

What Do Journalists Think of Bad PR Pitches?

There's a lot to be learned from other people's mistakes, including other publicists. In this article, I share some quick tips for crafting great PR pitches, provide insight on what makes a PR pitch bad and end on some journalists' amusing takes about bad PR pitches they've received.

What Makes a Great Media Pitch?

Jaffe's Newsstand has addressed [best practices for media relations](#) and [tips for working with legal media](#) in previous blogs. Here's a quick summary:

- Research the journalists you are pitching.
- Personalize your pitches to their coverage and their needs.
- Write a compelling subject line.
- Present a newsworthy topic for their consideration.
- Write in a concise manner.
- Offer a reliable, available, insightful source who can comment on the news topic.
- Give examples of comments the source can provide.
- Make sure that the pitch helps the reporter.
- Appreciate the art of the follow-up by knowing when and how much is appropriate.
- Maintain contact and help nurture the source's relationship with the journalist.

Do Journalists Read Pitches?

Producers, editors and reporters receive pitches all day long. Their inboxes are stuffed with press release announcements, source pitches and story ideas. But are these pitches on the mark? A reporter once told me his pointer finger was permanently dented due to how often he hit the Delete key on emails that didn't meet his needs or interests.

Even a great pitch may remain unread in a reporter's inbox simply due to workload. And it's not surprising to hear back from a reporter several weeks, or even months, after a pitch, asking whether the source is available to talk.

What Makes a "Bad" Pitch?

A few years ago, Muck Rack began tracking "bad PR pitches" and publishing a monthly roundup of what they call "cringeworthy tweets from journalists about the PR pitches landing in their inboxes." The pitches are, as Muck Rack describes, "both hilarious and horrifying." They give a glimpse into not only reporters' pet peeves but also the importance of crafting a pitch that will do what it's meant to do: help the reporter by



Liz Bard Lindley
Senior Vice President
Public Relations
917.455.1798
llindley@jaffepr.com

providing an excellent source and/or story idea.

Thank You, Journalists

As we wrap up this unbelievable year, I want to thank all journalists who have weathered changing topics, short-staffed newsrooms, office closures, work-life balance, and complicated (and sometimes bizarre) news, and who have covered 2020's issues with the noble intent of keeping their readers and viewers informed. Thank you for working with us on relationships with new and existing sources during all of the ups and many downs of this year.

With that said, and with gratitude for the Twitter feed that gives us reason to laugh, here are a few "bad PR pitches" reporters tweeted over the last few years, as published by Muck Rack.

- "Just got a PR pitch offering an interview with a CTO and a note that they're 'happy to draft questions too if that's helpful.' That's new and – I cannot emphasize this enough – also not how journalism works. I'm genuinely insulted by the concept of this."
- "Ah, the 'I was wondering if you were interested in this PR pitch you didn't respond to that has nothing to do with what you actually write about' follow-up email. Always a good time for all involved."
- "Make your PR pitches at least seem personally written rather than just mass spammed. That includes keeping the fonts uniform so it's not obvious where you copied and pasted."
- "What's with people who send a 'follow-up' email less than 24 hrs after their first email? Like, settle down there, skippy, your PR pitch isn't life and death."
- "If you're a PR person emailing me to tell me how much you loved one of my recent health articles (before you launch into your PR pitch), make sure it's actually one of my articles."
- "The truest opening sentence in PR pitch email history: My constant follow-up might be irritating, but ..."
- "Typical afternoon, deleted 61 new PR pitches since 8 am to find the emails I was looking for from colleagues and sources."
- "Just Because It's 'Exclusive' Doesn't Mean I'll Cover Your PR Pitch."
- "Your pitch needs to fit in the length of a tweet. I am not kidding about this. I have 2,400 unread emails now, mostly PR pitches. I give a pitch one sentence to get my attention. If it hasn't grabbed me by then, I just hit delete and move on."
- "My favorite PR pitches always start with 'Hi [MediaContactFirstName],' It is that personal touch that really makes it stand out."
- "... some PR pitches really are like 'hi, really loved your recent article! if you happen to write the exact same article again in the near future, i hope you'll consider including my client, as they are a perfect fit!'"

Here's to a happy and healthy 2021, filled with good PR pitches! Feel free to leave a comment below, or contact me, Liz Lindley, at llindley@jaffepr.com.