



14 Ways to Make (or Break) Relationships with Journalists

All relationships take work, but some take more work than others. Consider, for example, the relationship between PR professionals and journalists. Between juggling multiple beats and working amid tight deadlines, journalists don't have time to give every PR pro the attention they're hoping for - which is why building solid working relationships is so critical.

Fortunately, we have the inside scoop on what it takes to do exactly that. We gathered data from our most recent [State of the Media report](#) to take you inside the mind of the media - from what they want from PR pros to their biggest pet peeves and ultimate deal breakers.

Use the lessons in this guide to help you understand the other side and navigate your most important media relationships.

3 Factors Affecting the Relationship Between Journalists and PR Pros

Before we get into our tips for working with journalists, it might help to understand where they are coming from first (lest you start to think you're the one doing all the work in the relationship). Consider the following factors that are having a direct impact on how journalists work with PR pros.

1. **Journalists are stretched a mile wide.** Shrinking newsrooms have reporters juggling multiple beats with demanding workloads and pressing deadlines. Almost half of journalists (47%) cover five or more beats, and nearly the same amount file seven or more stories per week. Their busy schedules don't leave much time to follow up with PR professionals – much less build relationships with them.



2. **Journalists are inundated with email.** More than half of journalists (53%) say they get over 50 pitches a week, and 28% receive over 100. The worst part? The vast majority of those pitches are completely wrong for their audience or the topics they cover. All the noise has made it harder for PR pros to capture the attention of journalists, who're growing sick and tired of getting drowned in pitches.



3. **Journalists are minding the metrics.** The pressure to prove their impact that PR pros know so well? Journalists feel it, too. Four in five journalists agree that the availability of detailed audience metrics (views, engagement, demographics) has changed the way they evaluate stories. Many are focusing on stories that will generate the most traffic and shares across social media and other distribution channels in an effort to draw the almighty advertising dollar (and job security). If PR pros aren't mindful of this (and doing what they can to help), journalists might not be willing to pay them any mind.



7 Ways to Win the Attention (and Favor) of Journalists

Now that you understand the obstacles getting in the way of building relationships with journalists, let's look at the ways to overcome them. We've spoken with journalists across the world to understand how PR pros can get "in" with journalists and build relationships that will benefit both sides for years to come.

1. **Do your homework.** One of journalists' pet peeves is getting pitches that have nothing to do with their audience, outlet or beat. And they get a lot of them (as noted above). Before you reach out to journalists with a pitch, channel your inner armchair detective and do some research to learn more about them, the types of stories they cover and their audience. Then ask yourself, "Would they care about this?" If the answer is no, move on.
2. **Be a trendspotter.** As mentioned above, journalists are looking for stories that speak to what's happening in the world right now, so the better you are at delivering stories with timely narratives, the more of an asset you will be. Setting up news alerts to understand the day's hottest trends and topics is a good start. Working with media monitoring and social listening tools to stay ahead of those topics – and be able to spot emerging trends – is an excellent next step.
3. **Time it right.** Be aware of when journalists are most amenable to receive pitches. The majority (60%) prefer Mondays, while Tuesday is also good for 43%. A significant number, however, prefer pitches on Friday (28%) or over the weekend, likely for weekend coverage or to plan for the week ahead.
4. **Give them time before following up.** One of journalists' biggest turnoffs is PR pros who repeatedly and relentlessly follow up. Nearly 3 in 10 journalists say they never want follow up at all, while many want at least two days to look over a pitch first. If you're going to follow up, try to do so between 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., as the majority of journalists prefer.



5. **Let them in on the plan.** Do you already know the stories you plan to pitch in the near future? Don't be afraid to share them. Thirty-five percent of journalists say that one of the best ways to help them out is to provide them with a list of stories you plan to pitch in advance. This helps them anticipate what's coming, plan ahead and better manage their already-packed schedules (and stress levels).



6. **Get graphic.** Including photos, a video or other visuals with your press release can win you major points with journalists, who are hungry for multimedia elements that help bring their stories to life and drive engagement (a.k.a. those much-needed numbers to prove their ROI). In 2020 alone, the overwhelming majority of journalists (80%) included images with their pieces, followed by videos (45%), infographics (43%) and social media posts (39%). And if that's not enough evidence that you should include multimedia content in your press releases, 1 in 5 journalists (22%) explicitly said they wish PR pros would do so.



7. **Give them what they want (what they really, really want).** Again, journalists are under tight deadlines, so they don't have the time (or patience) to chase down critical details. By giving them all the information they need up front (insightful data, relevant quotes, accompanying images), you're not only saving them time, you're giving them fewer hoops to jump through, making them more likely to cover your story. It will also put you in their good graces for future interactions. A win-win.



Bottom line: The easier you make it for journalists to do their jobs, the more it will pay off for you.

What kind of content do journalists want to see from brands and PR professionals?*



*Cision's 2021 State of the Media Report

7 Journalist Relationship Deal-Breakers

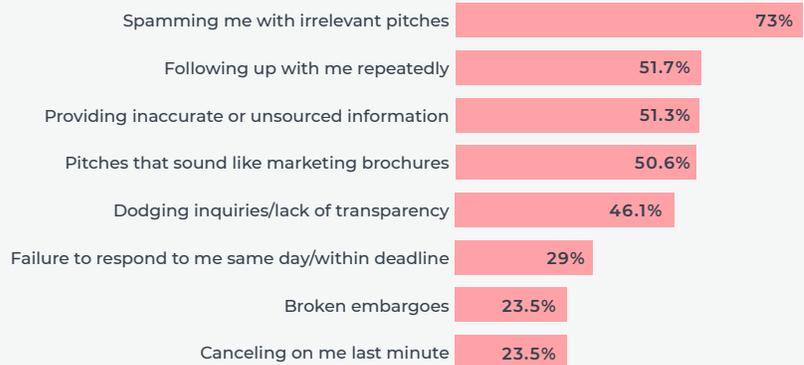
Building relationships with journalists is hard. Ending those relationships before they even begin is (unfortunately) far too easy. Avoid the following faux pas that journalists say will have them think twice before working with you again – and maybe just block you from their inboxes forever.

1. **Pitching apples to journalists who cover oranges.** The overwhelming majority of journalists (73%) won't hesitate to block a PR pro who "spams" them with irrelevant pitches.
2. **Following up.** Again. And again. While journalists' follow-up preferences vary widely, most agree that a PR pro who follows up repeatedly is the WORST.
3. **Providing information that is suspect.** More than half of journalists agree that providing inaccurate or unsourced information is an unforgivable offense.
4. **Sounding like a marketing brochure.** If your pitches read more like "As Seen on TV" scripts than an actual human being, 1 in 2 journalists aren't going to buy what you're selling – ever again.
5. **Gaslighting (or simply disappearing).** If you dodge inquiries or aren't transparent, you risk damaging your trustworthiness as a source and increase the likelihood that journalists will ghost you later on.
6. **Taking your sweet time to respond.** Most journalists are under tight deadlines to finish their stories. A PR pro who doesn't respect that and isn't around to provide needed details is not a PR pro journalists want to work with.
7. **Flaking.** Journalists need a PR partner they can count on, so cancelling on an interview at the last minute or breaking an embargo is enough for 1 in 4 journalists to say, "See you never!"



When asked what would make them block a PR person or put them on their “don’t call” list, journalists cited the following:

*Cision’s 2021 State of the Media Report



Find out how Cision makes it easy to adhere to the guidance above and help reporters help you. Our solutions enable you to identify the right journalists to pitch for your story, create more relevant and personalized outreach, and understand the messages that will make the biggest impact.

About Cision

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