

# PR Tips for Engaging with Reporters

# Session Goals

1. Understand the most effective ways to pitch reporters
2. Learn how to write a variety of pitches
3. Take away concrete next steps for how to pitch reporters

# Agenda

1. Setting the stage: What to know about reporters and the PR tactics for pitching them
2. Deep dive into each of these tactics, with hands-on exercises
3. Q&A

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- Developed and executed media relations, social media and writing programs for hundreds of B2B and B2C companies, ranging from Fortune 500 organizations to venture-backed startups.
- Named on AdWeek's PR 30 Under 30 List for 2015. In 2013, won the Publicity Club of New England Striker Award, which recognizes New England's best young PR professional of the year.
- Every year, work with companies across industries on hundreds of media placements across industries.



# Points to keep in mind throughout the workshop

1. Some overlap from last week's PR plan presentation, but will *not* get into building a PR plan.
2. This will very much be an *active* workshop! The more exercises you do, the more you'll get out of it!
3. You're welcome to drop questions in the chat. I'll try to pause every few slides to take a look, and will also save some for the end.

# Reporters and Media Relations: Setting the Stage

# What to know about reporters

1. They are *not* an extension of your marketing team.
2. They are extremely busy, and get dozens (if not hundreds) of pitches a day.
3. They can be extremely influential in shaping your company's reputation.
4. Generally, they prefer building personal relationships with founders in their industry, as opposed to publicists.

# Outbound vs. Inbound Media Relations

# Two Different Media Relations Tactics

**Outbound:** Pitching reporters (For example, asking them if they'd like to learn more about an upcoming product launch or funding announcement, or introducing yourself as an expert source on a particular topic).

**Inbound:** Using channels that you own (like LinkedIn, Instagram, Substack, Medium, etc.) to share your viewpoints on topics as well as updates about your company, while also engaging with people (including reporters) on these channels. If you consistently put out high-quality content, over time, you will build your following and reporters will eventually start reaching out to you for interviews.



# Outbound Media Relations Tips

# Three Outbound Pitching Tactics

1

**Sharing  
company news**

2

**Commenting on  
relevant topics**

3

**Pitching intro  
meetings**

# Company news

# Decide what news you want to share

- Company launch
- Product/service launch
- Published research
- New hires
- Funding
- Expansion/new office
- Partnerships

# Steps for pitching the news

1.

Write an announcement about the news

2.

Identify reporters to share the news with

3.

Ask reporters if they'd like to preview the news

4.

Distribute the news

# 1. Write an announcement about the news

## Tips on writing announcements

- Keep it to under 500 words
- Keep it buzzword free (eg. disruptive, innovative, etc.)
- Clearly state in the headline what you're announcing

## Examples

- Funding — <https://acelabusa.com/articles/what-s-new-at-acelab/acelab-announces-5-3m-in-funding-for-building-product-selection-platform>
- New hire — <https://www.novo.co/blog/novo-hires-brad-paterson-as-evp-of-business-development>
- Product launch — <https://innovationlabs.harvard.edu/about/news/the-harvard-innovation-labs-introduces-membership-model-to-provide-more-flexible-inclusive-support-to-student-innovators-and-entrepreneurs/>

## 2. Identify reporters to share news with

- Build your media list manually, instead of relying on a media database
- Here are a series of Google News searches you can do to start building your list
  - [insert city your company is headquartered] and “startup”
  - [search terms related to your industry] and “startup”
  - search competitors in your industry, even if they’re larger, and “startup”
  - Seeing how your peers are being covered (LinkedIn homepage)
- Keep Google News search to last year

# Exercise

Find 1-2 reporters that have recently covered startup news in your industry.

Tip: Use a Google News search, limited to the last year, to identify relevant articles. For instance, if I want to find a reporter that covers fintech startup funding news, I might search: “fintech” “startup” “funding.” Or, if I want to find a reporter that covers Boston startups, I might search: “Boston startup.”



# 3. Pitch reporters on previewing your news

## Writing a pitch

- Keep it under 150 words
- The first paragraph should be 1-2 sentences tops. Something like “I’m the founder of Xx, and I’m writing to ask if you’d like to learn more about our 4/1 product launch”
- In the second paragraph, write 2-3 sentences about what the news is
- In the third paragraph, write 2-3 sentences about you and your company
- In the final paragraph, ask a question, like “Would you be interested in an advanced look at a press release?”

