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**GUIDE 2019**

**How to pitch  
an idea to the  
media**

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# How to pitch an idea to the media

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Hayward is managing director of Magenta Associates, and a communications specialist with more than 18 years' experience in a range of journalistic, publishing and marketing roles. She founded Magenta in 2011 after a journalistic career spanning a number of different titles including *FM World*, the award-winning magazine for the British Institute of Facilities Management, *Marketing Week*, *Financial Management*, *Soccer Analyst*, *Supply Management*, *Unions Today*, *People Management* and *Director*. She holds a Masters degree in journalism, as well as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations' post-graduate diploma in PR.

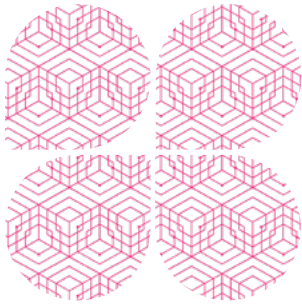
## Introduction

If you've got an interesting story to tell and you want to share it with as many people as possible, why not pitch it to the media? A successful pitch can result in positive publicity for your organisation and its products and services, but given the fact that most journalists (especially those working on national newspapers) plough through thousands of pitches a week, what can you do to ensure yours gets noticed and doesn't land in the junk pile?

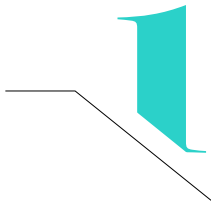
In rather the same way that those within the built environment who have worked on the client side are well placed to understand the needs of clients when they move to the supplier side, those of us at Magenta who have worked in the media have been tried and tested by the best and worst kind of pitches from communications people.

Here are some key tips on how to pitch an idea to the media without wasting your (and their) time.





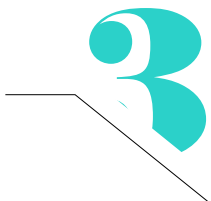
# This guide takes you through the process.



Find the right outlet. It's staggering how many PR people cold call or email publications or websites with story ideas that have absolutely no relevance to the readership of that media source. So before you dash out an email or pick up the phone, carry out some basic research. This is incredibly easy to do as every media website will include an 'about us' section and often a detailed media pack which spells out the aims of the publication, the kind of content it produces and importantly, the demographic profile of its readership. So if a publication is described as being a premier source of information for senior property managers, it won't be interested in office equipment launches or guides on 'how to set up a home office'. You can almost bet that the word 'office' crept into someone's google search which led them to pitch to the wrong place.

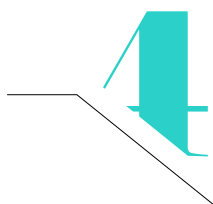


Read up on the contents. Once you've identified the most appropriate magazines or websites, get hold of a hard copy of the journal or access their content through the site and try to envisage what you're proposing being published there. This will help you to figure out which areas of the publication would suit your pitch best; e.g. comments, features, blogs, opinions, advice pieces, case studies or news. That way, once you come to pitch an article you can suggest where in the magazine it might belong; and even if your contact disagrees and points you elsewhere in the publication or isn't interested this time, it'll show you've taken the time to read their content and help to build a relationship.

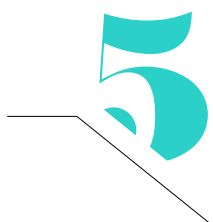


Approach a named person. Although most publications have a generic editorial email address, it is preferable to find the right person to contact so that your pitch is personalised. If this isn't spelt out on the website or a magazine's content panel give the editorial office a ring and ask for the name and email address of whom you should contact for a particular section. When you do identify the right person, unless you're already a trusted contact it is best to email the pitch first, and follow that up with a call.



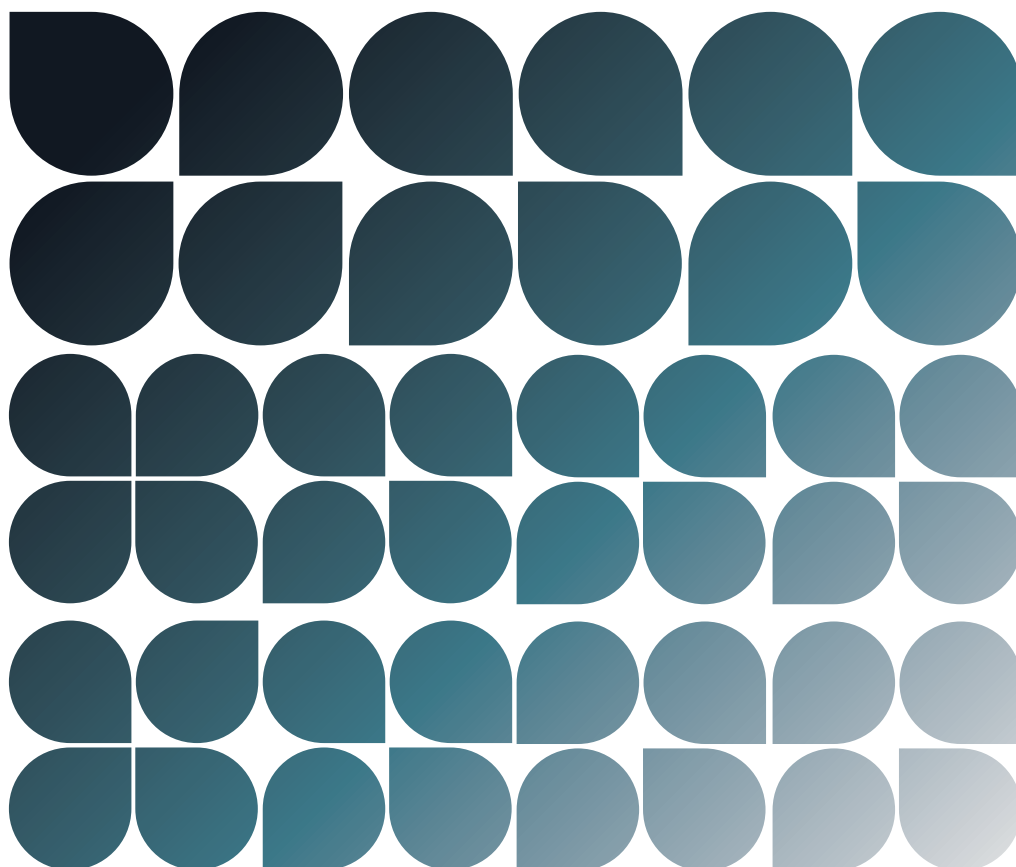


Keep to the point. Ensure that both the length of your pitch and its content is succinct. This means not going into realms of details in your pitch but simply outlining the story idea – preferably with quick bullet points to spare the journalist having to read through waffle to find the interesting bits. And in terms of content, although you might think your company is the most exciting place in the world, all the journalist wants and needs is an interesting story that will engage their readers, so stick to the story you want to tell rather than making your company the subject of the pitch. Put in a subject line to let them see immediately what you have in mind, and keep it short and to the point. This should include details on what the article is about, who will write it, what their expertise is in producing an article and (if applicable) assurances that you're offering the feature as an exclusive.



Follow up your pitch. Once you've emailed a pitch, leave it with your contact for a day to give them time to read it and process it, and if you haven't heard back from them by later in the day or the following morning, then give them a call. If you do get them on the phone keep the conversation short, just find out what they thought, whether they'd like to proceed and – especially on the nationals – if they don't want to use it this time find out what areas would be of interest in the future.

You may feel a little nervous when pitching ideas to the media but we know from experience that journalists are always grateful for good ideas and those that are pitched well are always welcome.





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