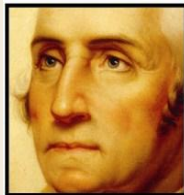


# How the Press Uses and Values Public Relations and Other Media Resources

A new national study of how editors/journalists use and value public relations assistance, media databases, and other traditional and online resources for research, story ideas, and other purposes



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
POLITICAL MANAGEMENT

Conducted by

**Cision, Inc.**

in conjunction with

**The George Washington University  
Graduate School of Political Management  
Strategic Public Relations Program**

**Research Concept & Project Development**

Don Bates, Founding Director,  
GSPM Strategic Public Relations Program

**Analysis & Final Report**

Annette Arno,  
Research Director, Cision, Inc.

**February 2009**

## Introduction

This study of editors/journalists was conducted by Cision, Inc., in conjunction with the Strategic Public Relations Program at The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management in Washington, DC.

**Don Bates**, Instructor and Founding Director of the Strategic Public Relations Program, devised the survey based on his prior studies of media practices and professional public relations. He also wrote and edited the research instrument, which was disseminated by Cision. Prof. Bates teaches writing and media relations. He has also taught at Columbia University, the New School University, and the New York Institute of Technology.

**Annette Arno**, Cision Research Director, analyzed the survey data and prepared the final report. Ms. Arno has more than 15 years of experience in market research. She has held senior positions at two full-service market research firms and one university survey center. Her research has addressed a variety of audiences, such as media outlets, commercial businesses, consumers, not-for-profit organizations, and government agencies. Her research studies have covered journalism, internal communications, customer satisfaction, advertising awareness, market/brand perception, and other subjects.

## Study Goals

- Inform best practices and teaching in the public relations and political management fields as they relate to media relations and media professionals.
- Deepen Cision's and GWU's understanding of how editors/journalists use and value outside resources, including social media.

## Comment by Don Bates

My deepest thanks to Cision and its resolute media guru, Ruth McFarland, for answering my inquiry for assistance in surveying the media on the important question of how they use and value outside resources. She and her company provided all of the horses needed to execute the study pro bono and in keeping with its intended goals. I also want to thank Larry Parnell, associate professor and the first full-time director of the Strategic Public Relations Program, for his support of this and related research. Neither I or GWU nor its Graduate School of Political Management received compensation for our involvement. My deepest thanks, as well, to my Fall 2008 Advanced Writing students for their help in focusing and sharpening the final questionnaire. Their names are listed below. This has been a labor of love.

**My Fall 2008 Graduate Students:** Jenny Burke; Ryan Duffy; Amy Dufour; Suzanne Dundas; Lindsey Geisler; Mallory Gianola; Amy Gray; Jeanene Harris; Yadira Lacot; Carrie Lingenfelter; Gwendolyn Maddox; Valene Marshall; Samantha McGovern; Adam Nelson; Matias Obludzyner; Julia Parmley; Laura Peed; Anne Rittman; Patrick Ryan.

### About Cision AB

Cision AB ([www.cision.com](http://www.cision.com)) empowers businesses to make better decisions and improve performance through its CisionPoint software solutions for corporate communication and PR professionals. Powered by local experts with global reach, Cision delivers relevant media information, targeted distribution, media monitoring, and precise media analysis. Cision has around 2,500 employees in Europe, North America and Asia, and has partners in 125 countries. Cision AB is quoted on the Nordic Exchange with a turnover of SEK 1.8 billion in 2008.

### About GWU's Strategic Public Relations Program

Established in the fall of 2008, GWU's Strategic Public Relations Program offers a master's degree, both on campus and online, and a graduate certificate. The program is part of GWU's Graduate School of Political Management ([www.gwu.edu/gspm](http://www.gwu.edu/gspm)), which also offers graduate degrees in political management, legislative affairs, and PAC management, in addition to a certificate in community advocacy for not-for-profit organizations, and international programs in Latin America and Europe.

## Methodology

This study of media professionals was conducted by Cision, Inc. in conjunction with Don Bates, Instructor and Founding Director of the Master's Degree Program in Strategic Public Relations at The George Washington University Graduate School of Political Management. The goal of the study was to both inform best practices and teaching in the public relations field as they relate to media professionals and also deepen Cision's understanding of editors' and journalists' use and perceived value of various resources, including social media.

A custom research instrument was developed jointly by Cision and GWU. The questionnaire consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Cision provided the list of 12,337 editor/journalists which were solicited by e-mail to participate in the 10-minute questionnaire. Data collection took place in November and December of 2008. Potential respondents were offered an incentive to participate of a free executive summary of the findings. Initial invitations were sent on November 13, 2008 with a reminder distribution on Nov 19, 2008, garnering 745 completed questionnaires. Of these, 39 percent classified themselves as working primarily at Magazines, 28 percent at Newspapers, 27 percent worked for Internet-based media (including blogs), 6 percent at Broadcast media and 1 percent at Newswire or news services.

Statistical analysis consisted of frequencies and cross-tabulations. Statistical testing based on a 95 percent confidence interval was implemented to analyze any differences in respondent sub-populations. Responses to open-ended questions are reported under Selected Verbatim Statements. Care should be used when interpreting the results for the Newswire/news service subgroup as they number only 6 in total.

## Study Questions

- Q1. Which one of the following media types do you spend most of your professional time working for?
  - Q1a. What is the geography this medium covers?
- Q2. Do you work for any other media, in addition to your primary medium?
  - Q2a. What is the geography this other/additional medium covers?
- Q3. In an average month, how often do you use each of the following sources in your editing and reporting?
- Q4. How important to you are each of these sources for identifying or developing story ideas?
- Q5. How important to you are each of these sources for monitoring responses to your stories?
- Q6. Thinking about the e-mail pitches you receive from communications professionals, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?
- Q7. What other suggestions do you have for improving the quality of e-mail pitches you receive from communications professionals?
- Q8. How do you prefer to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals?
- Q9. What is your primary role in the media you work for?
- Q10. What is your age?
- Q11. How long have you been working in the media?
- Q12. Please add any other comments or suggestions regarding this survey or how PR professionals can work more efficiently and effectively with the media.

## Study Highlights

- Website usage for editing and reporting “All the time” is highest among those age 30 – 49 (94%), followed by those age 50+ (92%) and then those age 29 or younger (91%).
- Social networking sites and podcasts are used least often for editing and reporting compared to other sources overall, and most often by editors/journalists younger in age and experience. Blogs are used almost as often as trade journals, overall.
- Of the nine sources examined, submissions from PR professionals are used by more than 94% of editors/journalists.
- For identifying or developing story ideas, Websites are most important to editors/journalists, followed by submissions from PR professionals. Social networking sites and podcasts are rated as unimportant.
- For monitoring responses to stories, only Websites and blogs are considered important; conferences, trade journals, industry newswires, social networking sites and podcasts are rated as unimportant.
- Editors/journalists agreed with seven of the eight improvement statements for e-mail pitches from communications professionals. Being more relevant to their beat/area of interest and being less promotional struck the strongest chords.
- Over half of the editors/journalists responding wanted to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals as simple text only.

## Executive Summary

**Significantly more Editors/Journalists age 29 or younger spent most of their professional time at Magazines (49%) compared to 38% of those age 30 – 49 and 35% of those age 50 or older.**

- Significantly more Editors/Journalists age 50 and older spent most of their professional time at Newspapers (35%) compared to their younger counterparts (29 or younger; 21%, 30 – 49; 24%) while those age 30 – 49 were more likely to be at Internet (including blogs) media (32%) than either younger (26%) or older (24%) Editor/Journalists.
- Similarly, over half of those with less than 5 years of experience spent most of their professional time at Magazines (54% - significantly more than all other experience levels) while significantly more of those with 30 or more years or experience in the media were at Newspapers (39%) compared to all other experience levels. Those in the field from 5 – 14 years were most often found at Internet media (34%).

**Those working in the media for 5 – 14 years (42%) and 15 – 29 years (46%) were more likely than their counterparts to be working for another media beyond their primary media (Less than 5 years experience; 31%, 30 or more years of experience; 40%).**

- Those working for a second media classify themselves as Producers (54%) or Editors (43%) more often than Reporters (32%).
- Among those working for a second media, more worked primarily at Magazines (51%), followed by Internet (45%) and Broadcast (43%).

**Use of Websites “All the time” for editing and reporting is prevalent across media types, age, and experience levels.**

- Website usage “All the time – at least once per day” for editing and reporting is highest among those age 30 – 49 (94%), followed by those age 50+ (92%) and then those age 29 or younger (91%).



- Those with 15 – 29 years of experience report the highest level of Website usage in their editing and reporting (94%), followed by those with 5 – 14 years of experience (93%). Those with 30 or more years of experience and those with less than 5 years of experience were equally as likely to use Websites in their editing and reporting (92% each).
- Newspaper Editors/Journalists least often reported using Websites “All the time” compared to those in other media types, but still high at 90 percent.

**Social Networking Sites & Podcasts are used least often for editing and reporting compared to other sources overall and most often by Editors/Journalists younger in age and experience. Blogs are used almost as often as Trade Journals, overall.**

- Blogs are used by 79% of Editors/Journalists overall, with those 29 or younger (27%) and 30 to 49 (26%) reporting using Blogs “All the time” significantly more often than do those age 50 or older (18%). Findings are similar in terms of experience, with 28% of those with less than 5 years in media using Blogs “All the time” compared to only 15% of those with 30 + years of experience.
- Usage of Social Networking Sites (50% overall) is not as strong as that for Blogs (79%), with 30% of Editors/Journalists overall using Social Network Sites “Sometimes,” “Often (12%)” or “All the time” (only 8%).
- Editors/Journalists 29 or younger report the highest usage of Social Network sites (64% overall), significantly more than those age 30-49 (52%) and those 50 and older (42%).
- Podcasts are used least often of the nine sources examined (35% overall), but most prevalent among those age 30 – 49 (41%), significantly more so than younger (30%) or older (32%) Editors/Journalists.

