

Story Pitching Tips for the Governor's Summit and Taking Action

Do it over the phone: The best way to pitch a story is to pick up the phone and call. However, if you already have a relationship with a reporter, an email pitch may be fine. Don't email or fax. Email if you already have a relationship with them

Target your pitch: It is best to pitch your story to a reporter that is likely to cover the Governor's Summit or to a reporter that you have a relationship with. If you do not know who to target the story to, you can call the assignment desk and ask who is going to cover the summit. Don't pitch your story to more than one reporter at the same publication, unless you are explicit about it up front (e.g. if the first reporter you speak with passes on the story, ask them who else you might be interested. When you call the second reporter, be sure to tell them that you already spoke with someone.) If you need the number for a local news desk, call BMSG.

Practice makes perfect: Practice your pitch out loud with a colleague ahead of time. Have notes with any relevant data you might need in front of you.

Keep it short: Your pitch should not be longer than 30 seconds (see 30 Second Pitch below). Think about what makes your story interesting and unique, what special perspective does your organization add to the issue.

Be sensitive to deadlines: All reporters work on a deadline. After you've identified yourself ask if this is a good time to speak. If not, ask what would be a better time for you to call back. It may be best to make your pitch in the morning, but all news outlets are different.

The "30-Second Pitch"¹

Five key elements comprise the "30-Second Pitch":

- Identify who you are and why you are calling.
- Ask if this is a good time to talk. If it isn't, ask the reporter to suggest the best time you should call back. Never ask a reporter to return your call. If it is a good time to talk, proceed to the next step.
- Let the reporter know you are familiar with the publication or with stories s/he writes about.
- Explain the story in a sentence or two.
- Explain quickly why readers will care.
- Ask if the reporter is interested.

¹ http://101publicrelations.com/blog/pitching_reporters_over_the_phone_000102.html

A Sample Pitch and Food for Thought

Below is a sample pitch for you to modify accordingly. In preparing your own pitch, think about:

- What makes the information that you can provide or the work that you are engaged in compelling. Why should the reporter care?
- How does what you are doing relate to the governor's summit? How would covering your story support the coverage of the Governor's Summit?
- Can the work you are doing serve as an inspiration statewide (i.e. the gist of the pitch might be that your local community has already gotten it right by doing XYZ)

Sample Pitch:

"Newsroom, this is **(reporter's name)** speaking

"Good morning **[reporter's name]**, this is **[your name]** from **[your organization/coalition]** calling to suggest a story idea. Is this a good time to talk?

"Yes, but I only have half a minute. Can you make it quick?"

"**[Reporter's name]**, I know you cover **[reporter's coverage area: e.g. health, nutrition and physical activity]** and that you may be covering the upcoming Governor's Summit on Obesity and Health. **[Your organization/coalition]** is engaged in exciting work **[right here]** that can serve as a local example in your coverage. We are **[brief description of two short sentences of the work that you are doing]**. Your readers might want to know about **[what is happening to make their own community a healthier place to eat and be active]**."

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