HOW TO GET PRESS.

Everything we've learned about pitching journalists, in four pages.

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01 / THE INBOX

WHY 99% OF PITCHES DIE

A journalist's inbox is a warzone. 99% of what lands in it is deleted on sight, and the person doing the deleting is not an arrogant gatekeeper. They are drowning in automated agency mailouts, triaging to survive. When they open your email they are not looking for a reason to say yes. They are hunting for a reason to say no. A misspelled name. A vague subject line. A 600-word block about your synergistic paradigm. Delete, delete, delete.

The hardest truth of the lot: nobody cares about your product. You care. You burned 18 months of runway on it. The journalist exists to serve their readers, not to do your marketing, so the only currency they trade in is impact. They want a story so cleanly packaged they can paste it into Slack, send it to their editor and look like a genius. They do not want a friend. They want ammunition.

THE EDITOR'S GUILLOTINE

Three questions. Run every pitch through them before you send.

1. **SO WHAT? Read your headline out loud, then ask it. "AVRE launches new heritage jacket" dies. "Zero-profit menswear brand launches jacket to fund veteran mental health" lives.**
2. **WHO IS BLEEDING? WHO IS WINNING? Every story has stakes. If nothing changes because you exist, there is no story.**
3. **WHY TODAY? Journalists deal in news, not olds. Tie it to a trend, a moment, a shift in the data.**

FOUR PHRASES THAT GET YOU DELETED

- **"We are thrilled to announce…" Ego. Nobody cares how you feel.**
- **"The leading provider of…" Adjectives are not proof.**
- **"Innovative new feature…" If it were true, the facts would show it.**
- **"Welcome [Name] to the team…" Unless you hired Tim Cook to run a bakery, a hire is not news.**

02 / THE STORY

MAKE THE BORING THING A STORY

An announcement is a gravestone. A story has a pulse. “We are launching cheaper payroll software for independent cafés” is a product, and it will be ignored. “Independent cafés are being bled dry by predatory software fees, so we built the thing that stops it” has tension, a villain and a rescue. Same company. Different sentence.

NAME YOUR ENEMY

Every pitch that lands has one. Not always a competitor: an outdated standard, a lazy industry norm, an overpriced monopoly. Journalists trade in conflict, and naming what you are against does the positioning for you. Netflix’s real enemy was the late fee, not Blockbuster. Dyson went to war with the vacuum bag and built a clear bin so you could see the evidence. Wise stripped to their pants outside the Bank of England over hidden fees. None of them pitched a product. They pitched a fight.

Find yours with three questions. What annoys your customers most before they reach you? Who benefits from the old way of doing things? And if you vanished tomorrow, why would the world be slightly worse?

YOUR DATA IS AMMUNITION

Adjectives mean nothing to a journalist. They have editors to answer to, and claims need mathematical proof, so hard numbers turn you from a founder begging a favour into a source of industry truth. You do not need a £50,000 McKinsey report. A weird buying pattern, a regional spike, a one-question poll to your email list: that is proprietary data by Friday.

THE MICRO-TO-MACRO PLAY

BAD

“Our waitlist hit 2,000 people today.”

GOLD

“73% of freelance creatives are fleeing legacy accounting software over hidden fees. We know, because 2,000 of them joined our waitlist in 48 hours.”

The first pitch is about you. The second hands the journalist the thesis of their article, backed by your numbers.

YOU ARE THE STORY

Faceless corporations do not inspire movements, so journalists need a main character, and it does not have to be the founder. Mine your team for three things.

- **THE ORIGIN SCAR.** The exact moment of frustration that forced you to build this. Were you lied to? Did you lose money? A scar proves you are a missionary, not an opportunist.
- **THE UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.** Why this specific human. A 45-year-old former cargo captain pitching a shipping revolution is a threat. A 22-year-old is a hope.
- **THE BURN-THE-BOATS MOMENT.** What was risked. Who quit the safe job at Google. The struggle proves the value of the win.

ONE STORY, TEN ANGLES

Take the most boring announcement going: “We closed a £1m seed round.” Now rotate it. The business desk gets the valuation and which funds are betting against the incumbents. The local paper gets £1m regenerating an abandoned warehouse and 15 new jobs. The trade press gets the feature that makes the legacy retainer obsolete. The supply-chain desk gets 100% of sourcing moved within 50 miles. One event, four desks. You do not need to do more things. You need to extract more from the things you have already done.