**Of the nine sources examined, Submissions from PR Professionals are used by more than 94% Editors/Journalists responding, followed by Press Kits.**

- Editor/Journalists younger in age (29 or younger; 99%, significantly more so than older counterparts) or experience (less than 5 years of experience; 97%)

report using Submissions from PR professionals as a source for their editing and reporting. Editors/Journalists 29 or younger also report using this source “All the time” more often than their older counterparts.

- Wire (67%) and Internet Editors/Journalists (49%) reported using Submissions from PR professionals “All the time.”
- Of those using Press Kits in editing and reporting (87% overall) more experienced Editors/Journalists (30+ years; 92%) most frequently reported using this resource compared to less experienced Editors/Journalists, while significantly more of those than 29 (91%) and also those 50 or older (91%) used Press Kits more often than did those age 30 – 49 (81%).

**When it comes to identifying or developing story ideas, Websites are most important to Editors/Journalists, followed by Submissions from PR professionals. Social Networking Sites and Podcasts are rated as unimportant.**

- Overall, only one source was considered strongly important (an average of 4.58 on a 5-point scale where 5 = Important and 1 = Unimportant); Websites. Submissions from PR professionals was second at an average of 3.88 – just under Somewhat important (which would be a score of 4.00).
- Submissions from PR professionals was rated strongest in importance by Wire (4.33) and Internet Editors/Journalists (4.01) and least important among Newspaper Editors/Journalists (3.70).
- Overall, younger Editors/Journalists (29 or younger in age, less than 5 years of experience) rate the majority of examined sources as more important than did their older counterparts. This pattern is most evident for Blogs (3.79) and Social Networking Sites (2.58) where Editors/Journalists age 29 or younger gave significantly higher average importance scores compared to their older counterparts. This pattern is also present concerning years of experience (less than 5 years compared to 15 or more years.)
- Podcasts are rated lowest in importance by Editors/Journalists from Newspapers (1.85) and Magazines (1.98) and “highest” by those at Wires (2.33) and the Internet (2.21). (Keep in mind that a score of 2.0 equates to Somewhat unimportant and 3.0 represents Neither Important nor

Unimportant.) Younger Editors/Journalists also rated Podcasts s more important (2.15) than did their older counterparts (50 and older; 1.85). A similar pattern exists for Social Networking Sites.

**For monitoring responses to stories, only Websites and Blogs were considered important; conferences, trade journals, industry newswires, social networking sites and Podcasts were rated as unimportant.**

- Editor/Journalists older in age (50 and older) rated 6 of the 7 sources examined as least important compared to their younger counterparts. The exception being Trade Journals, where Editors/Journalists age 29 or younger gave the lowest importance rating to this source (2.39) for monitoring responses to stories. This same pattern can be seen for years working in the media.
- Editors/Journalists at Newspapers gave the lowest importance ratings (and in many cases significantly so) compared to those working in other media to the following sources: conferences and events (2.28), trade journals (2.13), industry newswires (2.06), social networking sites (2.20), and second lowest for Podcasts (1.79).

**Editors/Journalists agreed with seven of the eight improvement statements for e-mail pitches from communications professionals; being more relevant to their beat/area of interest and being less promotional struck the strongest chords.**

- With few exceptions Editors/Journalists across the boards - different age ranges, experience levels and media types – agreed that e-mail pitches should be more relevant to their beat/area of interest, less promotional, should state benefits for their audiences, have stronger story ideas, cover the 5 Ws in leads, be better written and have less boilerplate.
- Editors/Journalists working at Newspapers (4.51, 4.34) and those 29 or younger (4.48, 4.42) most strongly agreed that e-mail pitches from communications professionals needed to be more relevant and also less promotional, respectively.
- Broadcast Editors/Journalists agreed most strongly on the following compared to those at other media: e-mail pitches should state the benefits for

their audience (4.41), have stronger story ideas (4.39), cover the 5 Ws in leads (4.29), and be better written (4.20).

- Editors/Journalists age 29 or younger registered the strongest agreement with five of the eight statements examined, compared to their older counterparts. (Should be more relevant to my beat; 4.48, Should be less promotional; 4.42, Should have stronger story ideas; 4.17, Should cover the 5 Ws in leads; 4.11, and Should be better written; 4.15.)
- Agreement was neutral overall that e-mail pitches should have better quotes, indicating that this is not necessarily an area in need of change, but those working at Wires (3.83) and Internet media (3.62) reported the highest agreement with this statement.

### **Over half of the Editors/Journalists responding wanted to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals as simple text only.**

- Of the six different ways examined for receiving unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals, 57% overall said they would “definitely prefer” to receive them via simple text only. This was the preference especially for those working at Wires (83%), and least so for those working at Magazines (49%).
- Slightly fewer would definitely prefer to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches with hyperlinks to video and audio files (43%). Those working in Broadcast (62%) and Internet (54%) especially expressed this preference.
- A similar amount overall would definitely prefer simple text with photos/graphics (42%). Editors/Journalists at Magazines expressed this preference (49%) most often of the various media types.
- Little differences in preferences were expressed across Editors/Journalists in terms of age or experience, with the exception of the most complex format; those age 50 or older (39%) or those with 30 or more years of experience (37%) were least likely to prefer receiving unsolicited e-mail pitches with hyper links to video and audio files compared to their younger and less experienced counterparts.

**How Magazine Editors/Journalists want to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals**

Simple text only	49%
Simple text with photos/graphics	49%
With hyperlinks to video & audio files	45%
HTML only	26%
With attached video files	3%
With attached audio files	2%

**How Newspaper Editors/Journalists want to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals**

Simple text only	61%
Simple text with photos/graphics	42%
With hyperlinks to video & audio files	27%
HTML only	14%
With attached video files	3%
With attached audio files	3%

### How Internet Editors/Journalists want to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals

Simple text only	59%
With hyperlinks to video & audio files	54%
Simple text with photos/graphics	35%
HTML only	32%
With attached video files	7%
With attached audio files	5%

### How Broadcast Editors/Journalists want to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals

Simple text only	69%
With hyperlinks to video & audio files	62%
Simple text with photos/graphics	28%
With attached video files	23%
HTML only	21%
With attached audio files	8%

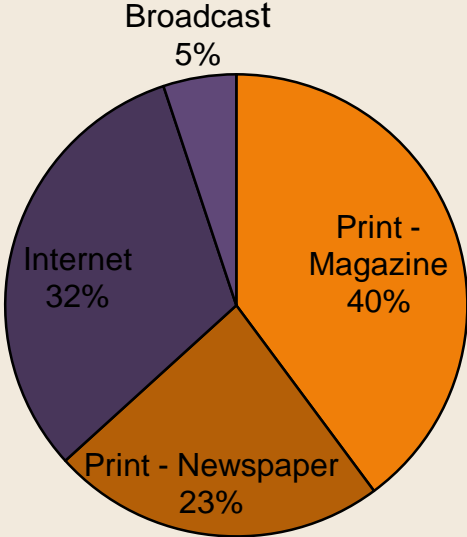
## How Wire Editors/Journalists\* want to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals

Simple text only	83%
With hyperlinks to video & audio files	33%
Simple text with photos/graphics	33%
HTML only	33%
With attached video files	0%
With attached audio files	0%

\*Care should be used when interpreting the results for this subgroup as they number only 6 in total.

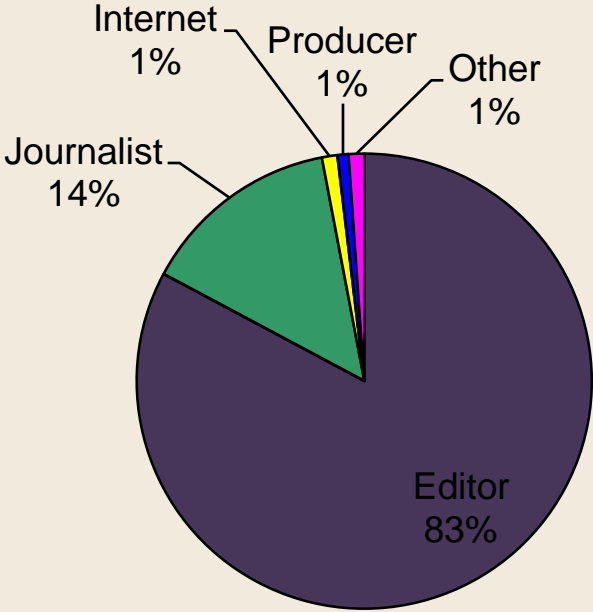
# Survey Charts

## Media Types Represented



Percentage of Respondents (N=744)

