



# Pitch Daily

Tips for Gleaning Media Hits

March 2012

## Media Members Tell It Like It Is

*"Know who does what! I am always being pitched by people who have no idea that the print newspaper and the online edition are separately edited."*

**Vlae Kershner, News Director  
San Francisco Chronicle  
SFGate.com**

*"Please, don't tell me your boss told you to approach me."*

**Charlie White  
Senior Editor  
mashable.com**

*"Include quotes in your release from multiple sources within the company and one client or customer, if applicable. The more your release resembles an article, the better chance it has of being published."*

**Jeff Adcock  
Online Service Director  
Exhibit City News**

*"Pick up the phone. The best way to break through email and voice mail barriers is to talk regularly with your media contacts."*

**Gerry Kaufhold  
Principal Analyst  
In-Stat Group**

*"The best journalism-public relations interactions are borne out of establishing relationships."*

**Glenn Proctor  
Former Editor & Reporter  
United Press International  
Richmond Times-Dispatch  
Akron Beckon Journal**

## Media Need You as Much as You Need the Media

By Aleta Walther, PR Writer Pro

No one likes rejection. Perhaps that's why some PR professionals loath pitching the media. Know, however, that many journalists are overworked, overwhelmed and underpaid; and, as much as I hate to admit it, I am grateful when a corporate PR pro makes my job and life easier.

This is particularly true for show coverage when I am spammed and slammed by companies seeking media coverage. And I am not alone, so don't resist calling, emailing or stopping me on the show floor. Just be professional and I will treat you professionally and respectfully.

"I received 667 emails for CES (2012)," said Gerry Kaufhold, an industry analyst with In-Stat Group. "Only about a third of offered information I was interested in." Gerry analyzes technology and market trends in the digital video industry and forecasts the growth of emerging digital video applications. He is a highly sought after expert re-

source for journalists, therefore companies strive to be on his radar screen.

"The best way to break through email and voice mail barriers is to talk regularly with your media contacts," Gerry says. "Email is great for continuous contact, but reporters, editors and analysts need to hear your voice, want to build a relationship with you before you 'need' them, before you go to a show, so call, be a resource."



Holly Jensen, associate editor for *Ethanol Producer Magazine*, agrees that building relationships is vital to earning media attention before, during and after a tradeshow or event.

"Don't think of yourself as a controller of me and my story," says Holly. "Think of yourself as a resource to help connect me with the sources, photos and information I need. Contact me before the event to set a meeting, but understand... I don't want to chit-chat, to be wined or dined. A quick meeting, exchange of cards is best. And when we do meet,

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## Hit a Home Run Using These Do's and Don'ts

- Do** build relationships with members of the media before your trade show
- Do** get the media list ASAP and integrate updates as the show gets closer.
- Do** review potential targets. Know what they cover and who covers what.
- Do** be selective. Quality over quantity.
- Do** review editorial calendars for show papers. Know submission deadlines and guidelines; e.g., photo formats.
- Do** use online press rooms. Post as early as possible.
- Don't** spam the media list with your press release or media alerts. Customize.
- Don't** use the previous year's media list. Beats, reporters, writers, editors change.
- Don't** send a four-page press release. Keep news tight, concise; two pages, tops.
- Don't** pressure me to cover your news. I'll determine what's newsworthy.
- Don't** ask to "review" my article or blog for accuracy or quote confirmation.
- Don't** host a press conference unless you are a Microsoft, Chevrolet, or Intel.

See pg. 2, Do's..

See pg. 2, Don'ts...

### ...Media Need You, continued from front page

focus on what is new. I don't have time to sit and listen about your company or its widget. Short and memorable is best."

As a senior editor at *mashable.com*, Charlie White attends several trade shows annually in search of what's new and trendy. He is responsible for gadget news and reviews and *mashables.com's* weekend coverage. As busy as he is, Charlie demands little from PR reps at tradeshow.

"Please let me know when you're going to a show," he says. "Don't tell me something is new when it isn't. Send a press release with the price and release date of the product and include pics, or links to pics, and a well-produced YouTube video of the product. And tell me when your product will ship."

Brian Hutchins, news director for Bowtie Inc., enjoys working with PR pros. Brian oversees news operations for *Pet Product News International*, *Veterinary Practice News*, *Water Garden News* and *Pet Style News*. He also assists with the production of *DogChannel.com* and *CatChannel.com*.

"As to being approached by PR pros at trade shows, I have no preference, Brian says. "If they have significant news to share, I appreciate having them set a meeting up with their clients (executives). Otherwise, catch me as you can. That's why I'm there."



