

WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Once you have established a timeline and are ready to put the wheels in motion for your book's PR campaign, the first step is selecting your target media.

Finding your target media requires a candid assessment of your book. Who would be interested in reading it? Make lists of potential book buyers – who they are, where they are, what topics and issues both concern and interest them, what in your book is relevant to them, and then find those potential buyers. Research magazines these potential buyers read, newspaper columns that reach them, radio and television shows they listen to and watch, and use this information as your guide. The more specific you can be, the better your likelihood of reaching these potential buyers. Your book may appeal to a wide variety of different groups and you should endeavor to reach them all.

Once you have an idea of who your target media is, you need to find them.

Media research databases can be a terrific source of information. However, they can also be terrifically expensive. Don't despair if a yearly subscription to a media research service is cost prohibitive, as there are plenty of other ways to find media contact information.

Visit your favorite bookstore, library or newsstand and look for magazines, newspapers, and journals that might afford an opportunity for book coverage. Find magazines, journals, and outlets you think could be interested in your book.

The internet is a wonderful source of information on specific media.

Research media outlets by visiting their websites – read what they are writing about, note the focus of their publication or show, and research what topics specific journalists are covering. Most websites will include contact information for editors, writers, and staff. In addition, many websites even include guidelines for submitting.

Now that you've found them, it is time to make contact.

Making initial contact with a member of the media can be accomplished in several ways. You can meet face-to-face, call them on the phone, write a letter, or send an email. Please do bear in mind that journalists and producers are often working on tight deadlines and may not want to disruption of a phone call. Believe me – you will know! On balance, email is less intrusive, as the journalist has the luxury of reading – and responding – at his or her convenience.

If you do prefer to call, be polite. Introduce yourself and be sure to ask upfront if this is a good time for

them to talk and if not, ask when might be a better time. Be brief. Explain exactly why you are calling, and offer to send more information. Use your discretion, but sometimes a follow up email thanking the journalist for his or her time, and recapping the conversation can be useful.

You've made contact, now keep in touch.

Follow up is crucial. Know that it sometimes takes more than one follow-up to get a response. After initial contact has been made, and you have sent the requested material, follow up in 7-10 days to confirm receipt, and offer more information or an interview. If you do not hear back within 7-10 days, follow up again. Be persistent, but follow the guideline of 7-10 days, with the exception of breaking news that relates to your book.

If there is a breaking news story that does not pertain to your book or area of expertise, do not contact them.

Whatever you do, Know thy media

One of the most important parts of pitching successfully is researching the media outlet before you pitch. Watch for articles and columns that the journalist has written, guests the host or producer has booked on a show, and mention them when you pitch – particularly when these relate to your book.

By establishing this connection, you are letting the journalist know that you have taken the time to do your research and that you have an understanding of what he or she is looking for. It also signals to the journalist or producer that you may be offering a great lead on an upcoming story, show or article. Doing the research does take time, but it is time well spent.