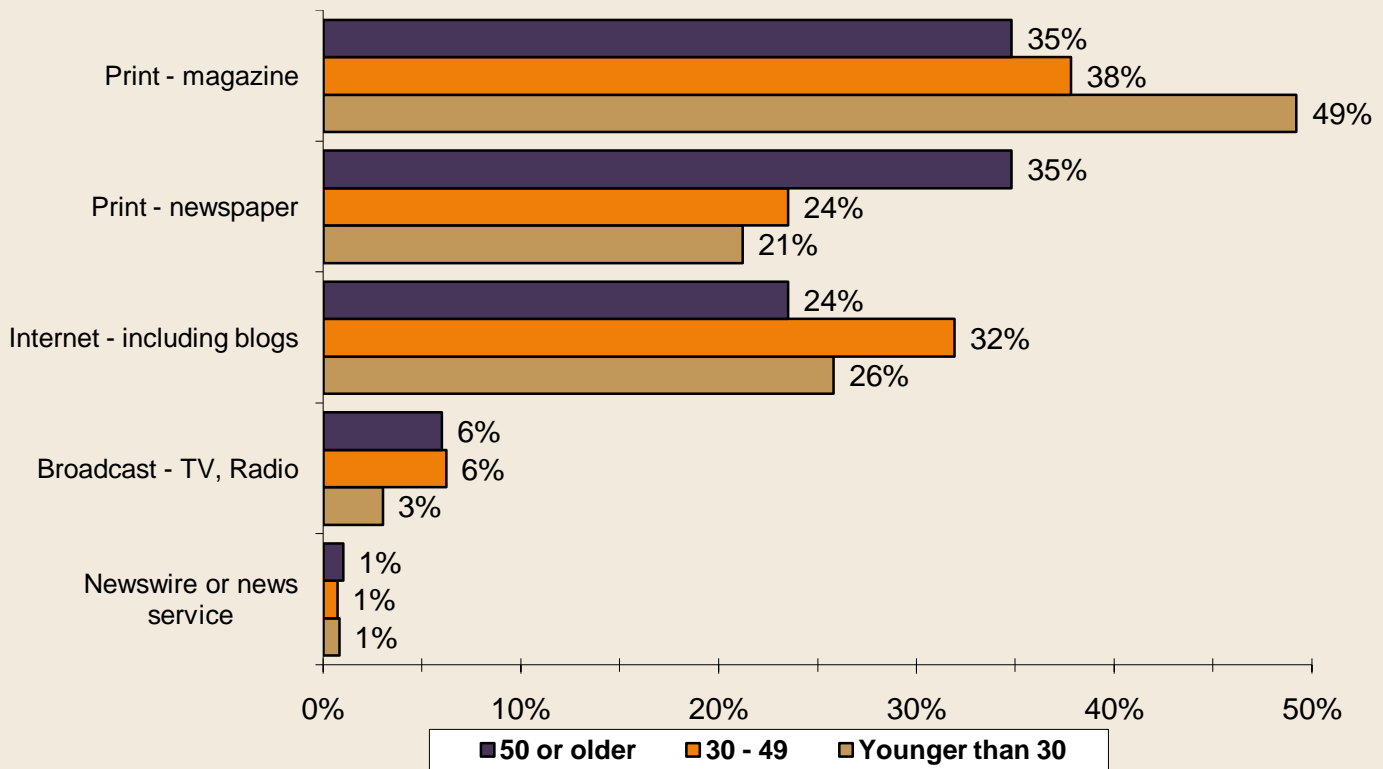
## Respondent Titles



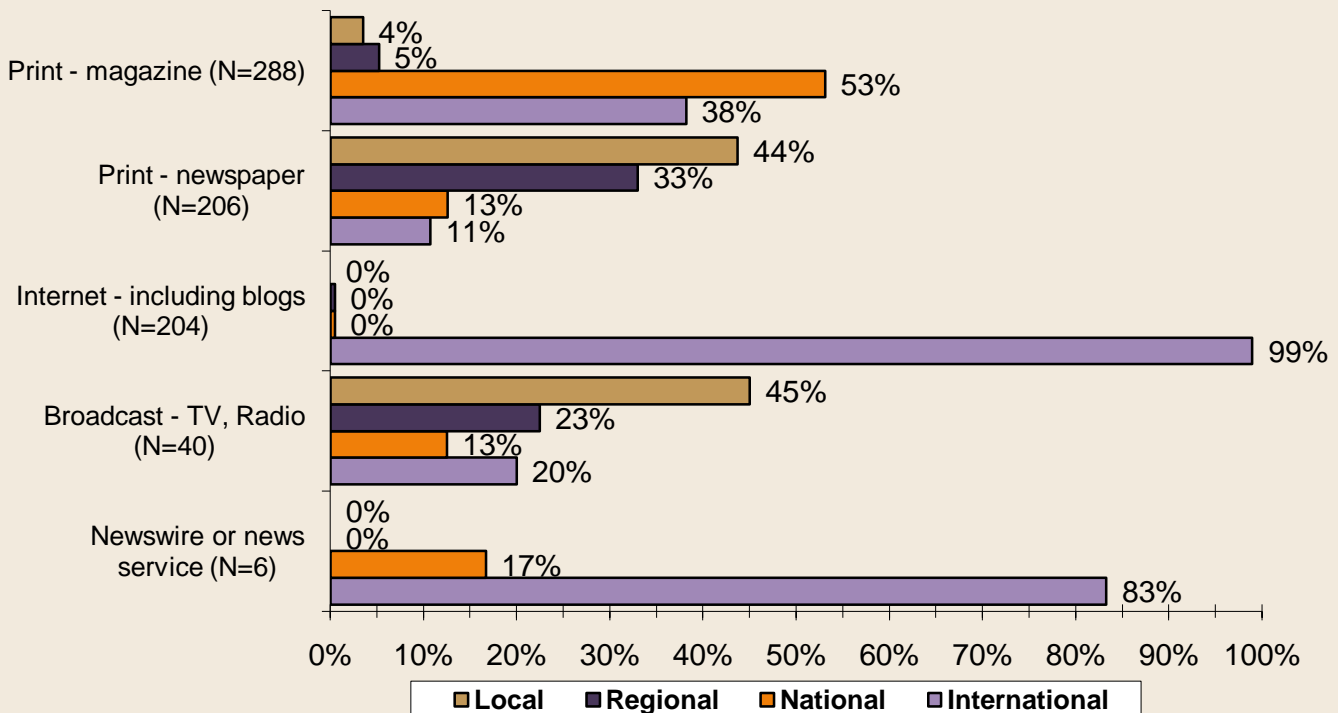
Percentage of Respondents (N=744)



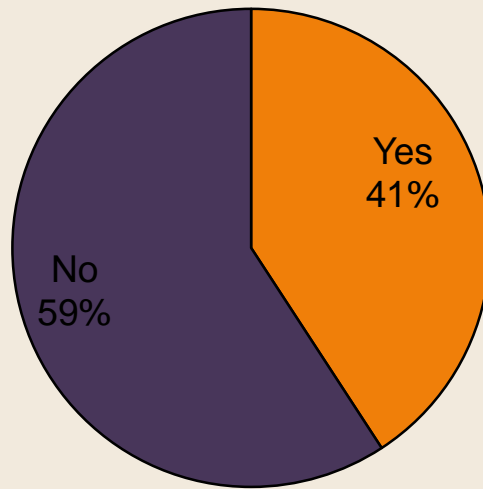
**Q1. Which one of the following media types do you spend most of your professional time working for?**