# Exercise

Write a 100-150 pitch about your hypothetical company launch, asking a reporter if they'd like to learn more in advance of the launch.

## 4. Distributing the news

- Make a news page on your site, and post it! (Here's an [example news page](#))
- Share the post on all your social media channels
- If you have an email list, send an email to it sharing the news!
- Send emails to all the reporters you pitched asking if they wanted to preview the news with the release in the body of the email
- You can consider paying for a wire distribution, but I wouldn't recommend it

# Commenting on relevant topics

# Where you can find out what reporters are writing about.

1. Go to <https://www.helpareporter.com/>, click “I’m a source” and sign up for an account.
2. Go to <https://www.qvoted.com/>, and make a free account.
3. If you have X, do a search for #journorequests, or a more advanced search (eg. “AI #journorequests”)

# Exercise

Write a response to the hypothetical inquiry on Qwoted: “Looking for an early-stage entrepreneur to offer their perspective on whether to have a co-founder or not. Email responses only. Will follow up if I have more questions. This will be for an article on Inc.com.”

# Pitching intro meetings

# Tips for pitching an intro meeting

- Make it a very personal note
- If the reporter is in your city, ask if they have time for a call or a coffee in the “coming months.”
- If you’re going somewhere for a conference, this is a great reason to reach out to reporters in that area.



# Exercise

- Whether you're based in Boston or not, pretend for a moment that your startup is based in Boston.
- Write an introductory pitch to Isabel Tehan, who is the innovation reporter for the Boston Business Journal.
- Keep it to 100-150 words.

# Inbound Tactics

# Four Components of Inbound Media Relations



**Decide what  
you want to  
comment  
on**



**Decide on the  
medium for your  
commentary  
(written, audio,  
video)**



**Create and post  
content**



**Build your  
digital  
followings**

Decide what you  
want to comment on

# Commentary topics

- **Providing perspective on a relevant news:** E.g. Let's say you're working on fintech startup, and a government regulation came out related to fintechs. Maybe you could comment on the regulation.
- **Providing perspective on your industry:** For instance, if you work in ed tech, in Q4 2024 you could offer predictions on how the industry will evolve in 2025.
- **Lessons learned from your day-to-day work:** For instance, if you just raised funding, you could share your experience pitching investors — what worked and what didn't. Or, you could offer takeaways from a conference you just attended.

# Exercise

- **Providing perspective on a relevant news:** In one sentence, write about a recent piece of news that happened in your industry. In the second sentence, write your opinion on the news.
- **Providing perspective on your industry:** In one sentence, what is one way your industry will evolve in the second half of 2024?
- **Lessons learned from your day-to-day work:** What is one lesson you've learned from building a startup over the last 2.5 months (from Jan 1 2024 to now)?

Decide on medium  
for commentary

# Possible mediums and channels

- **Mediums:** Written, audio, visual — photos/videos
- **Channels:** LinkedIn, Instagram/Facebook, X, YouTube, TikTok, Substack, Medium
- **Advice:** Develop a channel that you're already seeing the most traction in (for most people, this is LinkedIn. Focus on no more than a few channels to start, and get feedback from peers in their industry on which channels they're seeing the most engagement on.



# Exercise

- List the top one-to-three social media channels you already see the most engagement on professionally.
- List the one channel you're currently not active on that you're the most interested in launching.

# Create and post content

# Tips

- **Medium:** Start with the medium that's most appealing to you! If you're a natural writer, then write. If you're more passionate about doing video, then do video.
- **Quality:** Whatever you decide to comment on, give a thoughtful take on the topic. You want people to come away from seeing your content thinking “that was interesting!”
- **Frequency:** Try to create and post commentary at least a couple of times per month.

# Exercise

- Commit to doing one thought leadership comment on one channel in March
- Decide on the topic, medium, and channel now (e.g. I'm going to comment on PR lessons I learned from a campaign in March. I'll comment on LinkedIn, and do it as a written post).

Build your digital  
followings

# Tips

- Connect with *everyone* you meet in the real world on the channels you're most active on.
- Identify the reporters that are most active in your industry, and follow them on the channels you're most active on.
- Engage with the content your network produces.
- Use appropriate hashtags and tags on your content when you publish it.

# Commonly asked questions

- Should I spend more time on outbound or inbound?
- How much time should I spend on PR?
- Should I hire a publicist?
- Who should do my PR internally?



# Questions?

Please drop in chat