

# Working with journalists

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# A Nifty Nine List

"Simplify, simplify, simplify." – Henry David Thoreau

# 1. Have empathy for your audience.

- ▶ They need to fill the space between the ads.
- ▶ Their metrics are social engagement and page views.
- ▶ They want to feel like what they do matters.
- ▶ They are being *sold* all the time and have overtuned b.s. detectors
- ▶ They love hearing and telling stories.
- ▶ They love to get as far away from their desks as possible.
- ▶ There are two types of news stories: perfect and done.
- ▶ Their first audience is their editor. The editor wants done, no errors and a headline.

## 2. Make friends before you need them.

Follow	Follow journalists.
Compliment	Compliment journalists & promote their work.
Point	Point them to other interesting people and ideas.
Know	Know what they've already done.

### 3. Give them a story, not a report.

- ▶ Stories have characters, settings and - most importantly - plot.
- ▶ Plot means conflict, or at least change.
- ▶ Great stories have high detail, but are about big themes like love, justice.

## 4. Know who will care and why.

- ▶ Oddity
- ▶ Timeliness\*
- ▶ Magnitude
- ▶ Proximity
- ▶ Impact
- ▶ Conflict
- ▶ Prominence

## 5. Make them an exclusive offer.

- ▶ Give them embargoed information before it is publicly available.
- ▶ Let them know if you are telling them something you haven't told one of their competitors.
- ▶ Nothing excites a journalist like a secret about something important.

## 6. Make it easy.

- ▶ You convince reporters the story is fun and important.
- ▶ They convince their editors they can get the story done.
- ▶ Story elements
  - ▶ Events at a specific time and location
  - ▶ Specific sources and their contact info
  - ▶ Summarize key documents
  - ▶ Graphics for print and embeds for web
  - ▶ Maybe aggregated or raw data
  - ▶ Hashtags already being used

*But don't make it too easy!*



## 7. Favor brevity.

- ▶ Never use a long word when a short one will do.
- ▶ Two periods are better than one comma.
- ▶ One idea per paragraph. Maybe one sentence per paragraph.
- ▶ The passive voice was avoided.
- ▶ No adjectives.
- ▶ Use "first degree" words; "home" instead of "residence"
- ▶ Active, interesting verbs. (No 'to be' verbs).

## 8. Use numbers mercifully.

- ▶ Use numbers selectively for the places where precision is really important. Use words everywhere else.
- ▶ Numbers only have meaning in relation to other numbers. Compared to what?
- ▶ Paint pictures with the audience by comparing numbers to something they already know.

# 9. Structure your pitch.

- ▶ What.
- ▶ So what?
- ▶ Why it is easy to do.
- ▶ Why it will have an audience.