**Q1a. What is the geography this medium covers?**

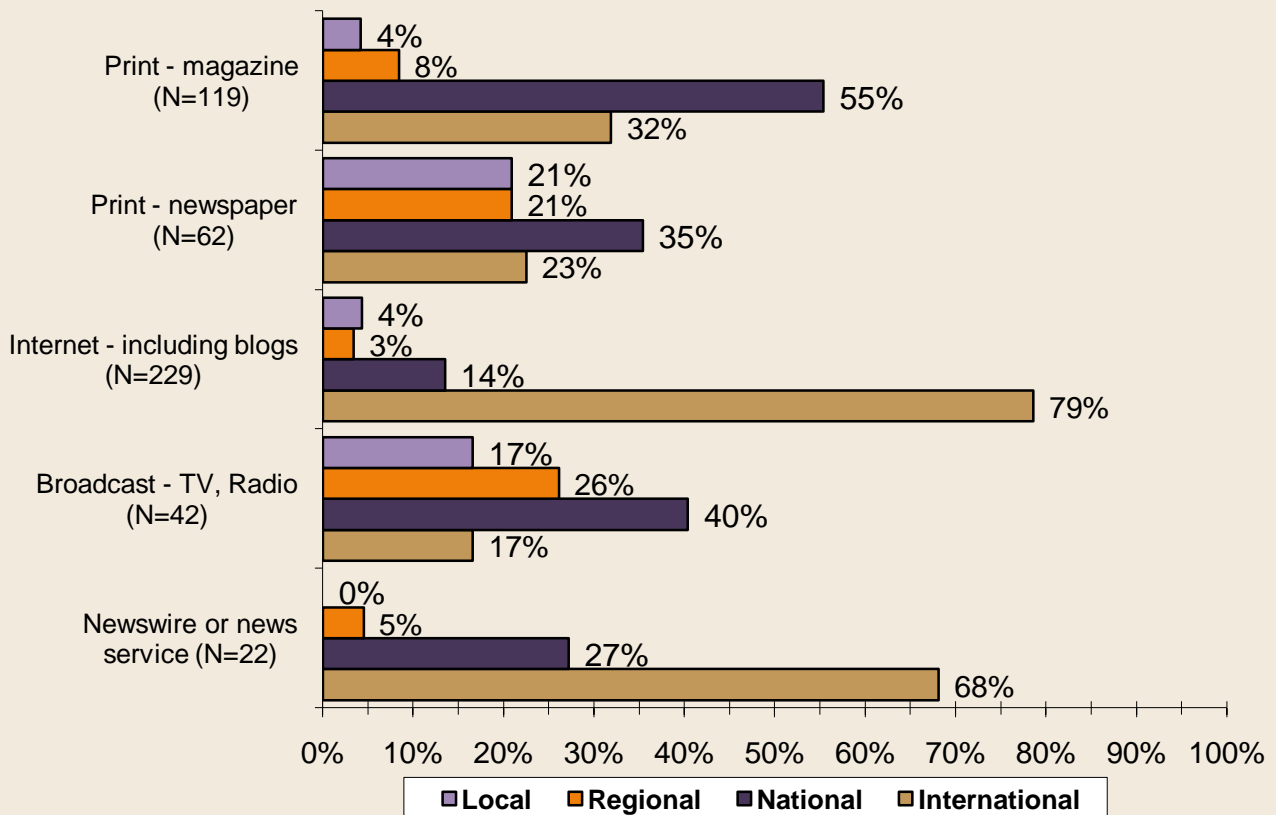


**Q2. Do you work for any other medium, in addition to your primary medium?**

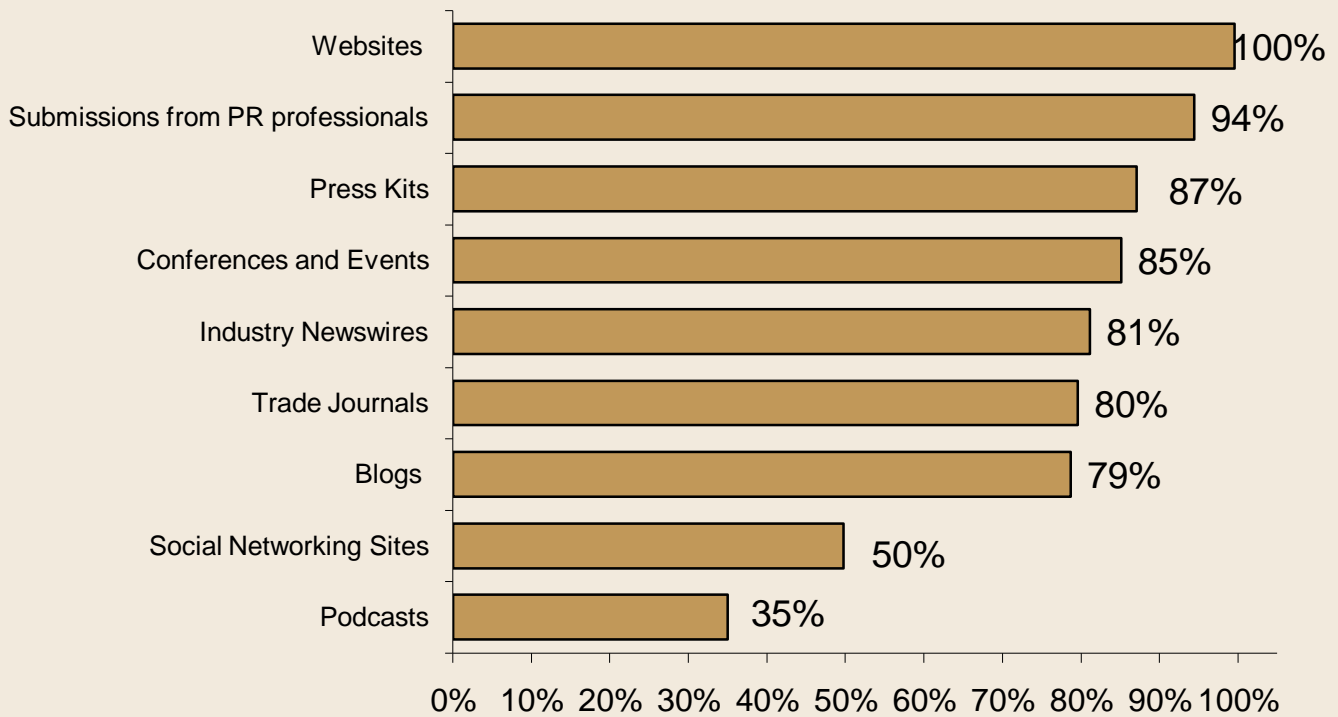


Percentage of Respondents (N=740)

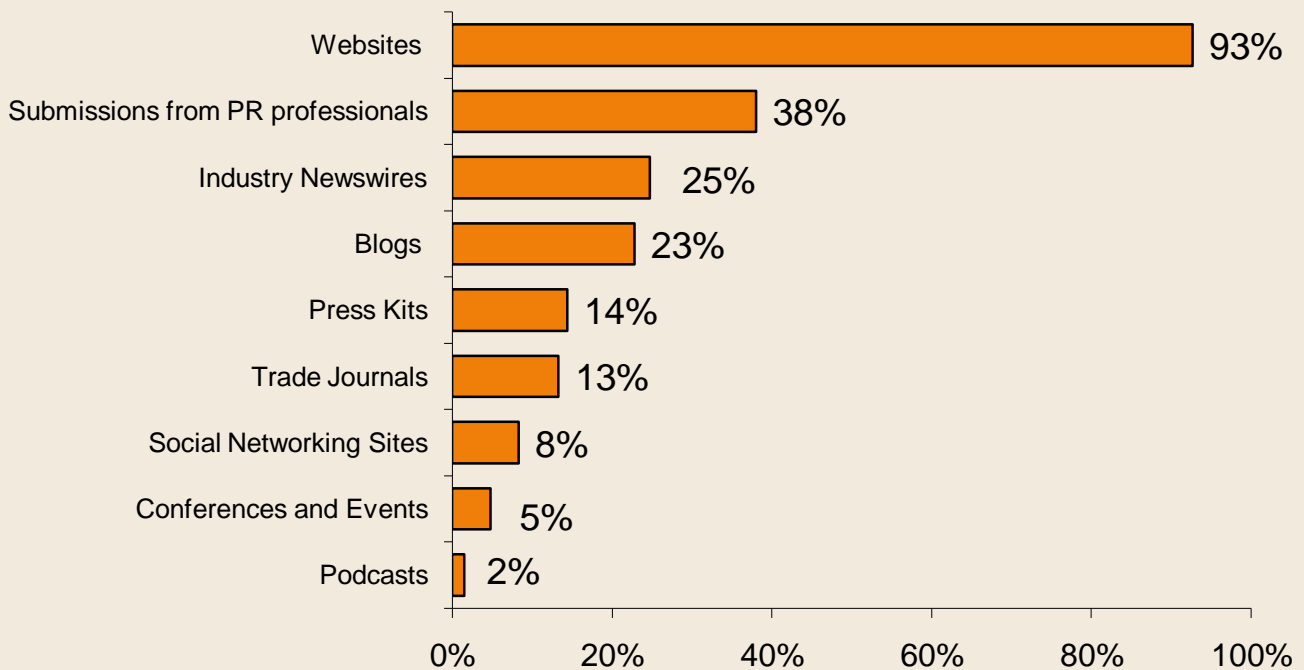
**Q2a. What is the geography this other/additional medium covers? (Of those who are working for other/additional media)**



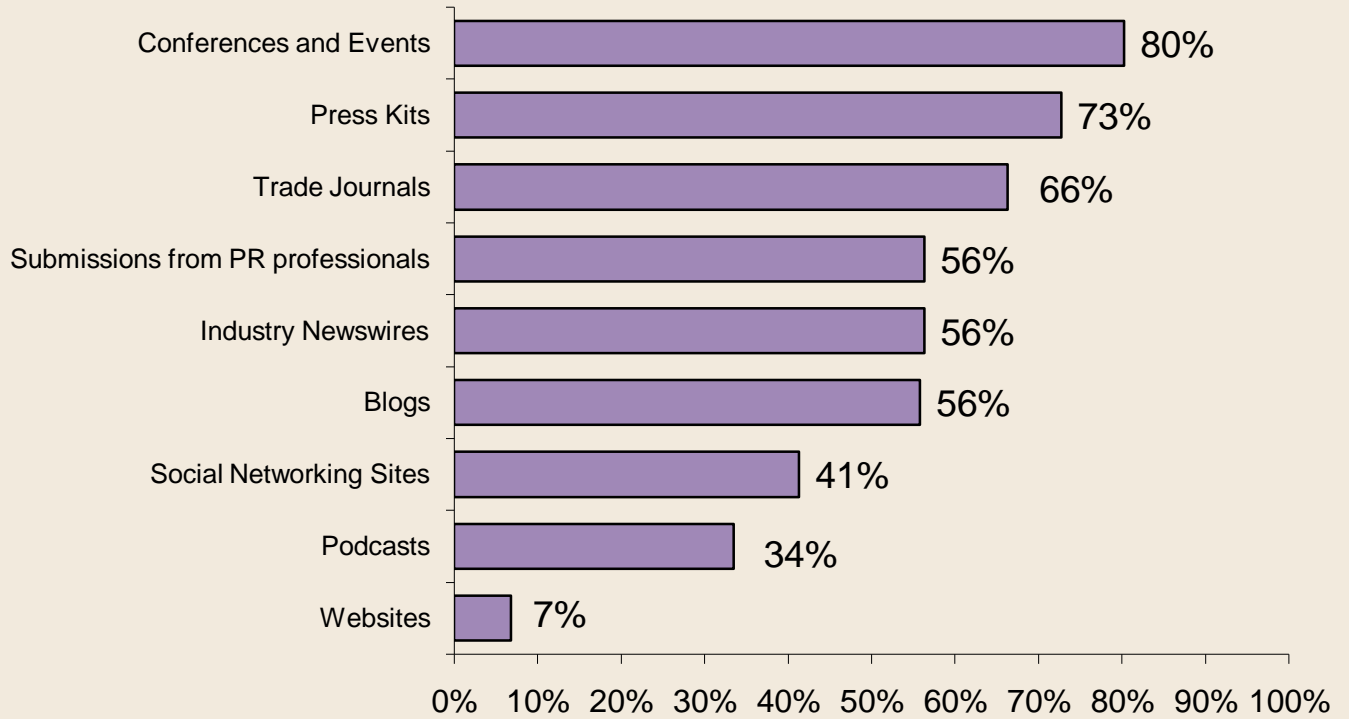
**Q3. In an average month, how often do you use each of the following sources in your editing and reporting? ~ Summary of Usage**



