



## 11 things that annoy journalists and bloggers

By *Abbi Whitaker*

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A public relations professional can be one of the most valuable resources for a journalist—a partner who points out relevant news, gives access to valued sources, and provides photos and reliable company background.

Unfortunately, repeated miscues by PR companies frequently turn them into the equivalent of spammers.

Here are 10 irritating habits common among PR media pitchers that can destroy any chance of a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship with a writer or editor. Avoid these mistakes, and you'll improve your chances of success with journalists across the nation.

**1. Blasting mass emails.** This is a no-brainer. Marketing is all about personalization, communication, engagement, and listening. The same rules that apply to everyday communication apply to journalists. They hate to be bcc'd or, even worse, cc'd.

Remember you are pitching a news outlet, and no news outlet wants to cover something that everyone else is publishing or broadcasting (unless it's an earnings announcement, for example, in which case the journalists probably have opted in).

**2. Sending the same Twitter @ reply to 30 people.** Everyone can see your @ replies. It's even worse than sending a mass email, because the rest of world can see your ploy. Just don't do it.

**3. Mailing big press kits.** Have you ever been to a journalist's office? It's not exactly a penthouse on Park Avenue. I know you think those creative and elaborate [press kits](#) you persuade your clients to produce are "cute," but are they practical? If you must create a press kit, it's best to keep it to an 8x10 folder.

**4. "Just following up."** Imagine it's 3 p.m. and you have a 4 p.m. deadline for a 1,000-word story and your main source just fell through. Then you get a call from a [PR company](#) saying: "Hi. Just calling to follow up on the release I sent you and to double-check that you received my release on the opening of Jimmy's Jump Factory." Enough said.

**5. Leaving phone messages.** Sad, but true. Imagine how many messages a journalist at [The New York Times](#) receives each day. By the time they get to their fifth message, they have already tuned out.

**6. Adding them to your newsletter.** I love newsletters—we have one at Abbi PR.

But we don't add people. We let them choose whether they'd like to receive our information. You should, too.

**7. Giving them packed itineraries.** I am not saying an itinerary on a press familiarization trip is a bad thing, but being booked every hour on the hour from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. is not what most top-tier journalists want. I know you need to make sure they meet all the bigwigs, but they really want time to explore and discover the hidden stories.

**8. Booking press trips with 20 People.** Press trips are a valuable tool for giving the media a firsthand look at a destination, but nobody likes to be herded like cattle. Press trips should be intimate, customized, and personalized. Focus on quality not quantity.

**9. "Friending" them on Facebook.** Before you send a journalist a friend request, ask yourself: Are you this person's friend? Do you know his or her kids' names and birthdays? Do you know the journalist's spouse? If the answer is "no," then you are not friends. Send a connection request on LinkedIn instead.

**10. Profile Pitches.** Everyone thinks their client is worthy of a profile in *Inc.* magazine, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Forbes*. Maybe your client is. Or maybe it's best to start with pitching the client as an expert source, deepen the relationship, and then pitch a profile. Just saying.

**11. Send off-topic pitches.** If you write for the *Wichita Daily Times*, you don't care about a restaurant opening in Tucson. If you write about geothermal energy, then you're not really jazzed on pitches about refocusing your energy through yoga.

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