How to Pitch a Reporter

It is important to build personal relationships with reporters in order to potentially generate favorable coverage of your business and the beer distribution industry as a whole. Since a press release is often not enough to generate a story, it is recommended that someone from your organization reach out directly to local media to offer story ideas that include your key messages. Send a personalized, introductory email as a first step.

For bloggers, familiarize yourself with their recent posts and specific areas of interest. Make sure your pitch is relevant to them. Cite previous posts the blog has published and ask if they might have interest in covering a similar topic as it relates to your business.

Sample Pitch Email: Broadcast

When contacting a reporter via email, it’s important to catch their attention right away with a quick, interesting subject line. Also, make sure you tell the reporter right away in the email what you can show them and what the viewer, listener or reader would learn.

Feel free to use the following sample language to guide your initial outreach. We encourage you to tailor this language to your own business and to incorporate any news or upcoming events related to your local community.
Subject Line: Beer Behind the Scenes

Dear [reporter’s name],

I’m writing to invite you to go behind the scenes of your local beer distributor for an economic and consumer story that would appeal to a wide range of viewers.

When you pop open a cold beer, do you know how that can or bottle got to you? Or that American consumers can choose from thousands of labels of beer? Or there are more than 3,000 breweries in the U.S. today? Or that 130,000 men and women are working to deliver fresh beer to you?

I would be happy to show you what it takes to get beer to market by taking you inside a beer distribution warehouse. [Name of your business] delivers beer to restaurants, pubs, convenience stores, grocery stores, ballparks, concert venues and other licensed retailers across our local community. You have probably seen our trucks driving down the streets of [name of your community].

At [name of your business], you’ll see [x number] of brands of beer, including labels from across the country [for example: including Vermont, Michigan, Delaware, Texas, California and Oregon]. See cases and kegs filled with a wide range of styles from Lambics and lagers to pale ales and porters.

Here’s an idea of the great visuals your viewers would see:

• Workers loading beer onto trucks for delivery (many work overnight to make deliveries as the sun rises)
• Cases and cases of beer coming off forklifts and kegs rolling off hand trucks
• Thousands of cases of beer (and hundreds of brands from around the country and around the world) stacked to the rafters of a temperature controlled warehouse
• The refrigerated keg room (kegs floor to ceiling)
• Distributors’ high-tech ability via barcodes and other tools to track every label on every route, which is valuable to ensure a fresh, safe product is in the marketplace (vital in recalls, virtually no other consumer product can claim such traceability)
• Logistics and marketing machine that helps bring beer to the American marketplace

I’m excited for you to see how beer gets to beer lovers in [name of your community]. I hope you agree a behind-the-scenes tour could be a colorful story that your viewers would really enjoy. I look forward to working with you on it.

Regards,

[Contact name]
[Title]
[Business/Organization]

[Contact phone number]
[Contact email address]
[Website, Facebook and/or Twitter links]
**Follow-Up**

Reporters receive hundreds of emails a day and may not respond. After sending a reporter your initial pitch, follow up with a phone call a couple days later. Once you identify yourself, it’s considerate to ask if a reporter is on deadline or if he or she has time to chat.

Here's a sample telephone conversation with a reporter:

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Hello my name is XX XX and I am with [COMPANY NAME]
I am following up on an email I sent you on [DATE]—do you happen to be on deadline?

If **YES**: OK, I simply wanted to introduce myself and see if there was a time in the future we could discuss [COMPANY] in detail, as I would love to share with you how we are impacting the local economy by bringing beer to market.

If **NO**: [COMPANY NAME] is a local beer distribution company that has been in business for X years and brings XX labels to market for the local area. We have a strong visual story to share and since we work with an interesting product, I wanted to see if you would be interested in coming to our warehouse or taking a ride with one of our trucks one day so we can give you a behind-the-scenes look at how beer arrives at local retailers each and every day.

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If a reporter indicates that this isn’t a topic they cover, simply ask if they have any recommendations on someone else at the station or paper that may be interested.

Once you have piqued a reporter’s interest, be prepared to offer the following items:

- Warehouse tour and potential “ride along” in distributor truck
- Fun facts/recent statistics
- Direct interviews with company leadership and employees
- Company bio & executive bios
- Photos and/or video
- Recent company press releases (if applicable)