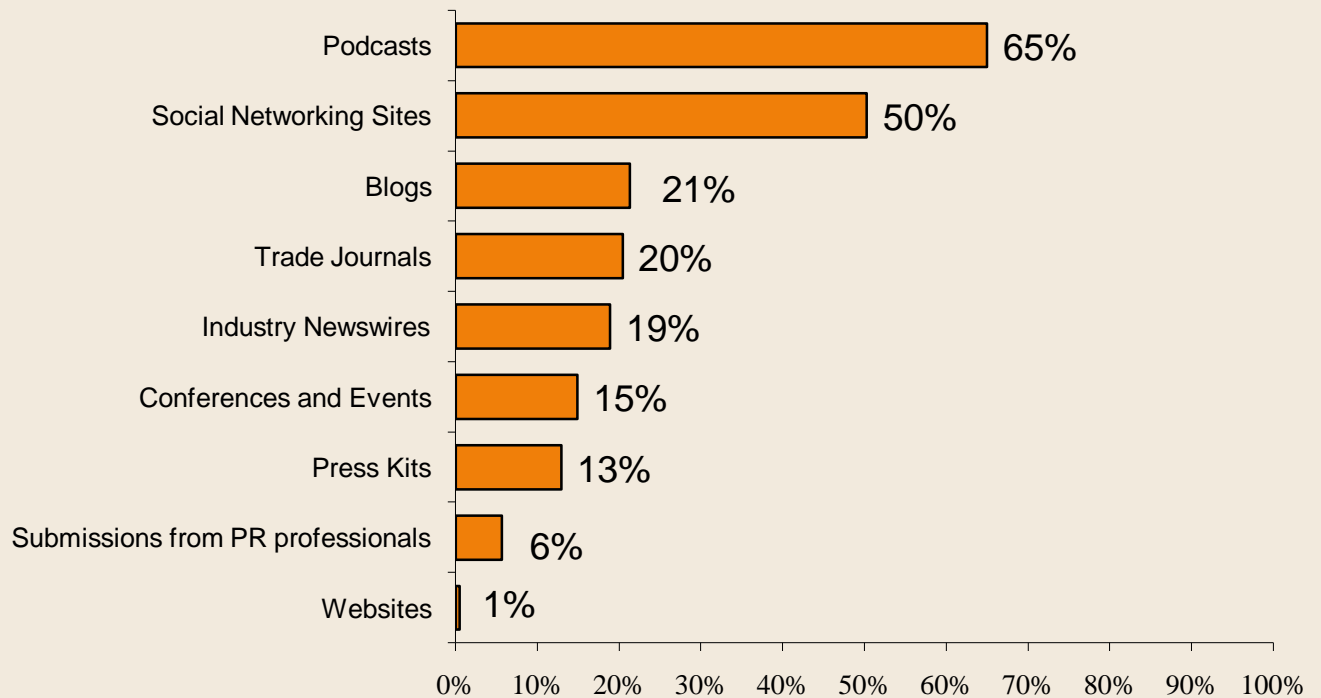
**Q3. In an average month, how often do you use each of the following sources in your editing and reporting? ~ Summary of "All the time (At least once per day)"**



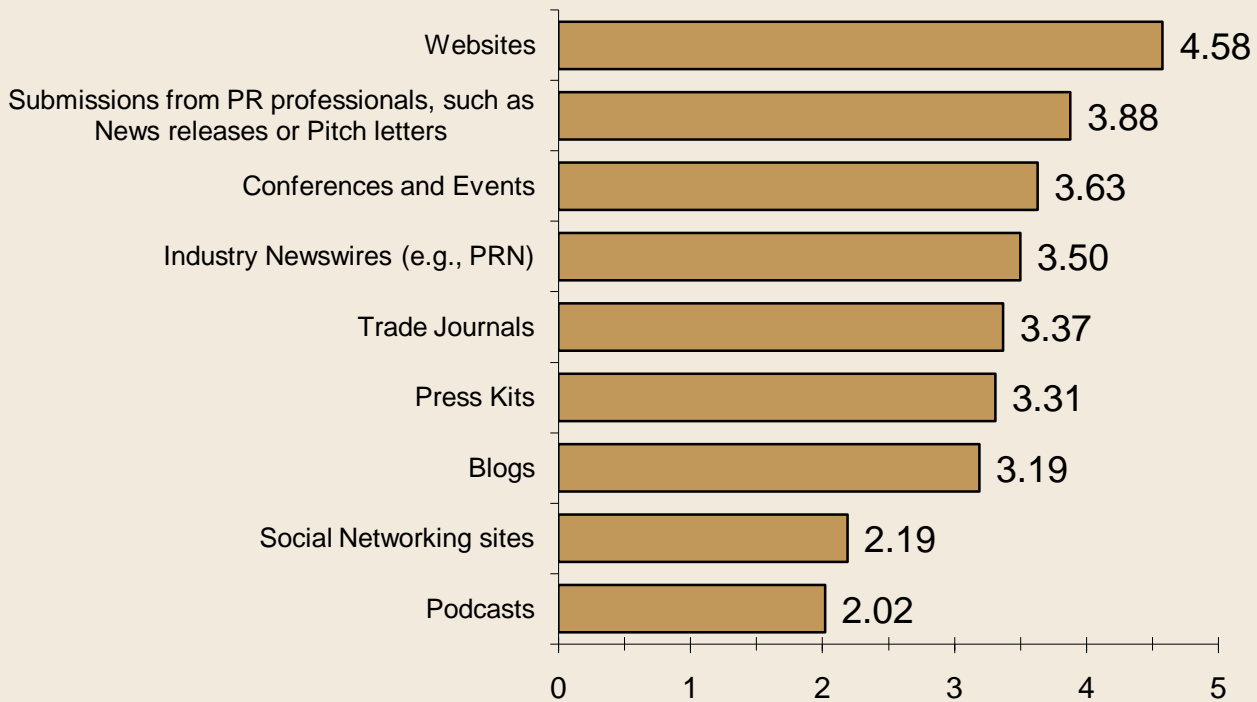
**Q3. In an average month, how often do you use each of the following sources in your editing and reporting? ~ Summary of “Sometimes (1 – 2 times monthly)” or “Often (Once a week)”**



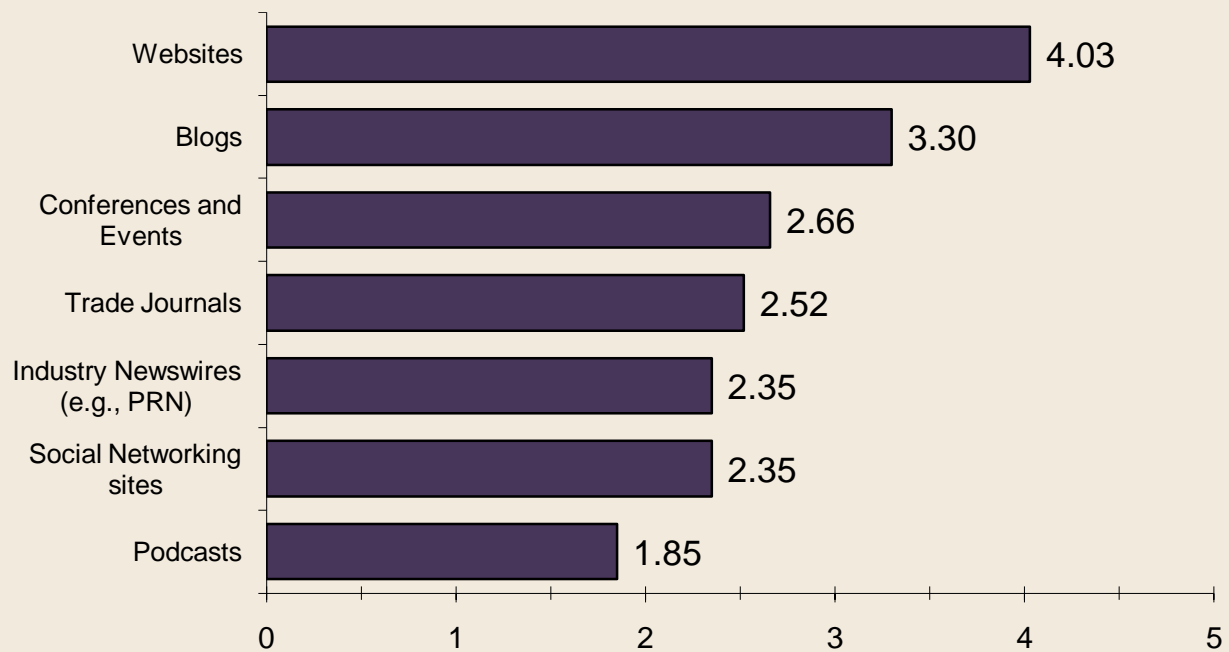
**Q3. In an average month, how often do you use each of the following sources in your editing and reporting? ~ Summary of “Never (0 times)”**



