

# MEDIA PITCHING MANUAL

## FOR PR AND COMMS PROFESSIONALS

A practical guide to working better with the media in 2019

Based on data collected in [Cision's 2019 State of the Media Report](#), we've put together this guide to help PR and communications professionals create better, more successful pitches. PR pros get their stories told and journalists get fewer irrelevant pitches to wade through—it's a win for everyone.

If you're not familiar with Cision's State of the Media Report, every year we talk to journalists around the world to better understand the issues, trends and concerns important to them. This year, we surveyed nearly 2,000 journalists from 10 countries. For PR and communications professionals, this data provides insight into how to establish more productive and effective relationships with their media contacts (and build better pitches).

This pitching manual will help you learn how to make sure your pitch stands out, reaches the right audience, meets a journalist's needs, and generates a response.

We've broken this guide into three basic sections:

**01 Researching  
your audience**

**02 Preparing  
your outreach**

**03 Contacting  
your targets**

Mix and match or skip around to meet your needs. And if you have any questions, you can always reach us on [Twitter @Cision](#).

# 01 Research

## Using data to understand your audience

While journalists face a shortage of resources, they don't face a scarcity of leads. Journalists receive more pitches than ever—some receive 100 or more pitches a week! Unfortunately for journalists, the vast majority of pitches they receive are irrelevant. In fact, 75% of journalists say fewer than a quarter of the pitches they receive are relevant or useful.

This was one of the most common themes in this year's State of the Media survey: **Pitches need to be more relevant.**

This year, survey results suggest that PR pros overlook, ignore, or simply do not understand the target audience of the journalist they're contacting. If there's one thing that PR professionals can do to help journalists do their jobs better, it's to better understand a publication's audience and what they find interesting.

When asked how PR professionals can write more effective press releases, journalists universally agree that press releases should include more information that is relevant to their target audience. Today's media environment is fragmented, crowded and noisy; it's more important than ever to write for the end consumer. Content should be tailored for individual target audiences.

Find the right reporters for the audience you want to speak to and make it easy for them to write the story. The extra time you spend researching your audience, the publications they read, and the reporters who wrote for those outlets will be entirely worth it. Spend time on Twitter and LinkedIn to understand what your audience finds interesting, and what journalists talk about on social media. Review everything you can about an outlet before pitching.

**As we found in the 2019 State of the Media Report, relevance and trust are more important than ever.**

75%

of journalists say **fewer than a quarter** of the pitches they receive **are relevant.**

# 02 Prepare

## Press releases

To cultivate a valuable relationship with a journalist, it is important for PR professionals to deliver trustworthy, relevant and useful content. When asked what type of content they want to receive from brands and PR professionals, 73% of journalists said news announcements and press releases (which has been the top answer for the past four years). Invitations to events and original research reports came in close after that.

### What kind of content do you want to receive?

Answer Choices	Global Average
<b>News announcements/press releases</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Invitations to events</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Original research reports</b>	<b>57%</b>
Initial ideas for story development	47%
Invitations to meet spokespeople	36%
Images and logos	35%
Offers of comment on current news	29%
Guest blog posts/byline articles	20%
Content marketing	19%
Video clips/b-roll/live streams	18%
Data-driven predictive insights into the potential performance of a story	16%

**When it comes to which type of branded content journalists trust most, 30% prefer press releases, and 27% rely on spokesperson interviews.**

And for non-branded content, journalists equally trust interviews, industry experts, and newswires (for press release distribution). For more than a century, the press release has proven to be the journalistic staple.

So no matter what, it's still a good idea to prepare and distribute a press release for major news. Don't rely on a press release alone when pitching reporters, but be sure you use a wire service to share important company updates. Make it easy for people to find your news when you have it.

However, when you're preparing a pitch, be sure you customize your press release to your audience. 65% of journalists would rather receive customized press releases segmented by product, industry or theme, than one mass-audience release. Consider segmenting your target audiences into smaller segments and sending more specific pitches to reporters in each segment. This allows you to provide the perfect information for each audience.

## How can press releases be more effective?

Answer Choices	Global Average
<b>Has information that is relevant to my target audience</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>News hook clearly stated</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Avoid industry jargon and marketing language</b>	<b>13%</b>
Content meets editorial standards/free of typos and errors	8%
Add quality quotes and add depth to the story	6%
Include more multimedia elements	5%

## Using multimedia

Journalists tend to publish what they consume—and survey results suggest that's not always video. **Images and useful infographics are journalists' preferred visual media.** Videos are not as important to journalists, and they often don't have a way to publish them. So in many cases, PR professionals may not need to spend the extra time and resources developing video for many media outlets. Instead, focus on high-quality, relevant imagery and creative ways to display data—particularly if you can provide customized data and visualizations for a particular source.

## Which media are most engaging?

Answer Choices	Global Average
<b>Images</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Infographics</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>Personalized data analysis</b>	<b>16%</b>
Videos	13%
Social media posts	11%
User-generated content	8%
Live streams	3%
Web polls	3%
Animated gifs	1%
Quizzes	1%

## Which multimedia have you included?

Answer Choices	Global Average
Images	81%
Videos	50%
Social media posts	48%
Infographics	40%
Web polls	20%
User-generated content	19%
Personalized data analysis	16%
Live streams	13%
Animated gifs	10%
Quizzes	8%

So you've researched and prepared. **Now here's how you should send your pitch.**

## 03 Contact

### Sending your pitch

Journalists today are overworked and overwhelmed. Despite having limited resources, journalists also continue to publish at a very high frequency. When asked how many pieces a week they file, 39% publish fewer than three articles, 25% publish four to seven articles and 36% publish more than seven articles per week.

#### More than 1/3 of journalists globally publish seven or more articles a week.

Many journalists plan their stories in nearly real time; 52% of respondents plan for future stories no more than a day in advance. For PR professionals, this means you need to be ready with all materials and contacts when you pitch a time-sensitive story in case it will be written right away.

Show you value a reporter's time.

- Keep your pitches short and to the point.
- Provide customized info for their audience.
- Help find interesting angles and stories to tell.
- Use your subject line effectively.

Don't follow up too many times. It's okay to reach back out or try one more outreach method, but don't harass your media contacts. Assume that if you've emailed twice about one story, they're probably just not interested.

But don't let that stop you from pitching something relevant to their audience in the future. Just be sure to check first to make sure their audience and/or beat hasn't changed before you reach out again.

## Maintaining contact

You shouldn't just reach out whenever you have a story to pitch; the best PR and communications professionals build real relationships over time with their media contacts. There's no shortcut to building human relationships, just time and effort.

Social media can play a valuable role in this, helping communications pros and journalists stay in touch on-the-go and keep up with each other's changes in job roles, employers, freelance status and more.

You won't have to question if someone's beat or audience has changed—or if they've even changed careers entirely—if you're keeping up with them regularly. You can also promote the other work they're doing to your own network when appropriate, or even help them make other meaningful connections.

## Conclusion

As journalists struggle with resource limitations, PR professionals have been and will continue to be a valuable partner. In 2018, Cision asked respondents how their relationships with PR professionals had changed over the year, and only 9% said their relationships with PR professionals had gotten more valuable. **This year the number jumped to 27%.** Overall, while the journalist to PR professional relationship has improved, there is still plenty of room for more improvement.

Take the time to research, prepare and reach out in the right way and you should see your pitching success rate go up.

**WANT HELP?** Talk to one of our experts today to see how Cision can help with all your pitching and PR needs.

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