

Tips on how non-profits pitch stories to the media

There are different ways to approach the media. You can call reporters directly, send emails to reporters directly or to the news desk and/or send a press release.

Once a reporter gets your inquiry, they ask three questions when they evaluate a "pitch":

- Why now?
- Why is this news?
- Who cares?

Most often when a nonprofit tries pitching a story to a reporter, the story probably is not breaking news, and may not seem relevant and newsworthy at first glance.

How do you make your story newsworthy? How do you make it relevant?

- Give the reporter an exclusive. If a media outlet receives an important story first, they will be more likely to cover it. Media outlets like to break stories first, they will have a "scoop" that makes them look good.
- Make it different, make it unique. Stories that are new or original are news because they are interesting and appealing. That may land the story on the front page or at the top of the hour.
- Involve a big name. Our culture seems obsessed with the famous, so adding a celebrity to your story can make it interesting to the right media. For example if you are having a press conference or an event and a prominent speaker, author, celebrity or elected official is attending – tell the reporters that.
- Use words like - first, biggest, smallest, oldest—don't exaggerate and don't make false statements but if it's true, capitalize on it.
- Play up the stakes. Conflict or controversy is news. Media love stories with protagonists. The battle between the two sides creates drama and emotion, elevating a, perhaps not so edgy issue to an appealing story.
- Be part of the solution. The media hear a lot about the negative impact of the issues we seek to address. If we can position our cause as a rare "good news" story, it will be an attention getter. If your organization has come up with a solution, let it be known.
- Put a face on the story. Compelling human-interest angles of any kind are news because journalists are always looking to put a human face on their stories.
- Make it local. A local angle on a national news story is news to media in your own community. The economy is a major issue – let members of your community tell their own stories about how the economy has affected them.
- Provide pictures. Newspapers and magazines love photos, and television reporters have to bring in visuals to get a story on the air. Let the media outlet know that photo opportunities are available. If dealing with a small publication, have some photos of your own to contribute.

**Tips taken from NNAAC*