

5 WAYS TO AGGRAVATE THE LOCAL REPORTER

We've covered a great deal in this column about how simple it is to grow your reputation and bottom line by generating free local media publicity.

The one thing we haven't done is focus on a few things that reporters hate. It's a good idea to stay away from the following five things.

1 Pitching something that's not newsworthy

Early in the series, we looked at the things reporters like to cover. These include anything related to a topical issue, something out of the ordinary, something new or a first, human interest and conflict. If you use these as guides with a local flavour, you can't go wrong, but remember it has to be of interest to the audience.

2 Not being available for follow-up

If you send an email pitch or press release, make sure you'll be available if the reporter wants to talk to you. If you have meetings scheduled all day, wait until the next day. When they do ring, it's fine to delay them for 30 minutes or so to prepare yourself, but no longer.

3 Send the same pitch to another reporter and having it appear in competitive media first

This is a great way to destroy a relationship with a local reporter. I need to qualify this. If it's something that would be huge and may interest metropolitan or even national media, you can circulate it everywhere. The



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same goes if it's some event you're holding where you want as many people as possible to attend. But if it's specific and local only, you're best to focus on one media outlet and tailor it specifically to them.

4 Ask to see the story before publication

In almost every situation, you should never ask to see the story first. This is usually taken as an insult by the reporter or his or her editor. They could tell you that if you want to edit the story, you should take out an advertisement. Some media even have a strict policy of not doing this. The main reason people want to see a draft story is to avoid being misquoted if the story involved an interview. The best way to deal with this is to be clear and brief during that interview. We'll have more on that in a later article. The other thing you can do is tell the reporter you'll be available if they want to check any quotes back with you. Having said all this, I have heard of the rare situation where junior reporters offer you a chance to see it first. By

all means, take up that offer but don't ask.

5 Demand coverage

There will be times when the reporter rejects your pitches. Sometimes this might even be when you're convinced the story would be a winner. There can be many reasons why a reporter, or editor, does this. It's important to accept their decision. Remember they are the boss. If you have formed a good relationship, you can ask why, but make it friendly and brief.

By following these guidelines, you'll have a great and prosperous relationship with your local reporter.

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