## Wire Services Can Expand Tradeshow News Reach



According to the *American Journalism Review*, in the U.S., there are more than:

- 1,100 Daily Newspapers
- 1,000 Non-Daily Newspapers
- 100 Alternative Newspapers
- 70 Specialty Newspapers

In addition, there are about 50 business newspapers/journals, 1,000s of magazines, a plethora of online news portals and e-zines, hundreds of radio stations and more than 30 television networks.

Your corporate news is not going to suit all these news outlets, and you're not likely to have the time or energy to review or contact even a quarter of these publications. So how do you reach the media without spamming your news? The best way to reach your target media, and then some, is to use a wire service to distribute your corporate news.

There are general news services like the Associated Press (AP), United Press International (UPI), and Reuters, which have worldwide armies of reporters, editors, photographers, videographers and graphic designers to gather and package news for their subscribers, e.g. newspapers, radio, television, and online sources. These services only distribute news its editors deem newsworthy. This coverage can't be "bought", therefore it has high credibility. Some specialty newswires operate on the same premise as the AP, UPI and Reuters, e.g., Bloomberg Business Press, Ziff Davis, Women's Enews and Gallup Poll, while others distribute news on behalf of corporate customers which pay for this service, e.g. Business Wire, PR Newswire, NewsUSA, PRWeb, Vocus, 24-7 Press Release and Global Newswire. Then you have those wire services that provide both services, e.g., Canadian Press and Environmental News Network.

Several of the "pay to play" wire services offer services for packaging and distributing tradeshow-related news. In fact, go to [businesswire.com](http://businesswire.com) or [prnewswire.com](http://prnewswire.com) homepages and you will find links to tradeshow-specific press releases. For a complete listing of wire service providers, go to <http://prwriterpro.com/pitchdaily2012.pdf>

### ...Do's continued

7. **Do** submit releases for inclusion in the show paper.
8. **Do** call, but be brief. State 5W's. Gauge interest and continue as appropriate. Send press release? Make show appointment? Send sample or demo unit?
9. **Do** post show media kit documents, photos, graphics, video, on your website and make it all easy to find.
10. **Do** have a PR rep in exhibit at all times. If not, let booth staff know who the PR rep is, how to reach her/him immediately. Also make sure your spokesperson is articulate and media trained to emphasize talking points and sound bites.

### ...Don'ts continued

7. **Don't** tell me you're an advertiser.
8. **Don't** pull your executive or spokesperson out of an interview to meet with an important customer.
9. **Don't** overlook freelance writers/contributing editors. Many publications cut staff then bring them back as freelancers. Freelance writers are always looking for article ideas they can pitch to editors or producers.
10. **Don't** forget to provide me your cell phone number in case I am delayed or have to cancel our show meeting. Don't forget to ask for mine, but use it judiciously.

# Media Members Tell It Like It Is



**Vlai Kershner**  
News Director, SFGate.com  
San Francisco Chronicle

Vlai has supervised news content selection and independent story production at SFGate.com for 13 years. SFGate.com is the San Francisco Chronicle's website, one of the 10 largest newspaper websites in the U. S.

**Do** know who does what! I'm always being pitched by people who have no idea that the print newspaper and the online edition are separately edited. I have nothing to do with assigning reporters, but I can get suggestions to bloggers on certain topics.

**Do** keep it short.

**Do** propose experts to comment on a news story, but get the pitch in in the first few hours after a story breaks.



**Jeff Adcox**  
Online Services Director  
Exhibit City News

Jeff has more than a decade of publishing industry experience. He previously served as managing editor for two military publications at the Colorado Publishing Co.

**Do** research your target media outlets to make sure your news is relevant to its readers. Editors get spammed all the time by PR companies sending news that has little relevance to their content. As an example, just because exhibits have lights doesn't mean we want to be pitched a story about long-lasting light bulbs.

**DO** include some type of multimedia with the release even if it is just a headshot of one of the sources. Include a link to download an image or at least mention that artwork is available upon request.

**Do** keep press releases short and to the point. Some of the releases we get are way too long.

**Do** send press releases snail mail which is still quite effective as long as it is addressed to the right person. If I want a digital copy, I will call.

**Don't** embed artwork in a Word document.

**Don't** submit a self-serving press release about how "great" the company or the product is. Keep it objective. If your client/boss makes you put in a bunch of flowery phrases and praise, tell them they are shooting themselves in the foot. It will not get published.



**Charlie White**  
Senior Editor  
mashable.com

Charlie is currently a senior editor with Mashable where he edits and writes features, reviews and news posts. He has had a 30-year career as an online and print journalist and editor. He is also an Emmy Award-winning television producer and director.

**Do** send a press release with the price and release date of the product.

**Do** offer a review unit with return label enclosed.

**Don't** call asking if we received your press release.

**Don't** send a release to two different addresses of the same person.

**Don't** tell me your boss told you to contact me.



**Micela Myers**  
Group Editor  
Firebrand Media

Micela is group editor for Firebrand Media, publisher of Orange County California lifestyle publications *Newport Beach*, *Laguna Beach*, *Montage* and *Bespoke* magazines.

