

Title:

How To Get A Reporter's Attention For Your Book

Word Count:

785

Summary:

Reporters are busy people. On any given day they are fielding dozens of phone calls, making calls of their own, reading stacks of newspapers and magazines and rushing to meet deadlines. So how do you break through all the noise to get a reporter or an editor on the phone to listen to your pitch?

In my 15 years as a magazine journalist I've fielded hundreds, if not thousands, of such calls. The following tips are what I've told many authors and publicists. The ones I eventu...

Keywords:

Article Body:

Reporters are busy people. On any given day they are fielding dozens of phone calls, making calls of their own, reading stacks of newspapers and magazines and rushing to meet deadlines. So how do you break through all the noise to get a reporter or an editor on the phone to listen to your pitch?

In my 15 years as a magazine journalist I've fielded hundreds, if not thousands, of such calls. The following tips are what I've told many authors and publicists. The ones I eventually wrote about are the ones who listened and learned from the conversation.

1.) Ask If the Reporter Has Time to Speak to You

Make "Is now a good time?" the first question you ask when you get a journalist on the phone. Don't assume that if he or she is busy, they won't answer the phone because sometimes a reporter on deadline has to pick up. They might be waiting for confirmation from a source or to connect with a colleague in the field, and Caller ID doesn't always give enough information for proper screening. There were many times when I was on deadline and answered my phone only to find, to my chagrin, a non-stop pitch on the other end. But the callers who impressed me would ask immediately if I was on deadline. All I had to say was "Yes" and they'd say they would call me in another day or so and hang up.

Totally cool. I made sure I made time when they did call back. Sometimes I even checked my mail to see if I could find the caller's press release so I would be ready for our talk.

2.) Understand This: The Fact That You Wrote a Book is Not a Story!

You may have written the best book in the world, but unless you're Stephen King turning to pulp fiction (as he did recently) or Terry McMillan publishing your first novel in several years and getting divorced at the same time (as she did recently), you and your book are not a story. I'm sorry but that's the plain truth. Of course if you land on the bestseller lists then we'd have something to discuss. There is one instance, however, when you would be a story and that's when you...

3.) Connect to a Story Already in the News

When promoting your book you should be reading the newspaper and watching the news (local and national) daily. You're looking for stories related to the subject matter in your book. Ideally you would have something to say and you would offer that up to a reporter. For instance, if you've written a book on cronyism in official government posts you could have put out a press release and called up a reporter during the Hurricane Katrina disaster with information such as, "This kind of cronyism has caused mishaps in government response before. I can tell you how it happens and where it has happened before." The press release would list the details in easy-to-read bullet points. It would be easy to see you'd make a great interview subject.

This can work for novels as well. Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* is an exquisite book in its own right, but it got a huge publicity boost because it happened to get published at a time when several stories of missing girls were in the news.

4.) Ask What the Reporter is Working On

If the reporter isn't interested in your story, don't just cut and run. Engage the person in a friendly conversation and find out what types of stories he or she is working on for future issues. This way you get to cultivate a relationship--important because good media contacts are difficult to come by. You're also learning what is newsworthy so you can either tailor your message for other outlets or come back to the reporter when you do have information he or she can use. I used to love it when the latter happened--it made my job easier!

One last note: Always follow up on the press releases you send out. You might be

thinking, "Well, if they're interested they'll call" but nine times out of ten it doesn't work that way. Your press release could be in the mailroom, in someone's office under a pile of papers or in the garbage unopened. It definitely hasn't been read! Don't be afraid to make the call. Whatever the outcome, at the very least you'll be able to use what you learn for your next publicity effort.

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