Good Pitch/ Bad Pitch

Best Practices For Targeting Media

By Jerry Grymek October 2023



INTRODUCTION TO JERRY GRYMEK, PRC, CAAP



Manage Public Relations Travel, Hospitality and Association clients throughout North America and overseas

Current Vice President for the Travel Media Association of Canada, Canada's premier travel association

Active member of the Toronto Blogger Collective and Travel Massive, the social travel blogger community

Professional speaker on the topic of media relations

Recognized as a media personality 'The Doggie Concierge' for the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show

TODAY'S AGENDA

- Tips on the good and bad habits of pitching
- How the pitch approach differs between Canadian and U.S. media
- Understanding the difference between earned and paid editorial and when to use each option
- Practical examples of pitches that have led to media outreach and coverage

MY FIRST PITCH EXPERIENCE

- I want to share my first pitch experience
 - Just out of school
 - Eager to tackle any projects
 - Optimistic about the results
 - Envisioning eager media

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FIRST PITCH REALIZATION

- Working in the travel industry, it is easy for us to share in the excitement of our destination

- After all, we are in the travel industry: it seems like an easy sell!
- According to the World Urban Forum, there are over 10,000 cities and destinations worldwide
 - Meaning they are all pitching as well!
- There are different ways of pitching media, to varied success

PITCH PRACTICES



GOOD PRACTICES

Knowing that we all have experience with pitching media means that we all have our own successes and best practices that work

The following highlight general best practices to keep in mind when pitching

1) DETECTIVE WORK SHERLOCK

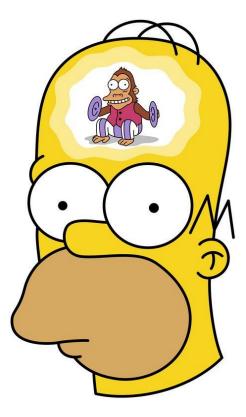
- Research is important
 - What are their recent stories?
 - Who are they writing for?
 - Are they the right fit?
- Spend time researching their bio media
 - Muckrack
 - Google
 - Associations
 - Ask a colleague/media contact



- Find their interests

2) THOUGHTS BECOME WORDS...

- Ask yourself a few things
 - Why is this important to the media?
 - How can I make this unique?
 - So what?
- Think about the idea
 - Detail this before writing that email
- Make clear what the story is about
- As needed, rewrite until you have a tight introduction



3) 20/20 VISION

- Make it as easy for them to review as possible
 - Short and sweet is always good
 - Media receive multiple pitches a day
- A second set of eyes is always good



4) STOP THE PRESSES

- Be aware of what is happening in the news when you pitch
- Sometimes this can work in your favour or against you



NOT SO GOOD PRACTICES

The following highlight general some 'not so good' practices to keep in mind when pitching media

1) MASS VS PERSONAL EMAILS

- Many are divided on which is better
- Too impersonal
 - Try the personal email approach
- For news releases, it is still okay to send group emails
- For press trips, send individual emails



2) !!!!!, 🕲 & LOL's

- Avoid fancy fonts, emojis and LOL's

- We all do it but best to avoid these
- Especially if you are not familiar with the media

- How many exclamations do you really need? Right? LOL



3) DOES THIS FIT?

- Know who you are pitching to
- Just because they work for an outlet you like, doesn't mean they are a fit
- Would you pitch an adventure trip to a wine editor?



BAD PRACTICES

The following highlight the things to avoid practices to keep in mind when pitching media

1) WHERE IS THE BEEF?

- Do you have a story?
- Do you have a theme?
- Is there an actual news hook?
- Don't pitch for the sake of pitching
- This may be passed on



2) DEAR DIARY

- Watch the length of your pitch
 Avoid it being too long
- Do you really need to give the entire history in this email?
- The truth is: No one will read it



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3) AND YOU R?

- NO typos
- NO spelling the editor's name wrong
- NO calling media by the wrong name

Let's eat Mom! Let's eat, Mom!

4) DEJA VU

- Do not stalk media
 - 1 follow-up is appropriate, 2 is pushing it
 - After that, assume they are not going to reply
- Only call if they ask you to
- Want to hear back? Ask for them to confirm receipt and if they are interested or not
 - Strong chance they will reply
 - If not, that tells you all you need



Canada VS J.S. Pitching

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CANADIAN MEDIA

- We all know Canadians are nicer
- We can spend more time discussing an idea
- Media take the time typically to respond



U.S. MEDIA

- They want everything STRAIGHT. TO. THE. POINT.
- AP style is appreciated
 U.S. spelling as well
- Very different audiences in regions of the States
 - Be mindful of who you are reaching out to



EARNED VS. PAID

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EARNED VS. PAID MEDIA

- Do you ever watch a news segment and wonder how they got that?