She was previously managing editor of *Horses USA* and associate editor of *Horse Illustrated* magazines. She is also the author of three equestrian books.

**Do** know the magazine or publication you are pitching. Most have online versions or at least online samples, so there is no excuse not to.

**Do** know the types of things they cover, and when you contact them, tell them how your client fits in - i.e. for *Laguna Beach* magazine and *Newport Beach* magazine, we require a local connection, so when you contact us, tell us what that connection is up front. Grab us in the subject line.

**Do** pitch by mail if you think your client's product, service or story is a good fit. Send sample and media kit or package. Editors get many e-mails a day, so sending a hard copy can help you stand out.

**Don't** send me anything or call me about anything that isn't relevant to my publications.

**Don't** email or call me incessantly.



**Gerry Kaufhold**  
Principal Analyst  
In-Stat Group

Gerry is one of the tech industry's leading analysts and is sought after by journalists as an expert resource for insight into trends for mobile internet and digital entertainment.

**Do** follow editors, reporters, analysts and bloggers on Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Twitter, or their blog. If reporters or bloggers post that they are taking a week off for surgery, send a card. If they post that they are working on a particular hot topic, post on their site, and when you call to pitch your press release/article idea, mention you "follow" them.

**Do** know what content is on your company's website and check it periodically for changes. It amazes me how many people don't know what is available on their corporate website. Also, when you contact an analyst by email, provide an easy to follow URL link, even multiple links, to your website, specifically targeting content related to your pitch. Don't make me hunt.

**DON'T** forget, it's a 24/7 news cycle on the Internet and for mobile devices.

**DON'T** just leave your name and number if you get voice mail. Instead try this: "Dear <name> - Sorry I missed you. Read about your <personal item> on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. Hope it's going OK. Our company just announced <announcement-one sentence summary>. Call me back and we'll provide more details." Provide your contact information slowly, distinctly and repeat it.



**Glenn Proctor**  
Founder, REDDjobb  
Retired Newspaper Editor

Before retiring in 2011, Glenn was executive editor, vice president-news of the Richmond (VA) Times-Dispatch. Proctor also worked as a reporter for United Press International (UPI) and numerous other newspapers, including the *Akron Beacon Journal* where he shared in the

1987 Pulitzer for coverage of the Goodyear takeover.

**DO** tell the truth. In a crisis or breaking news situation, if you don't have all the facts or can't reveal them, say so and why. Be upfront with what you can share with journalists.

**DO** pitch quirky, new and different stories.

**DO** build relationships with journalists. The best journalism-PR situations are borne out of establishing relationships. Establish a relationship and it's much easier to pick up the phone, email, tweet or meet in person and talk with a journalist. Journalists like it when you visit their offices.



**Holly Jensen**  
Associate Editor  
BBI International

Holly writes news and feature-length articles for *Ethanol Producer Magazine*. She was also an editor and writer for

two North Dakota newspapers, the *Sargent County Teller* and *The Jamestown Sun*.

**Do** follow up by phone if I don't respond. Even if your pitch doesn't turn into a story immediately, I may think of you later on and call you when I'm doing another story.

**Don't** pitch me a story based on Diabetes Month or Adoption Week unless you have a local, targeted story idea to go with it. I'm not going to write about those unless I can interview people in my readership area that have lowered their risk for diabetes through exercise or adopted a child.

**Don't** bother to use my name and write me a nice note if you are simply harvesting email addresses and you have no idea what I am writing about.

**Don't** send me a press releases for all your other news sources after I have worked with you on a specific topic. Suddenly I'm getting emails about wind power and electric vehicles.

**Don't** demand or expect a story, especially if you don't have a new or interesting angle.



**Bill Mitchell**  
Senior Reporter  
KTUL-TV Tulsa

42 years in broadcast journalism as a reporter and anchor, Bill covered the Girl Scout murders, the Edmond Post Office massacre and the Oklahoma City bombing.

**Do** offer your executives as expert resources for educating a reporter on a subject/issue/for background, but be sure that they can be available at a moment's notice if necessary.

**Do** let the media know if you see a breaking news story and can contribute to a 'fix'; e.g. solutions for winter plumbing problems, spring allergies, winter driving tips..."

**Do** follow reporters and stations on Facebook and Twitter. An early morning check is best to know what stories they are working on that day and sources they are looking for.

**Do** media train your expert resources or spokespersons to provide impactful, 15-second sound bites.

**Don't** lie. The first time will be the last time.

**Don't** promise and not deliver, especially if you offer a company executive or spokesperson as an expert resource.