**Q4Sum. How important to you are each of these sources for identifying or developing story ideas?**



**Q5Sum. How important to you are each of these sources for monitoring responses to your stories?**

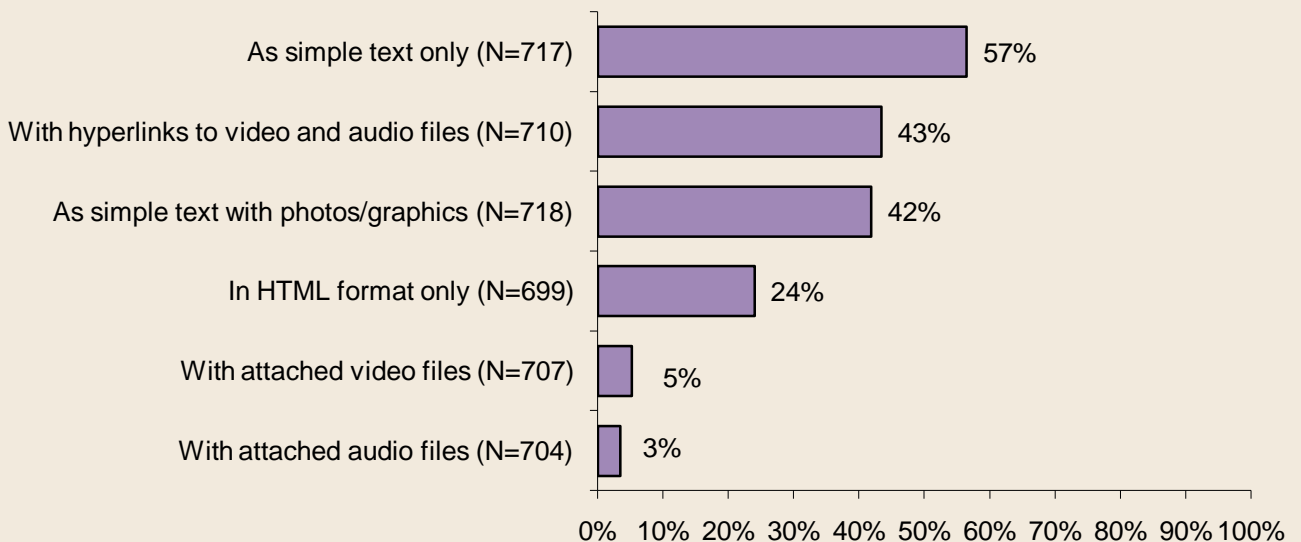


**Q6Sum. Thinking about the e-mail pitches you receive from communications professionals, how much do you agree or disagree with each of the following?**

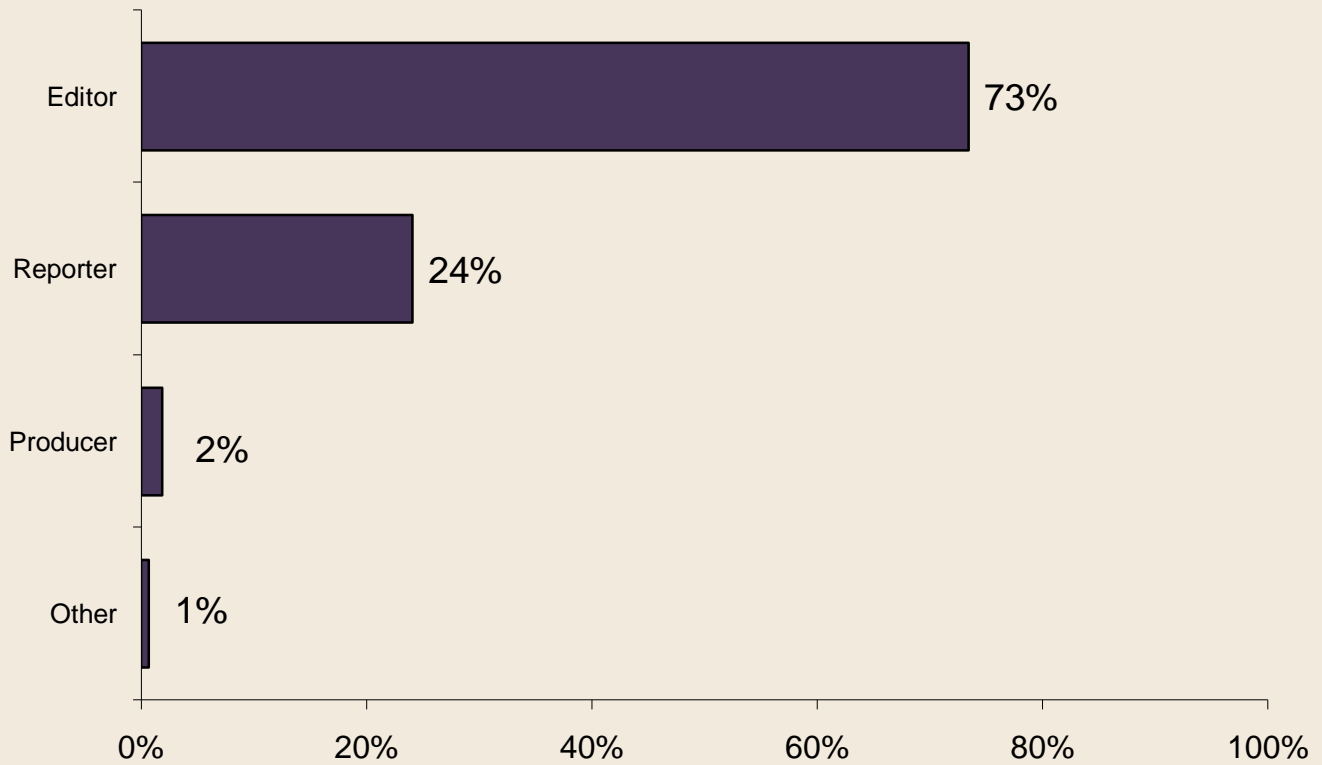


**Q7. What other suggestions do you have for improving the quality of e-mail pitches you receive from communications professionals?** See “Selected Verbatim Responses,” starting page 24, for answers to Q7 and Q12.

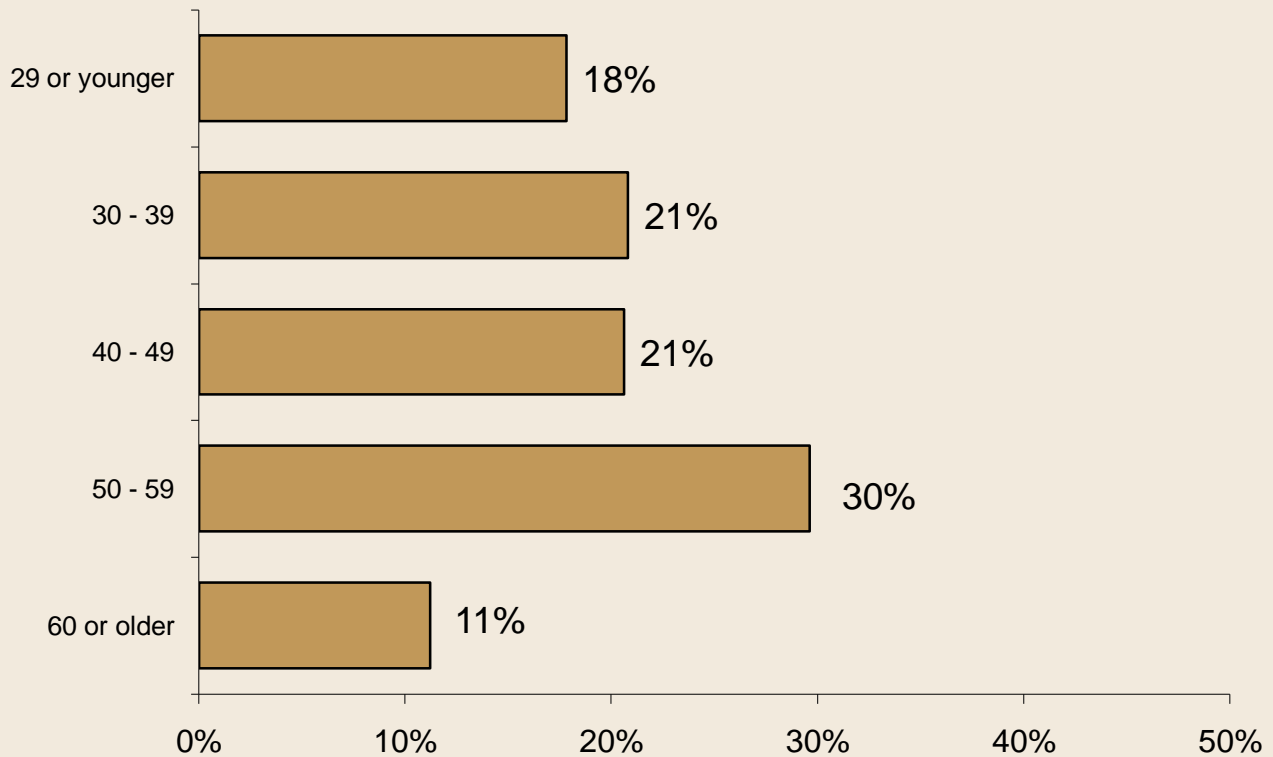
**Q8. How do you prefer to receive unsolicited e-mail pitches from communications professionals? ~ Summary of “Definitely Prefer”**



