

## Perfecting your pitch

*Skill, perseverance pay off  
when pitching to trade pubs*

By Willy Gissen



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**Industry trade publications provide a useful source of publicity for many businesses, especially those with unique niches such as high-tech firms, public-safety organizations and financial companies. Pitching press releases to editors at these magazines requires both skill and perseverance.**

### RESEARCH CONTACTS

Bacon's Directory, the definitive research source for industry trade publications, costs approximately \$300, but it's also available at selected libraries. The magazines are grouped by category, and you can use keywords with the alphabetical index in the back to find the correct section.

You should carefully review the description of the magazine's readers and the circulation. Usually, magazines with a subscriber base of 30,000 to 60,000 reach an adequate number of prospects and are fairly easy to pitch. However, you should compile a media list of 20 to 40 magazines with a full range of circulations for your client.

For lower circulations, it's best to contact the editor-in-chief or managing editor directly to avoid unnecessary referrals. For larger magazines, you can use Bacon's to find the reporter covering your topic.

### PITCHING E-MAILS

Carefully draft a cover note when you e-mail your release. Avoid e-blasts

and address the "to" field to a specific reporter. The subject line should start with the words "Press release" so the e-mail is easily differentiated from spam and other advertising. The cover note should only be one-screen long because editors are too busy to even scroll down a message. The content should include a description of your client and three newsworthy bullets from the release.

Before the advent of anti-virus programs, editors preferred the press release pasted into the message box below the cover note, but today, it's okay to send it as an attachment. A more sophisticated method involves sending a link to the release as it resides on your client's Web site. Your computer support staff can teach you or your client how to do this by using an FTP (file transfer protocol) program.

### PITCHING THE EDITOR

Even editors at smaller publications may receive 300 press releases a day. Call the editor before send-

ing the release, briefly describe the content and ask for permission to forward it. The release should be on your client's electronic stationery, and the type should be 1-1/2 spaced for easy reading.

Avoid voice mail at all costs; you must develop personal relationships with editors to ensure publication. Try calling at different times, or ask the operator for assistance. When you finally get through, if you determine the editor is on deadline, conclude the phone call immediately. Then, when you call back the next day, remind the editor about your consideration.

### FOLLOW UP

After calling the editor, wait a few days before following up. When you call back, the editor will probably tell you he hasn't read your release. Continue this process a few times, then finally ask the editor to read the release while you're on the phone and provide the exact time of transmission.

Always provide graphic support, such as a screenshot, but do not send it with your initial e-mail. This strategy provides a good excuse for one of your follow-up calls.

Two final caveats. First, editors may give vague promises about future coverage. You must try to pin them down as much as possible. Second, once you've achieved a placement, obtain the appropriate issue to confirm its publication.

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