03 / THE PITCH

YOU GET THREE SECONDS

If the opening line is weak, the rest of the pitch does not exist. The hook cannot be clever, cannot be vague, and cannot start with “I hope you are well.” Keep it under 75 words: what happened, why it matters, why today.

THE 3-LINE TEST

If you cannot distil your pitch into three raw sentences, you are not ready to send it.

LINE 1 — THE ACTION. What happened, no adjectives. “We just launched a zero-profit heritage jacket.”

LINE 2 — THE IMPACT. Who bleeds, who wins. “100% of the revenue funds veteran mental health.”

LINE 3 — THE STAKES. Why today, and who is the enemy. “We are proving the retail markup obsolete, right as holiday spending peaks.”

Survives compression? It scales into a campaign. Feels weak here? It fails everywhere.

THE ONLY FOUR HOOKS THAT WORK

- **DAVID v GOLIATH.** You are faster, cheaper or more ethical than the monopoly. Name the enemy in line one.
- **THE DATA DROP.** Your internal dashboard is a trend report. Give them the maths.
- **THE LOCAL HERO.** National news feeds the ego; local press feeds the bank account. What are you doing for your postcode?
- **THE PROTAGONIST’S SCARS.** Who quit what, who risked what, and why this person had to build it.

STEAL THIS FORMAT

1. **SUBJECT.** The headline of the story you want them to write, not “Introduction to [Company]”.
2. **HOOK.** Action, impact, enemy. No pleasantries.
3. **CONTEXT.** Why this week. Tie it to the trend.
4. **PROOF.** Your three strongest numbers, bulleted, skimmable.
5. **CLOSE.** No calls, no coffees. Link your press kit and ask one frictionless question: “Is this something you’d want to see more of?” The goal is not the article yet. The goal is a reply.

WRITE LIKE A HUMAN

Corporate speak is the language of cowards. Run the pub test: three pints deep, an old mate asks what your company does. You would never say “an end-to-end B2B SaaS solution for enterprise resource planning”. You would say “software that stops big companies bleeding money on stock they don’t need”. Write the second one. No paragraph over two sentences, and if a line carries no fact, stake or proof, kill it. A 600-word email to a journalist is an act of aggression.

04 / THE AIM

TWENTY BULLETS, ONE BUMP

THE RULE OF 20

Pitch 100 people and you are spamming 80 of them. Give yourself a hard limit of 20 and your psychology changes: you stop chasing volume and start obsessing over relevance. Finding your 20 by hand takes an afternoon.

- **THE COMPETITOR BACKTRACK.** Google the three brands doing what you do, click News, and write down every journalist who covered them in the last six months.
- **THE KEYWORD SWEEP.** Who writes the thought-leadership on your macro trend? Add them.
- **THE VERIFICATION.** Check their last 90 days, because beats change constantly. And if the byline says “By Reuters”, the person on the page did not write it. Pitching them is a dead end.

RIDE THE WAVE

A cold story is a boulder pushed uphill. When a big story breaks in your world, the momentum already exists and you attach your expertise to it. But you only have the right to play if you bring one of three things: proprietary data, the autopsy nobody else will write, or the direct antidote to the crisis. Otherwise stay out of the inbox.

FOLLOW UP OR DIE QUIETLY

You get one follow-up. That is it. Wait 72 hours minimum, never open with guilt, and make the second email stand on its own:

THE SECOND EMAIL

BAD

“Just bumping this to the top of your inbox.”

GOLD

“Since Tuesday another 500 users joined the waitlist. The data in the kit is updated. Want the exclusive before we go wider on Monday?”

New data, proof of momentum, a soft deadline. Then walk away.

THE DRUMBEAT

Do not wait six months for a funding round to pitch. Push one targeted story a week: a hire to the local paper, a data shift to the trade press, a trend insight to the business desk. That is 52 campaigns a year, and if just one a month lands, you bank 12 press hits: 12 backlinks dragging you up Google, 12 badges for your homepage, 12 articles for your email list.

WIN SMALL FIRST

Everyone wants the front page of The Times on day one. National reporters do not want to discover you; they want to validate you, and they scout the trade blogs and regional papers to do it. A local win gives you a backlink, a badge for your homepage and a rung on the ladder. Stack three and you stop being a risky unknown.

That’s the lot. Go and get your press.

From **The PR Revolution** by Jim Edmondson. Everything on these four pages can be done by hand, for free. If you’d rather a machine did it in seconds, that’s presswhisper.com.