- More than likely, that was paid
- Paid media involves paying outlets for coverage of a particular event or news topic
- Nowadays, if you have the budget, you can purchase a segment with major media outlets



EARNED MEDIA PROS & CONS

PROS

- Allows you to know what technique works
- Satisfaction of knowing that your pitch worked
- Saves money

CONS

- May take more time
- Uncontrollable
- Limited by the focus and feature

PAID MEDIA PROS & CONS

PROS

- Immediate coverage
- Controlled, focused on what you like
- Up to you as to the focus and feature

CONS

- Requires payment
- Sets a precedent with the outlet
- Blurs the lines between PR and advertising

- Tip: If you have an ad campaign, ask for an editorial feature to be included



ROLE REVERSAL

- Today, there are tools that you can use to make pitching easier
- Writers are now pitching to industry members to help them!
 Makes the job easier for us
- These are free and paid options

1) HARO

- Offered by Cision
- Stands for 'Help A Reporter Out'
- It is free to sign-up
- Members receive 2 to 3 emails a day
- Note: not all of the pitches will be applicable so you have to go to the travel, food, or lifestyle section



2) Radio Guest List

- One of the top free radio, podcast, and talk show guest booking services
- Emails are sent weekly
- Free service is limited and there is a paid version as well
- Note: not all of the pitches will be applicable



3) Media Associations

- There are a number of associations that you can join that have a media directory of members that you can pitch

- Detailed list of interests, preferred forms of communication, and outlets





EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL PITCH

Creative Pitch #1 – Florida Keys Pitch to Former CNN Reporter, Don Lemon



Florida Keys is known for Conservation, Preservation and Key Lime Pie.

Dom Lemon from CNN had mentioned the Florida Keys on air before and we used this opportunity to pitch him.

What Was Done? The intro title for our pitch to Don was:

'You will enjoy your visit so much that you will change your name to Don Key Lime'

Creative Pitch #2 – David Foster Foundation to Roy Green Show



Famed Canadian David Foster has a charity that focuses on raising awareness of the need for organ and tissue donation.

What Was Done?

The theme of our pitch focused on a child that had 2 heart transplants.

Roy Green had a serious heart attack and this story was close to his heart (no pun intended).

Creative Pitch #3 – Tour Company Regional Awareness Pitch



A tour company that offers helihiking tours through the height of the Canadian Rockies, often educating guests on the local fauna and wildlife that reside there.

What Was Done?

We pitched regional media outlets in important markets and tailored the titles accordingly.

#1: Chicago values its Cub and Bears. So do we.

#2: Everything is bigger in Texas. Almost everything.

Creative Pitch #4 – Tour Company Experiential Trip Pitch



A tour company that offers selfguided cycling tours along with experiential activities within each location, such as candle-making and making rugs.

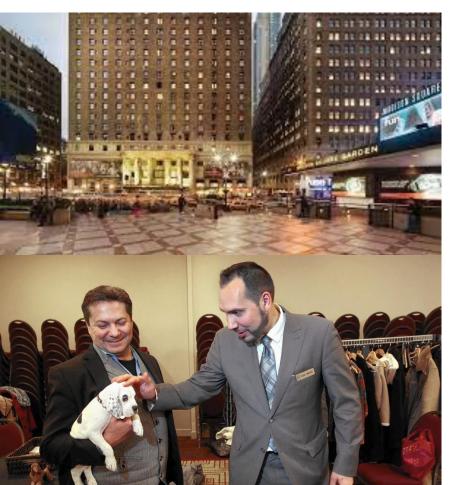
What Was Done?

We pitched media outlets with stylized invitations linked to the excursion.

We used the title for one tour as:

Become a (Rug) Hooker For a Day

Creative Pitch #5 – Hotel Event Pitch



A hotel client in New York had 1,000 dogs staying for the annual Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show taking place across the street and asked us if we can do anything with that.

What Was Done?

Piggybacked on the Westminster attention by hosting Dog Show events, introducing a VIP (Very Important Pooches) Dog S'paw' and dedicating a Doggie Concierge for interviews

Creative Pitch #5 – Hotel Event Pitch (continued)

The New York Times

DOG SHOW

At This Hotel, Just Bark for Service



By <u>John Branch</u> Feb. 13, 2006

Outside the Hotel Pennsylvania on Saturday, across the street from Pennsylvania Station and Madison Square Garden, three lanes of Seventh Avenue were clogged with taxis, minivans, limousines and sport utility vehicles. Dodging the traffic police and cart-wielding bellmen, they angled left for a spot near the door. Then they stopped to let out dogs and their belongings, and the people who tend to them.

Upstairs, 1,000 of the 1,700 rooms inside the hotel are filled this



TAKEAWAYS

TOP 5 TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Find a connection (if possible)
- 2. Hook them from the start!
- 3. Leave them wanting more
- 4. Personality is important, but so is research
- 5. Remember we are all aiming for the same goal: a great story

THAT'S A WRAP

WRAP UP SUMMARY

1) Remember the Good

- Research is key
- Ask yourself 'So What?'
- Short and Sweet/K.I.S.S.
- Watch what is happening in the news

2) Be Careful of the Not So Good

- Know when to mass email and when to personalize
- !!!!, $\textcircled{\mbox{$\odot$}}$ and LOL's
- Know who you are pitching and their interests

WRAP UP SUMMARY (continued)

3) Avoid The Bad

- No story, no pitch
- Too long and wordy
- Too many typos and wrong names
- No stalking the media

WRAP UP SUMMARY (continued)

4) Earned Media

- Uncontrolled
- Takes more time
- Could be limited
- Save on money

5) Paid Media

- Controlled
- More immediate coverage
- Can focus on anything you want

WRAP UP SUMMARY (continued)

6) Role Reversal

- Tools exist where media ask for story assistance
- H.A.R.O.
- Radio Guest List
- Associations (TMAC, TBC)

THANK YOU!

I hope you found this session useful.

Questions? Email me: JERRY@LMA.CA