

Report: Tuesday still the best day to pitch to journalists

Propel has announced in its *Q2 2023 Propel Media Barometer*, that overall, journalists only responded to 2.91% of the nearly 500,000 pitches sent through the platform in Q1 of 2023.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Meanwhile, podcast pitches increased by 21.23%, with response rates for them at 15.06%.

Fewer journalists to pitch to

While there was an 8.6% increase in journalist responses between Q4 2022 and Q1 2023, this increase is similar to increases seen year by year between Q4 and Q1 as journalists come back from vacation. However, it appears there are simply fewer journalists to pitch which is leading to this low response rate.

In Q1 2023, *NBC News* and *MSNBC* cut staff, Fandom owned companies laid off editors, *Vox* cut 7% of its employees, *Adweek* reduced its headcount, *CNET* laid off 50% of its staff, and *NewsCorp* and *ABC* are set to reduce the number of employees as well.

These layoffs are occurring as a result of businesses spending less on advertising, meaning media companies are forced to operate with less as this revenue dries up. These companies in turn are tightening their belts by laying off journalists and editors, thereby making it more difficult for PR professionals to get results with mainstream outlets. Meanwhile, podcast ad spending has been steadily increasing, with some advertisers saying the medium has one of the highest returns on investment in the industry, and making podcasts more financially stable than they were in previous years.

Tuesday still the sweet spot

In terms of PR pitching, the day with the most pitching activity was still Tuesday, with 29.11% of pitches sent that day. However, journalists were most likely to respond on Thursdays, with 22.55% of responses happening then. In addition, subject lines of between 1-5 words had the highest response rate of 4.01%, but there were only approximately 31,000 pitches in this bracket sent. The majority of pitches sent had between six to nine words and received a response rate of 3%. Interestingly, pitch open rates increased by 18.72% from Q4 to Q1, with nearly half of all pitches opened.



Meanwhile, pitches whose bodies were between 51-150 words saw the highest number of responses at 5.89%, while pitches between 501-1,000 words saw only a 1.46% response rate. Pitches in the 51-150 word range comprised 4.4% of pitches sent, while those between 501-1,000 words comprised the largest category at 35.7%, likely comprising full bylined articles.

Finally, the barometer also revealed that pitches mentioning AI had a 91% open rate but a 1.96% response rate. However, pitches mentioning the phrase “generative AI” had a 71.26% open rate and an 11.34% response rate. This suggests that while AI-related pitches are being opened, reporters are specifically looking for scoops related to generative AI.

Meanwhile, pitches mentioning seed funding rounds, as well as Series A and C rounds, increased in Q1 2023 compared to Q4 2022, receiving response rates of 12.12%, 12.03%, and 20.59% respectively. In fact, pitches on Series A funding rounds increased by 65%. However, Series B funding round pitches fell by 5.4%, yet still received an 18.75% response rate.

Be encouraged

“The continuing trend of low mainstream journalist response rates, while at first glance may seem worrying, shouldn’t discourage PR professionals,” said Zach Cutler, co-founder and CEO of Propel.

“It should instead be seen as a sign that people in communications need to change their tactics to do more in depth research into the journalists they pitch and focus on more targeted, niche audiences via new media, such as podcasts. No matter the media type, the key to any successful PR campaign is ensuring that media lists are made up of only the most relevant journalists to the pitch subject. Therefore, given the recent upheaval in the world of mainstream media, it’s more important than ever for people in communications to think outside the box in finding the most relevant journalists to pitch, be they at CNN or on Substack. While mainstream media will continue to be the backbone of PR, new media’s increasing prevalence coupled with its increased economic stability will likely see further interest among PR practitioners and hold greater importance in the overall media landscape.”