



Nine Ways to Insure Your News Doesn't Get Through

By Tom Gable

Wondering why your news isn't getting through? In some cases, it may be DOA (dead on arrival) and you may never have had the benefit of a crime scene investigation (CSI) to tell you why, until now. In surveying former colleagues and friends in the media, we found nine key reasons for failure:

1. **Wrong Outlet** – The perpetrator failed to determine the editorial focus, needs and requirements of each target. This often involves having junior people compile lists and fire off news and semi-news willy-nilly without further research (i.e. sending a color mug shot of the new VP marketing at a private start-up to The Wall Street Journal; launching an earnings report from a local company, to the national media, major dailies, Web sites, blogs, television stations and daily newspapers throughout country; or sullyng the inboxes of key bloggers with standard corporate news releases).
2. **Wrong Target** – Media database and list services aren't always up to date, so due diligence is required. You can get the outlet right but throw a wild pitch. Don't send something addressed simply to the Editor; that's like home junk mail addressed to "Occupant." Avoid misdirection such as sending a biotech pitch to the telecom writer or a software story to the city columnist. Phone calls and emails can work wonders in finding the right target and even starting a relationship.
3. **Lame Subject Lines** – Media sources cited "See the attached" (with nothing in the message section); "for immediate release"; and anything that includes empty words such as leading, paradigm, synergy, best of breed, solutions and superlatives in general; has an exclamation point (!); or no subject line.
4. **Burying the News** – If it's not in the headline, first paragraph, or both, it's goodbye. Be brilliant in the first 100 words. Think like an editor. Simply ask yourself, from an outside point of view: so what and who cares?
5. **Content, of Course** – Editors are amazed by how many pitches and releases are crammed with unsubstantiated claims (world leader), superlatives, lack of supporting data, hyperbole, self-serving quotes by the CEO or others, and jargon-laden copy understood by only a few engineers, Ph.D.s or cognoscenti in the business. Is it a good story for your target's audience? Does it stand above whatever the competition is doing?

Is the story interesting to someone other than the CEO quoted in the story and his or her immediate family?

6. **Obvious Spam** – Anything with more than one name or zero names in the “TO:” or “CC:” lines.
7. **Clogging the Pipeline** – Not every writer/editor/blogger has high-speed connections or capacity for huge attachments. Some media limit the size of files accepted by their systems, so you may never get through. Put essential news into the body of the email and offer to provide more information or high-resolution graphics if desired.
8. **Lack of Style** – Beyond content, connect with the media in their own news style, which is dictated by the Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual (Perseus Books). Typical errors: capitalizing every possible title after a name (Joe Smythe, Asst. Vice President of Outside Sales, Lower Echelon Division), leaving out a first or last name of a person cited in the story, or their titles, or both.
9. **Credibility** – If you've violated any of the eight tenets listed above, you and your organization may find yourself in a “Bozo Filter,” a term coined by major media for filters set up to automatically delete any email from certain companies and agencies based on their previous performance, or lack of same. A similar fate – blacklisting – awaits those who violate some of the written and unwritten laws of the blogosphere.

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