PUBLIC DATA

What journalists want *from your pitch.*

Two large 2026 surveys, from Cision (1,899 journalists in 19 markets) and Muck Rack (897 journalists), agree on what gets a pitch read and what gets it deleted.

82%
of journalists reject pitches not relevant to their audience or coverage (Cision)

88%
immediately disregard pitches that miss their beat (Muck Rack)

97%
prefer to be pitched by email (Cision)

47%
want more data or research from PR people (Cision)

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What journalists want from PR pitches: two large surveys

KEY FINDINGS

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Short answer: Relevance decides almost everything. 82% of journalists reject pitches that don't fit their audience or coverage, and 88% immediately disregard pitches that miss their beat.[1,2] Yet PR still matters to them: 86% say at least some of their stories start with a PR pitch.[2] What they want more of is data, early access and experts, sent by email.[1]

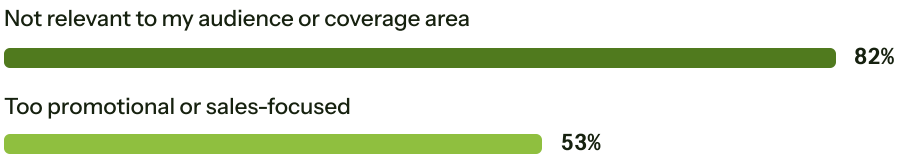
Relevance decides almost everything

In Cision's survey, the top reason journalists reject a pitch is that it isn't relevant to their audience or coverage area (82%), followed by pitches that are too promotional or sales-focused (53%).[1] In Muck Rack's, 88% say they immediately disregard pitches that miss their beat, and nearly half say they seldom receive pitches that match their coverage.[2]

What makes a pitch feel relevant? For 78% of journalists in Muck Rack's survey, it is a story that directly affects the community their audience belongs to.[2]

Why journalists reject pitches

Share of journalists who name each reason



Source: Cision, 2026 State of the Media Report (1,899 journalists, 19 markets).

Journalists still rely on PR

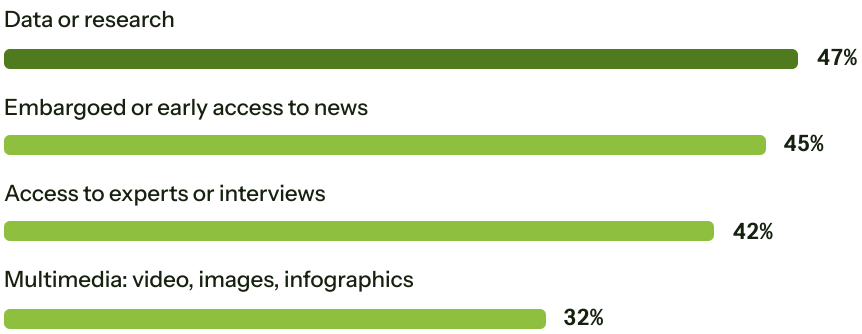
Most journalists still use what PR people send. In Muck Rack's survey, 86% say at least some of their stories originate from PR pitches.[2] In Cision's, 66% rely on PR-provided content for story ideas, and the majority sort through more than 50 pitches a week.[1]

What they want more of

Asked what they want more of from PR people, journalists put data and research first, then embargoed or early access, then access to experts.[1]

What journalists want more of from PR

Share of journalists



Source: Cision, 2026 State of the Media Report.

How to reach them, and how fast to answer

97% of journalists prefer email. Messaging apps and social media direct messages trail far behind, at 14% each. And 52% expect a reply from a PR person within 24 hours.[1]

How journalists prefer to be pitched

Share of journalists



Source: Cision, 2026 State of the Media Report.

AI in the newsroom

82% of journalists in Muck Rack's survey use at least one AI tool, up from 77% a year earlier. ChatGPT is used by 47%, Gemini by 22% (up from 13%) and Claude by 12% (up from 6%).[2] In Cision's survey, though, more than one in three North American journalists say they don't use AI at all.[1]

Journalists' biggest worries are about accuracy and money. Half of Cision's respondents name accuracy and combating misinformation as their top challenge.[1] In Muck Rack's, disinformation and lack of funding are each named by 32%, and unchecked AI by 26%, up from 18%.[2]

A pitch checklist from the data

- **Check the beat first.** Read what the journalist covered in the last few months. If your story doesn't fit, don't send it.
- **Lead with what affects their readers.** Not your company's news, but what it means for the people who read that outlet.
- **Bring data or an expert.** The two things journalists most want more of. A real number from your own work is often enough.
- **Cut the sales language.** More than half reject pitches for being too promotional.
- **Use email, and answer within a day.** Have your facts, photos and spokesperson ready before you pitch.
- **Make facts easy to check.** With accuracy a top worry, links to sources and named people save the journalist time.

How we did this

Cision surveyed 1,899 journalists in 19 markets for its 2026 State of the Media Report. Muck Rack surveyed 1,044 journalists between January 30 and March 2, 2026, and kept 897 responses after quality checks, for its State of Journalism 2026. Both companies sell media databases and PR software. The two surveys ask different questions, so we report each number with its survey.

Questions

Why do journalists ignore PR pitches?

Mostly because the pitch doesn't fit their audience or beat: 82% reject pitches that aren't relevant (Cision, 2026) and 88% immediately disregard pitches that miss their beat (Muck Rack, 2026). Being too promotional is the second reason (53%).

How do journalists prefer to be pitched?

By email: 97% prefer it (Cision, 2026). Messaging apps and social media messages are preferred by 14% each.

What do journalists want from PR people?

Data or research (47%), embargoed or early access to news (45%) and access to experts (42%), according to Cision's 2026 survey.

Sources

1. 2026 State of the Media Report, Cision.
   https://www.prnewswire.com/content/dam/prnewswire/resources/white-papers/Cision_2026_State_of_the_Media_Report.pdf
2. Muck Rack's 2026 State of Journalism Report Finds 82% of Journalists Use AI, Muck Rack.
   https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2026/3/19/3259178/0/en/Muck-Rack-s-2026-State-of-Journalism-Report-Finds-82-of-Journalists-Use-AI.html

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