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Getting Your Small Business Into the Press

Big companies have public relations pros who spend all day cultivating relationships with reporters. The good news for you: Reporters hate spin, and because of technology, it's easier than ever to get your company's story in reporters' hands.

While it's still common for companies to issue broad press releases to try to impress reporters, for a small business, that's often not the most efficient way to reach the press, says Margie Zable Fisher, president of Zable Fisher Public Relations in Boca Raton, Fla., which works exclusively with small businesses. Today, reporters troll for sources on several free websites, including **www.helpareporter.com (http://www.helpareporter.com)** and **www.pitchrate.com (http://www.pitchrate.com)**, where they list what they're looking for in the way of sources. Why not make yourself available?

Want to connect with a reporter? Here are Zable Fisher's eight tips to stand out among lots of businesses looking for attention on sites like these.

1. **Always follow the media contact's requests.** If you're told to put "Jane Doe Story" in the subject line of your reply to their query, do it. The reporter might have a filter that sends all query-related replies to a certain email box.
2. **Don't make a pitch unless you're really a good candidate for a story**. If you make fat-free dog biscuits, and that's what the reporter is looking for, then reply. But if you make great-tasting dog biscuits and want to prove yours are just as great, don't bother. You'll annoy the reporter, making it unlikely that person will consider you in the future.
3. **Include all of your contact information in the pitch.** That includes full name, business name, title, day, night and weekend phone numbers and email address. Including a Web site shows credibility and provides additional information for the reporter.
4. **Do not send attachments unless they're asked for.** Email filters sometimes delete emails with attachments automatically.
5. If the reporter doesn't give specific instructions for the subject line, **put the title of the query there**, along with your company name. Something like "Source and Information for Credit Crunch – John Doe" should work. This allows the reporter to find your information through an email search.
6. **Give them some information**. If a reporter is looking for ways employers are helping employees with high gas prices, don't just say you have the answers. Give a couple of bullet points with your ideas so a reporter knows contacting you will be worth their time.
7. If you're replying to a reporter's query, **always respond immediately**, even if the deadline is far away. The reporter has also asked other people for sources, and if they get responses from others more quickly, they may stop considering new sources.
8. If you're submitting a product for consideration, **include a link** to a photo, the price, listing of colors available and a description of the product.

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