Media stories about your company are one of the most powerful and cost effective ways to publicize products and services. A news story provides your company third-party credibility and broad recognition. However, placing a story is not simple and it’s not free. It requires time and effort, and that’s why free media coverage is now more commonly called earned media.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when pitching a story to members of the media.

1. Make sure your story is newsworthy. Is it interesting to a broad audience or just specific industries or occupations? Make a decision on whether to approach the mass media or a trade journal with your idea. Is it timely and relevant? Local media often find a story interesting if it can be tied to a larger, national story.

2. Draft an effective media release. The first paragraph of any release should include a “hook” that makes the reporter want to continue reading – the news should be included in that paragraph. Include a quote or two from your company’s leader or a quote from a subject expert. Include contact information in case a reporter wants to call you to get additional information or schedule an interview.

3. Make follow-up calls. One of the most successful ways to get your story placed in the media is to call reporters, editors, and news directors and discuss the press release you have recently distributed. News professionals are often working on a deadline and stressed, so your call can remind them of your story and bring it to the top of their mind. By calling you are also cultivating a closer, long-term relationship.

4. Get back to reporters quickly. If you do receive an inquiry from a reporter call them back as quickly as possible. Again, reporters are often on a deadline and by being responsive you are helping them and are more likely to receive coverage now and you’re more likely to be called in the future because you’ll be a reliable source.

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