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Pitching Tips To Land Major Media Placements

By Annie Jennings PR

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Pitching Tips To Land
Major TV, Magazine & Newspaper Media Placements

Break Into the TV Shows of your Dreams!
Tips, Strategies, Do's and Don'ts of Pitching to the Media

- Always have your press materials fully developed before you even begin the pitching process. You'll need a segment style press release for radio (contact me for more information on writing one), a media kit and video resume for National TV. After you pitch your media contact, they will ask you to send your materials. Any delay will cost you your credibility. Always do what you say you are going to do.
- Develop your media strategy with short and long term goals. You will need to have resources to find the names of the producers and bookers and contact information. We use Bacon's Media Directories 1.800.621.0561. Targeting the right contact will greatly increase your chances of getting booked. If your goal is to be on OPRAH within the year, you have a lot of work to do. You'll want to get booked on lots of media to gain experience, help you define your topic and create expert status for yourself. Pitch the smaller radio shows first and then move onto the bigger stations in the bigger markets. Use the same strategy with TV and book yourself first on the local/regional stations. This strategy will allow you to develop not only as a publicist for yourself but as a media guest as well.
- If newspapers and magazines are on your goal list, start to follow these periodicals. Learn about the content and style and who writes in your expertise. Become familiar with what they have covered so you are pitching a fresh and "next level" article or story idea.
- Expect to make about 50 pitch calls before feeling comfortable with the content, style, language and tonality (all factors that the media contact uses to decide to book you as a guest). Can the media spot an amateur? You bet! Your pitch call is an audition. If you sound shy, uncertain and stumble over your words, the producer will think that is what you will do on the air and will not book you.

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- Identify your ultimate target media and then find smaller media that will support your major targeted media outlets. For example, if you want to be on Bloomberg TV or CNN then pitch the local/regional business or talk shows. Develop a three-minute video resume that is edited and features your "best" moments. Lead with high-energy music and action! You want the viewer to feel excited just watching your video! They'll be thinking "ratings, ratings, ratings"!
- Know the caliber of guests your target media uses. You might need media training, a makeover and/or coaching to increase your desirability and skills.
- In major breaking news situations, TV segments are pegged to the breaking news. Tailor your pitch accordingly and do not pitch a soft feature. Tie your expertise into the breaking news to increase your chances of getting booked.
- Immediate availability will help you get booked. Tell your media contacts that you are "on call" for them and give them all of your contact numbers including pager and/or cell phone (for instant access). Include your instant access information on your website.
- TV and radio producers like controversial debates and experienced guests who can talk in information-packed soundbites. Leave high-energy, action packed voice mails.
- Stack your pitch with your credentials and content. Speak faster while leaving your voice mail yet slow down and speak clearly when you leave your phone number. Always mention where you are located and follow up with an email that includes more on your pitch, BIO and instant access contact information. Do not use attachments but you can link to your website that should be content rich and not overly promotional.
- Have two websites—one for the media and one to sell books. The media likes content rich website that showcase your articles, awards, area of expertise and bio. If they see a strong sell for products or books they will not book you as your site is too promotional. Save the strong promotion for products or your book for another site designed especially for this purpose.
- Explain how your book relates to the segment and have the book cover ready to be emailed. During the pre-interview double-check that the producer has the correct spelling of your name (and pronunciation) and title. Also, ask to have two chyrons (the way you are identified on the screen) that alternate while you are speaking—one with your name and book name and another with your name and area of expertise.
- Send your book and media kit for your contact to have on hand. Call, fax and email, send package, follow up with an email and then a follow-up phone call at the end of the process.
- Don't expect that if something comes up in your area later the producer will call you. Re-pitch yourself pegged to the story. The producers tend to book what is right in front of them and what is freshest in their mind. So treat it as a brand new pitch and follow up using the same process. But the advantage you have is that they are familiar with you already!

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- Keep notes! Know who you pitched, their comments, what you sent them, your follow-up dates, which message you left etc. When faxing, do not use a cover page. We use Avery removable labels in the upper left-hand corner, which come off for the note page and can be used again.

Pitching mistakes to avoid:

- Do not ramble, do not say the same things over and over. Practice your pitch to be concise, to the point and packed with value.

- No Umm's—never wing it. Have your press release handy so you can read directly from it and always lead with your strength.

- Never ask "how are you" unless you already have an established relationship.

- Never ask "is this a good time for you?" What you can say is "is this a good time for you to discuss a financial planning expert who can comment on the stock market decline?" Producers appreciate quick and complete information. Plus, they might be crashing because they are looking for a financial

planning expert!

It's going to take time, nothing happens overnight so be prepared to treat pitching as a second job.

Annie Jennings of Annie Jennings PR is a highly acclaimed national publicist whose insight and vision have revolutionized the public relations industry. Annie created her famous 'Pay For Placement Publicity Program, a program where clients only pay for secured media placements, that allows you to enjoy national exposure without high monthly retainers. Contact Annie at 908.281.6201, Annie@AnnieJenningsPR.com, www.AnnieJenningsPR.com.

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Turning your media pitch into a media hit

By Todd Brabender

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Anyone who has ever read a book on sales or taken a sales course has heard it – on average it takes anywhere from 3 to 10 contacts before a sale is reached. Although sales and publicity are very different animals, the same rule of thumb applies when pitching your release/story idea to the media. Because of the Internet and email, media outlets today are bombarded with hundreds if not thousands of media pitches each week. So, it's more important than ever that to make sure your release gets noticed. This doesn't mean pitching to more media outlets — it means your publicist or PR staff should take the time to pitch to your specific media market multiple times.

Whether you pitched the release yourself or hired someone to do it for you — did the release make contact? Sure it arrived, but is that the release that editor needs that day, for that article or for that issue. Hopefully so, but many times that is not the case. So the release is either saved for future use (again hopefully) or more than likely it is set aside, trashed or deleted. The releases/pitches that get used are the ones that are, in fact, newsworthy, media-friendly and arrive at opportune times. As

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you might imagine a perfect combination of all three translates into your best chances of media coverage and publicity.

Using a release distribution service gets your release pitched ONCE. But the most successful campaigns are those that are strategically and effectively maintained and/or re-pitched with calculated frequency. Most media outlets don't or can't respond to your initial release or pitch.

Based on my professional experience as a PR/Publicity specialist, I would estimate that media placements occur in the following manner:

25% occur after the 1st – 2nd pitch

50% occur after the 3rd – 5th pitch

25% occur after the 6th – 8th pitch

Sometimes (in fact most times) a strong placement happens when a release hits an editor at the right place at the right time. Sure you may have pitch that media contact three times over the last few weeks, but perhaps that reporter/editor/producer didn't have the time or the editorial space to work your release into a placement. Your opportunity for placements increases with meticulous, media follow-ups and re-pitches. What many business owners/entrepreneurs don't realize is the majority of media outlets fail to respond until after the third or fourth pitch. I continue to be amazed and amused at the editor/producer who, upon receiving my pitch for the fourth

time, says "I'm so glad you reminded me of this release!" or "Great timing! This will fit perfectly in a feature we're doing this week/month!" If the release had just been pitched once and not followed up, those placements would not have taken place.

So make sure your PR staff or the company you've hired isn't afraid to wind up and pitch your campaign multiple times. Just like in baseball, the more pitches there are – the better chances you get to make a hit.

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