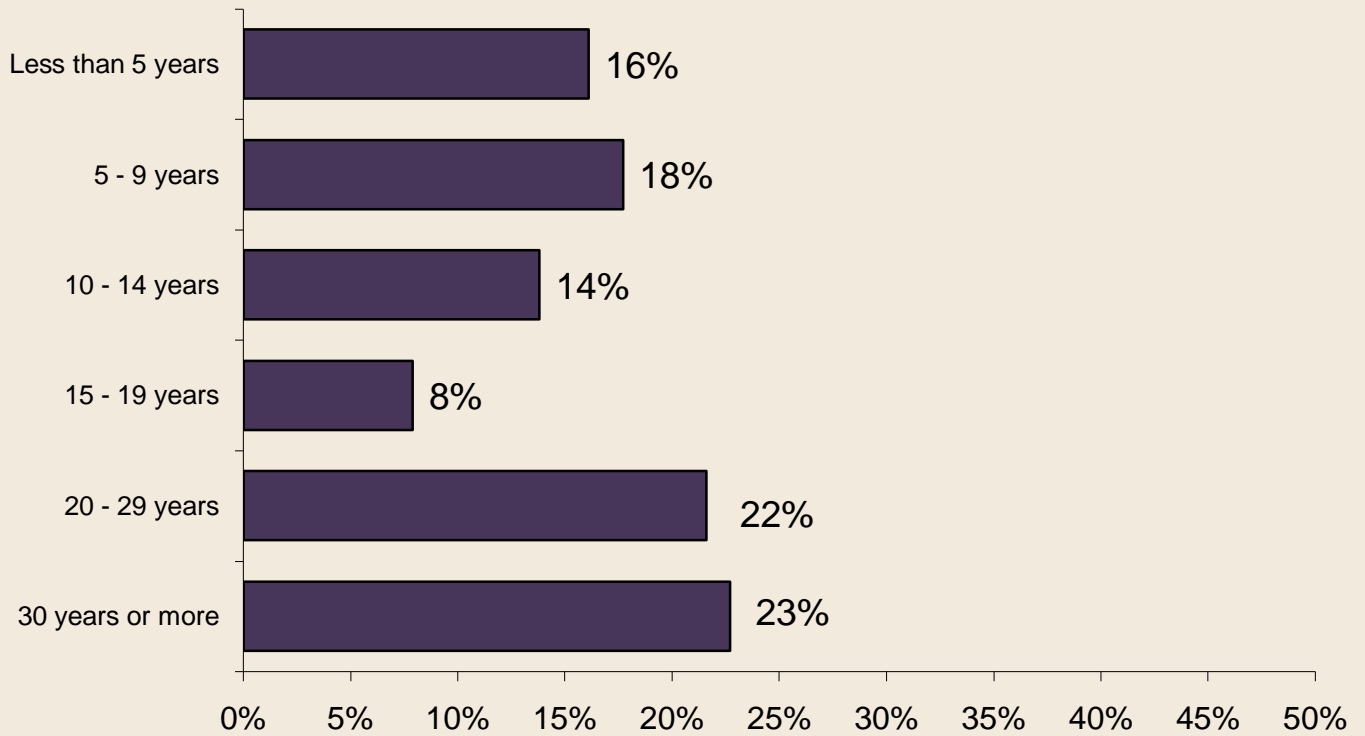
### Q9. What is your primary role in the media you work for?



### Q10. What is your age?



### Q11. How long have you been working in the media?



**Q12. Please add any other comments or suggestions regarding this survey or how PR professionals can work more efficiently and effectively with the media.** See "Selected Verbatim Responses," starting page 24, for answers to Q7 and Q12.



## Selected Verbatim Responses

These verbatim responses were in answer to Q7 and Q12 and were selected from a far larger number of responses in order to minimize repetitive expressions of the same or similar comments and suggestions.

- Keep file size small. Large attachments mean the entire email gets dumped because of my inbox restrictions. Approach me before the product (if it's a product) comes to market.
- A blanket press release e-mail sent to a bunch of reporters is far more likely to be ignored. The offer of exclusivity, however minor, even a throwaway quote that isn't included in the release, would pique anyone's interest more.
- Always use a date (!) linked to the body of the news release; undated information is useless! Always describe in detail the topic (product, etc.). Make sure that the contact listed in the PR can answer any questions regarding the topic
- Avoid unqualified superlatives such as "the industry's leading" or "best in class." Save all TM, SM, R, superscripts for an all-encompassing statement at the end. Follow AP Style. Do not use all caps in headlines; make all copy flush left.
- Be concise and get to the point quickly. Be more personal. The person pitching the idea should know about my publication. The pitches I like best are the ones where I decide instantly I want to include it on my web site or blog. Those are unique, current and I want the scoop before my competition covers it.
- Be more creative - pitches need to be tailor-made for my organization. Why do I want to do the same story that's being pitched to dozens of other news outlets the exact same way?
- Besides presenting the 5 Ws in the lead, make sure you are sending it to the right department. I am an arts and entertainment editor, but I get things for sports, faith, and news.
- Better subject lines, no attachments, signature with contact information, no follow up phone calls

- Better understand the audience and have sources in mind that you would like to use, even if there isn't an established relationship. Have a better idea of the editorial cycle (i.e., don't pitch a "summer reading" article in June - it's too late).
- Catchy, more clear subject lines. Cut to the chase quicker. And, in my case, stress early on if there's a LOCAL angle. Photos/graphics on request only, as this clogs up my email and is annoying.
- Check the editorial content or query the editor for a sample mag in a pdf to get a feel for the audience and demographics. I get three dozen invites a month for press trips (group and independent) many with short lead times making it next to impossible [to go].
- Communications professionals will get a better response rate if they address the person who they are contacting by their first name. They need to search for it especially for those of us who are bloggers. I hate being addressed "Hi, there".
- Do not use my first name in an informal manner as if we were old friends. Let me know upfront I'm being pitched. Do not condescend to me with unfounded scary statistics and Chicken Little B.S. Do a little research to see if I'm the fish you want to catch
- Don't send huge attachments, put the text of a press release in the body of the email (instead of attaching a word document) and provide a link to an online gallery where the press release and images can be downloaded.
- Don't try to write a story angle for me. Put the most newsworthy facts up front, get me a handful of experts/stakeholders to talk to, and let me write it. Don't spend a bunch of time putting it into your own context, or trying to write a lead.
- Don't use caps in the subject lines, and make the subject lines shorter. Eliminate all references to trademarks (tm, copyright symbols, etc.). Include a permanent link to the online version of the release, so we can link to it more easily.
- E-mail pitches to me would be more effective if the PR professional would give some indication that they are familiar with my publication and where their proposed story would fit within it.
- Explain value to our audience rather than value to the business represented.

- Get PR pros who are trained and seasoned professionals to make the calls to the press, not 24-year-old account execs who call reporters and sound like they're reading from the press release (because that's exactly what they're doing half the time).
- Go to my website and watch the last 10 stories I did and get a better feel for what news our station tries to cover and how.
- Have the facts up top and easy to find. Lose the promotional babble. I look at an email 3-5 seconds. If I don't get it, it gets recycled.
- I don't want someone's ideas, I just want them to give me the information and let me decide what to do with it. The less fluff in the release the better.
- I get a LOT of email blasts from agencies on topics that have nothing to do with our area of coverage. It's a waste of our time and their clients' money. Professionals who take the time to pitch a story relevant to our audience always get our attention.
- I hate attachments that take up all the space in my mailbox. Query me before sending me a gazillion attachments! Make the emails more personal. Know my audience.
- I heartily welcome email pitches, but only from professionals who show an awareness of my publications and our audiences.
- I will ignore any pitch that is badly written, doesn't give me a clear idea what the subject company actually does, or doesn't apply to my audience...so it's important to master those three areas.
- I work in TV and radio. I need to know is there an event, where is it, what time is it, are you providing pictures (especially for companies that want oversight of their image or regions that are difficult to reach)?
- I'd say quick and efficient follow through is important. After I've replied to an e-mail pitch, I really appreciate it when the publicist responds right away, and gives me what I need to develop the story.
- If you're a PR professional making your first pitch to me, please take some time to familiarize yourself with my publication and specific beat before you make the initial call/hit 'send' on the press release/email. The uninformed pitch is box-office poison.

- Improve targeting of lists. I get too many irrelevant messages, and too many messages that should be directed to me go to colleagues having different beats.
- Include Web site addresses of relevant companies mentioned. Relate relevance to my readers.
- Including the 5Ws in the first paragraph; toning down the promotional speak enough so I can understand what the real story is.
- Keep it short and to the point. Many editors, such as myself, receive several hundred emails a day, so get to the point in the first or second line.
- Keep it short. \* Use bullet points when possible \* Always include contact name, number, and email \* Make the boilerplate clear and concise as to what the company/organization is and where it is located. Avoid being ambiguous and adjectives in general.
- Know the media you are sending this to and understand the different ways we have to deliver information today. We are a print magazine, but we now have audio and video feeds via internet, electronic newsletters, a TV affiliate, etc.
- Learn your geography, especially out west. My newspaper serves a region of close to 1 million people, but it's not San Francisco or Los Angeles. It has its unique demographics that aren't that difficult to get a handle on with a little research
- Less broadcast stuff, more targeted to my publications. Smarter pitches. Not using pitches to sell products or services -- just the story, please. More professional -- less amateurish. Get to the point.
- Localize the story more... Offer me people in my area about stories that have a local angle. Also, if you're promoting a product you've got to do a better job of making the prospective story more than a 2 minute commercial for your product.
- More and more diverse quotes; analyst or other third-party comments in press releases. Info on primary customers or users of the product, so features and benefits are put in context.
- More stories; more stories; more stories! Make it easy for me!
- I prefer a strong news lead, or feature lead. Brevity (1 page) is appreciated. Image links and info is key too.

