

TIPS ON APPROACHING THE MEDIA

Detroit Free Press columnist Desiree Cooper offers these suggestions for how to approach the media:¹

1. Know the difference between a news story, a column, and an ad.
2. Don't call reporters on their deadlines. After 3 p.m. is the worst time for most reporters who work on morning papers or for evening news broadcasts.
3. Start with a reporter and work your way up, unless you already have a good relationship with an editor.
4. Speak in sound bites, not speeches.
5. Use e-mail and voicemail—don't insist on personal interactions at first.
6. Humor is your friend.
7. Be prepared to follow up conversations with more information: fact sheets, names and phone numbers, Web sites, and faxes.
8. If you are rejected because your pitch is not in the reporter's beat, ask if there is someone else at the media establishment who may be interested.
9. Make as many calls as you can yourself. Public relations professionals rarely have the same depth of knowledge or interest in the topic as an advocate.
10. Be upbeat and enthusiastic. If you're not interested, why should anyone else be interested?

¹ Desiree Cooper, "10 Practical Tips on Approaching the News Media," *Detroit Free Press*, 2001.