

PITCHING CHECKLIST



TIMING

Do a mental check before contacting a journalist - is this the best moment to approach them? Are they away? On a shoot? About to go into conference? Check their Instagram and Twitter account; it will tell you a lot about their whereabouts. A newspaper journalist is likely to have a morning conference (daily planning meeting) to establish the next day's issue, which they will be executing until the paper goes to bed at 4ish.

“ EVERY PAPER RUNS TO DIFFERENT TIMINGS. ”

Every paper runs to different timings, but as a rule of thumb, a journalist is best contacted before 10 am and after 4 pm. A notable exception is the Evening Standard - best to contact them before 8.30 am and after 2.30 pm.

PERSONALISATION

- Don't send out a blanket release to 100 contacts, they'll just press delete as you haven't tailored anything specifically for them - we all like to feel loved.

“ CONTACT ONE JOURNALIST WITH ONE STRONG STORY. ”

- Contact one journalist with one strong story. They'll appreciate it and will be more inclined to work with you again.



“ MAKE IT IMMEDIATELY APPARENT TO A JOURNALIST IF/WHEN YOU ARE OFFERING AN EXCLUSIVE ON A STRONG STORY. ”



RESEARCH

There is nothing more hateful to a journalist than PRs who haven't read their publication. If you're about to contact a journalist, take a moment to read and digest the latest edition of their title along with their recent articles.

The journalist will be pleasantly surprised that you've taken the trouble and you'd be amazed how many PRs don't follow this practise.

“ THERE IS NOTHING MORE HATEFUL TO A JOURNALIST THAN PRS WHO HAVEN'T READ THEIR PUBLICATION. ”

EXCLUSIVES

Make it immediately apparent to a journalist when/if you are offering an exclusive to a strong story. You'll get their attention and they are more likely to absorb your pitch.

V.I.P
PASS

TAKE AN INTEREST

We're all a bit needy. If you take an interest in a journalist and learn over time that they have two kids who love judo, ask them how the judo is going. Everyone loves to talk about their kids and the journalist will feel less exploited.

“ DON'T RELY ON A PRESS RELEASE TO DO THE WORK ”

GET YOUR FACTS STRAIGHT

If you are sloppy with facts, you will incur the wrath of both the journalist and your client. Double-check facts - it's a vital modus operandi for every story you pitch throughout your career.

BE DISCERNING

Work out exactly what you're going to pitch and picture who this would be relevant for. Specific stories suit specific journalists and there's nothing more satisfying than matching the two.

“ SPECIFIC STORIES SUIT SPECIFIC JOURNALISTS. ”



BE EFFICIENT

If a journalist responds positively to your pitch, respond speedily. Lose momentum and you risk losing the story. Every (decent) journalist is on a deadline, so if you help them to deliver something quickly and efficiently, you won't be forgotten.

“ LOSE MOMENTUM... RISK LOSING THE STORY. ”



PRESS RELEASES

Don't rely on a press release to do the work - releases just offer background information. Most journalists assume you've sent that same release to dozens of other contacts. Certainly attach the release - or embed it in the body of the email - but inform that journalist of why you think that story is relevant for them.