- I write for a weekly trade publication, so I cover the news of the industry. I need more facts and figures, more concrete information. Fluffy, promotional pitches do me and our readers zero
- Ninety percent of the e-mail pitches I receive show an obvious lack of knowledge about our publication.
- Now that many of us write for multiple properties, ID which publication your pitch is intended for. Do you mean my magazine? Or my newsletter? Or do you think this would be a good fit for the blog?
- Pitches should go to the right person. Go online, search Google news for your subject, find out who writes about it and pitch to that person.
- Pitches should include commentary from product end-users. In my case, I want help in contacting contractors who have tried the product. This requires the agency to persuade their clients to find and/or reveal names of key end-users.
- PR professionals need to avoid clichés, tired business jargon and qualitative terms in general. Such qualitative, emotion-laden terms (i.e. wonderful, great, best, impressive, etc.) may work in advertisements but they don't work in a news story.
- PR spam gives the industry a bad name. Email lists should be cleaned so that releases and/or pitches have at least SOME relevance, particularly when sending to niche publications. Cannot stress this enough. Irrelevant pitches are not effective and do nothing.
- Press releases should be carefully proofed for typos, etc. Provide links to other Web sites where more information can be gathered about the subject.
- Provide LOCAL sources who can be interviewed. Understand that I'm not interested in generating a staff-written story on content outside our immediate region.
- Read the target publication and give them material in their style. Pitch features that fit regular elements of the magazine--basically, if you offer to do someone's job for them and do it as well as they do, you'll get ink.
- Reduce the follow-up. No response is a response.
- Reference availability of quotable sources outside client or immediate company who can weigh in on the announcement....

- Releases that get to the point work the best. I delete promotional-sounding pitches fast. A time element is key. Less attachments. Less fancy decoration.
- Seriously consider whether something is worth a story, or whether you'd have a better chance of informing people by placing an advertisement. A new juice, toy, skin care product is not news, even for a feature section.
- State the NEWS upfront. Give stats, study specifics high up. Answer the question: "Why is this important now"?
- Statistics, statistics, statistics, please! Incorporating research from third-parties is always great.
- Subject lines should be short and to the point.
- The biggest issue is professionalism. I receive countless pitches with typos or formatting issues that make the item and the person sending it appear to lack in quality.
- Know what type of news an organization does on a daily basis. The pitcher should be familiar with franchises. This is easy to do know that most television stations have better websites.
- The person pitching should have checked out my web site to make sure the caliber of guest (or story) they are pitching is at the level of the rest of the guests and stories we've covered.
- The shorter the better. If you're talking product, include a photo.
- The subject line should always say what release is about -- don't leave it blank or say "press release" in subject line. I get thousands of emails. I need to know what your email is about before I will spend my precious time opening it.
- If I received two or three news releases in a row from the same source that are irrelevant, I start deleting emails from that source without reading them.
- They should actually read my Cision profile and actually look at the website before pitching something to me.
- Think of my point of view as an editor looking to capture the undivided attention of a reader/user. Ask: What makes this story impossible to ignore?
- This is a new era of information sharing. PR should stop acting as such stalwart gatekeepers. You're not the law. We'll find what we need--probably at your competitor--so get off your high-horse. Almost all publicity is good publicity.

- Understand my business and don't act surprised or offended if I don't agree that your client/product/idea is worthy of coverage in my publication.
- We are a local newspaper. Information about a business on the opposite side of the country is useless to me and wastes my time.
- Access readily available magazine/audience background details on website. If not confident of subject's relevance to the audience, frame pitch in terms of "We thought perhaps there is some potential here with your readers."
- Always add material at the bottom outlining who the company is and what they do so we can tell if they are relevant to our industry. Identify the headquarters of the company. Ensure that all your facts are correct and spelled correctly.
- Answer questions honestly (ha). Be more accessible. If we have questions and you don't know the answer, say "I don't know, but I'll look into it." Don't just ignore the questions or wait to respond until you find an answer.
- Be more specific in going after your target audience. A business reporter in Omaha couldn't care less about a fashion event in L.A.
- Be respectful of deadlines, answer follow-up questions promptly, and provide requested photos in printable format with captions. Provide after-hours contact info.
- Be straightforward; don't try to be cute. And here's the big thing. Don't use jargon. A tech company release that starts talking about solutions sends me right to the delete button. Be clear; write in English; understand what you are trying to convey.
- Call us sometimes.
- Check mailing lists. It is not necessary to send the same copy to everyone on staff at a publication. We know how to share with each other. When in doubt, choose the editor. Duplicates just waste our time.
- Do not place phone calls to follow up on emails.
- Do not send PDF attachments. Have links to easily download accompanying photos. Attach clean Word or RTF documents. Do not use default e-mail Verdana typeface. Use Arial or Times. Make it easy to copy and paste text.

- Don't hound editors with pitches; i.e. don't call me five minutes after sending an e-mail. That is a great way to never hear from me. If I am interested, I will contact you. Keep in mind, that on any given day I can receive 100 pitches....
- Every news outlet is different and requires individual attention.
- Factual, unembellished material always is appreciated and frequently used. We can spot too heavily spun releases. Timely material is key.
- First, they can check and see if your location is relevant to whatever it is they are pitching. At least once a day I get a call about a "local" event ... it only takes a few seconds to ferret out that "local" is 100 miles away. There are maps ...use them.
- Flash web sites and graphic heavy e-mailed press releases are horrible. They're just bells and whistles that are a profound waste of my time.
- Follow up calls are vital. While I wouldn't follow up every PR, I would target the publications most likely to be interested in that release and call. Often, as editors, we'll have question or two.
- Follow-up calls are distracting and unnecessary. Generally, if I'm pitched something I am interested in, I will follow up. If not, the "attack on all fronts" method only results in my frustration with the agency that contacts me.
- Follow-up calls are effective. Annoying follow-up e-mails are not.
- For online media pros, offering graphics to go with stories or offering more technical and less "business" angles would be welcome.
- Here is a simple question seldom asked: "Have I reached you at convenient time?" I am glad to help people, but when I am busy, I am busy. Before you dump the scut work off the newest person, provide some guidance. Don't make me teach your newbies.
- I actually receive a lot of good press materials. Just keep it simple, offer links to multimedia, make it clear where the information is coming from.
- I definitely like receiving press releases with links to photos, audio, video, websites, pdf files, etc.
- I like art (graphics, photos) available if I choose to use a story. But I hate having to spend my time chasing down photos or details by visiting multiple Web sites. If you think I might be interested, offer to email the art or put it on one site to visit.



- I recognize that you serve two audiences: me and your client. Don't be insulted when we don't respond to what you think is the best invention since the wheel!
- If you don't know me, don't use my first name when talking to me. That's for friends, colleagues and family. We are the media. Even B-to-B media execs are made up of regular people who think like regular people, not corporate types.
- I'm all in favor of print media using more audio and video on their websites -- I create podcasts myself -- but I don't want to receive PR material that requires me to listen or watch a story pitch
- In these days of instantaneous 24-hour news and information availability, we need communications professionals who are accessible and responsive in a timely fashion -- which means immediately during business hours and often beyond 5 p.m.
- Include the links to the organizations cited in the news release, and not just the link to your own product.
- It's also important for a PR person to respect deadlines and to be available by phone and work quickly. I really resent cold calls when I am on deadline. Better to just send an e-mail and ask if there is a time we can talk.
- Join the digital revolution! No more snail mail! Use push technology to send me press releases! Don't use services that require me to go out and get the release--if you want my attention, give me the information at my fingertips!
- Know the magazine's audience and style. It's as simple as picking up a magazine or going online to find it. Not necessary to send a detailed outline. By the time an outline is written, the article could be written and submitted.
- My old journalism teacher had one rule he urged us to follow: "Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity" It holds true no matter who's doing the writing. If you are trying to present a complicated or technical issue, make sure it's written for the average person.
- No phone calls to inquire if we received the press release! E-mail is the best communication. I respond to interview requests in as timely a way as possible.
- Our newspaper, like many others, is getting more local all the time. If you are going to pitch me something from outside my circulation area, give some thought to how I might be able to localize it.

- Pitches that work are ones that are put in context of a larger trend. PR people who do this right offer their client as part of a larger story. Journalists will not pick up a pitch that's isolated, focusing solely on some PR person's client.
- Please look at the magazine, whether online or print, and make the pitch appropriate. I receive tons of releases regarding end user products, while my site is only read by design engineers.
- PR people need to go back to the basics and quit feature writing!
- Press kits are always welcome, with CDs or DVDs if applicable. Don't bury point in long press releases. Right off, tell me the main point/why my readers should be interested.
- Provide RSS feed for releases so I can subscribe to them.
- Reduce hyperbole in copy, especially as it relates to quotes from company executives.
- Pitch me once per story idea, with one follow-up at the most. I promise I'll get back to you if I'm interested.
- Send press releases with definite news hooks, and information on how we can localize the story, providing e-mail addresses and phone numbers of potential sources. If scheduling a press conference, provide plenty of advance warning.
- Target, target, target! Know who you pitch to. Don't send news to a non-news organization, for instance. Segment your lists to reflect media interests.
- The quality or relevance of the idea is most important, as opposed to all the bells and whistles you can add (i.e. pod casts, video, etc.).
- Think like an editor. In other words, think like the reader of the publication/vehicle. Think like a reporter. In other words, think about the 5 W's and one H.
- We have to work too hard to get in touch with the media contacts -- websites are weak on contact info, and the media reps never return calls.
- When pitching stories, think about what you would want to consume as a reader. I can't imagine that go percent of the ideas I receive would be in any way interesting to the people proposing them.