalist asks for pitches through Twitter in their Twitter bio.
- You have a super strong relationship already, regularly chat on Twitter and know they are open to sharing story ideas on the platform.

If you do choose to pitch a reporter on Twitter, don't pitch multiple reporters at the same time.

Tweets are public, and it's easy to see if you're pitching dozens of reporters using the same or a similar tweet.

8. DO THANK A REPORTER BY SHARING THEIR STORY AFTER IT GOES LIVE.

Hooray! Your pitch was accepted and a story featuring your company or client was published.

Be sure to thank the reporter you worked with, but better yet, share their story online! A share goes a long way, especially in a world where more and more reporters are being evaluated based on the success of their stories.

Tweet it, post it on your company's Facebook, share it on LinkedIn, email it to your stakeholders...the list goes on!

Muck Rack's [Who Shared My Link tool](#) can give you data to see how widely your story was shared.

**CURIOS TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT USING MUCK RACK TO
CRAFT A WINNING PR PITCH?**

**WE'D LOVE TO TELL YOU MORE.
VISIT MUCKRACK.COM TO GET STARTED.**

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