

How PR professionals can pitch successfully to journalists

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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In the last decade, there has been a massive proliferation of media outlets, bloggers, micro journalists, influencers, etc. giving public relations (PR) professionals more potential targets to pitch an earned media pitch to than ever before.



Source © Mark Bowden [123rf](#) Public relations (PR) professionals have more potential targets to pitch an earned media pitch to than ever before

However, over the same period, the tools and technology of PR professionals have mostly stagnated.

“Legacy software incumbents have not innovated at nearly the pace that earned media has proliferated, and therefore PR professionals have been left behind,” says Eitan Goldstein, communications manager at Propel, a PR Management platform.

Spray and pray approach

He says that currently, most pitching is based upon gut feeling and prayer.

“This is because most people in PR are still using spreadsheets and mail-merges to ‘spray and pray’ their pitches to hundreds of journalists at a time,” says Goldstein.

He adds that at the same time journalist responses to pitches have been declining at a precipitous rate over the past few years.

“This doesn’t only include the number of people agreeing to write a piece, but rather any response whatsoever, including “no thanks.”

Taking the guesswork out of pitching

In response to this, Propel recently launched its new data report, the *Propel Media Barometer* compiled from data from approximately 500,000 pitches.



80% of journalists open pitches the day they receive them

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“The report enables PR professionals all over the industry to understand how best to pitch reporters, from understanding the best days of the week to pitch journalists, to what the best pitch length is, and how best to interact with journalists and influencers, etc. to get better-earned media results,” explains Goldstein.

He says that for Propel it was about taking the guesswork out of pitching and ultimately enabling everyone in the PR industry, be they in-house or at agencies, to create better engagement between themselves and the journalists they pitch to.

He highlights three important findings that came out of the report.

More difficult to reach journalists

Only 3.25% of pitches get a response.

“Again, this is any response. This means that close to 97% of pitches are ignored by journalists,” he emphasises.

But for him what is perhaps even more worrying for PR professionals is the fact that it’s only getting more difficult to reach journalists.

“Our research shows that journalist response rates were 12% higher in Q2 of last year than they were in Q2 of this year. There’s only so much room left before that response rate hits rock bottom,” says Goldstein.

Pitches too long

9.25% of the pitches that were between 50-150 words long got a response, thereby making this the most responded to pitch length. However, most pitches that PR pros sent were between 500-1,000 words long.

“Just for reference, that’s between two and four MS Word pages double-spaced!” he comments.

“Journalists get hundreds of pitches per day, and they simply don’t have the time to read whatever novel a PR pro might have written. “Our data shows that journalists and influencers prefer pitches which are short, sweet, and most importantly – to the point,” he says.

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Same day responses

80% of journalists who open pitches will open a pitch on the same day it's sent. If they respond to a pitch, then there is a 66% chance they'll respond on the same day.

If the journalist has opened a pitch and hasn't responded on the same day, he says then there's still a 33% chance they'll respond the next day.

"However, if they don't respond within 24 hours, it's likely they won't respond at all. Therefore, to maximise the potential for a journalist response (and remember, even a "no" is a response!) we recommend that PR pros send one follow-up email the day after the pitch is sent," says Goldstein.

"If the journalist still doesn't respond, it's best to move on," adds Goldstein.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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