



CISION®

COVID-19
PITCHING KIT

“

[The novel] coronavirus pandemic has changed every aspect of life, so stories that were previously in the works are on hold. Until we're past the crisis, pitches related to the pandemic and its effects are most relevant.

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We are in uncertain times, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact everyone's lives. That being said, stories still need to be told and PR pros and journalists need to maintain their relationships. The challenge is clear: How do you tactfully and empathetically continue the pitching process during this crisis?

We've put together this pitch kit to help you navigate this challenge. We asked journalists across various industries and geographical locations how COVID-19 has impacted pitching and how PR pros can put their best foot forward on the uncertain path ahead. Certain themes emerged: stick to email outreach, make sure your pitches are reflecting a local angle, understand the journalist's coverage area, and be patient with journalists. Most importantly, look for positive and human stories to tell.

For this special report we asked journalists three questions:

- *What types of stories are you looking for?*
- *How has the pandemic affected your pitching preferences?*
- *And how can PR pros be most helpful right now?*

Let's dive into their responses.



How has the pandemic impacted your pitching preferences?

“There is no such thing as a good time. Short and sweet and earlier in the day is better, that’s all I can really say.”

“We have started having destinations reach out again to look to the future when people will want to travel again. Planning stages are more of what we are doing right now as we have had destinations connect with us for summer and fall, with the hope that this will end one day soon.”

“Emails – but I’m getting so many mass emails from every company I have ever dealt with that many of them I am deleting without reading. So you might want to be personal and specific.”

“Please be mindful of any pitches that could be tone-deaf or unactionable at a time like this.”

“We’ve transitioned from weekly to nearly 24-7 publishing; first thing in the morning is still preferred.”

It’s a theme we see over and over in our pitching kits: Journalists prefer to receive pitches via email and now is no exception. Make your pitches short and to the point, but also personalized, and limit your follow-up. You must also be careful about sending tone-deaf pitches now more than ever. Be aware of what the reporter is covering and ask: how does this story apply to your target audience?



How can PR pros be most helpful right now?

“Please, please stop pitching if you are not pitching a specific local angle. I have unsubscribed from a huge number of lists because I have been inundated with pitches that I would never cover. No ‘experts,’ no angles that get way ahead of where we’re at today, etc. We are slammed with trying to cover our local market and don’t have capacity to deal with this.”

“Be understanding if we don’t respond to emails but helpful if we do reach out. That would be great!”

“Connect us with the stories of people, the things we are not hearing in the near constant press conferences.”

“Finding local angles to support the COVID-19 stories. Stop pitching things we don’t plan to cover right now like how your client is planning to do things for Mother’s Day. Stale pitches that aren’t in alignment with the current state of affairs are being deleted quickly.”

“Offer experts related to the news of the day. Don’t try to capitalize on the crisis by promoting clients in distasteful ways.”

It’s a chaotic time for everyone but don’t forget the human element. Your relationships with journalists are now more important than ever. Lead in these times with transparent and empathetic communication. Understand that journalists are being hard-pressed in the current situation and are dealing with just as much uncertainty as all of us.



What types of stories are you looking for?

"We're trying to keep it local, but as the web editor, I'd love to see more timely/local stories that are NOT about the virus. Even just one a day would be refreshing."

"How COVID is impacting businesses. How businesses are stepping up to address gaps left by COVID (distance learning, Internet bandwidth, various medtech applications). Also evergreen content - I don't want COVID-related only."

"COVID-19 stories, sure, but also the same stories I always wrote. My editor says readership on normal features is up."

"Mainly COVID-19 related due to the nature of this pandemic, human interest pieces that make things more personal or show people coming together are especially meaningful now."

"Right now we are focused heavily on COVID-19 stories and those that are closely tied to those, including positive stories. We all need positivity in this crisis."

One of the major differences we noticed when it comes to COVID-19 reporting is the focus on local stories. As the response has been slightly different across not only the globe but also in Canada, audiences are looking for the latest news in their area. Additionally, audiences are looking for more positive, human stories in these trying times.

CISION PITCHING KIT METHODOLOGY

The traditional and non-traditional media professionals featured in the Cision Pitching Kits have profiles in the Cision Media Database, and are vetted by the company's media research team to verify their positions as media professionals, influencers and bloggers. These individuals must meet certain additional criteria to be featured: they must cover the specific topic being highlighted in the kit, have given direct consent to be listed in the Media Database and must have been verified by the research team recently. The professionals must also be willing to be included in marketing materials and provide in-depth advice for PR pros.

Are you a member of the media who wants to be featured in the next pitching kit?

FOR MORE ADVICE ON PITCHING,
SEE OUR **2020 STATE OF THE MEDIA** REPORT

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