

12 TIPS

rethink

Building Reporter Relationships

- 1 Pick the right outlets and reporters.** Identify outlets that reach your organization's target audience—this could be your base, or a persuadable group. The last thing you want to do is waste a reporter's time by approaching someone who doesn't cover your issues.
- 2 Do your research.** Knowing your target's beat, the subjects they cover, and the types of sources they tend to quote will empower you to offer them useful information. Make sure the reporters you identify cover your issues.
- 3 Quality over quantity.** Developing and nurturing a handful of quality relationships with key reporters on your beat is often a more effective strategy than sending huge email blasts to hundreds of reporters.
- 4 Bigger isn't always better.** The New York Times is not the end-all be-all, and might even be the wrong choice to reach your audience! Local and state journalists, for example, are hugely important members of the media. They tend to reach an engaged audience and have a great impact on policy makers and the general public.
- 5 Reporters are busy.** Remember there's a person on the other side of the screen! Be polite, take an interest in them. Keep communication short and sweet and be cognizant of when they're on deadline.
- 6 Be a resource, not the source.** Strive for a symbiotic relationship, rather than a transactional one. Suggest other sources the reporter might also benefit from knowing.
- 7 Twitter is your friend.** Most journalists are on Twitter and use it as a tool for their reporting. Follow reporters, promote their stories, and engage in the conversation.
- 8 Look like an expert online.** In order to become a trusted source or resource to a journalist, you've got to look like it. Maintaining a web presence on your organization's website, a Twitter profile, and LinkedIn page means that you will control the narrative when a reporter inevitably Googles you.
- 9 Engage in multiple ways.** Acknowledge that you are following their work and find creative and kind ways to engage on Twitter and via email. Casual contact can lay the groundwork for successful pitching.
- 10 Meet for coffee.** If you find a reporter whose interests align well with your work (see #2!), take the relationship to the next level. All it takes is a 30-minute coffee to get to know each other and learn about what they are expecting to cover.
- 11 Give kudos.** Most feedback reporters receive is negative. When you see good coverage, celebrate good work. Write reporters a note with your praise and share the article on social media. On the flip side, pick your battles with public criticism of their work.
- 12 Don't overdo it.** Send one follow-up email to a pitch at most. Reporters are deluged with a high volume of email every day and can't respond to every email. Don't take it personally. Reporters will often respond to a pitch after ignoring your previous five pitches.

