CISION

2026 State of the Media Report

What 1,800+ journalists reveal about PR's next frontier

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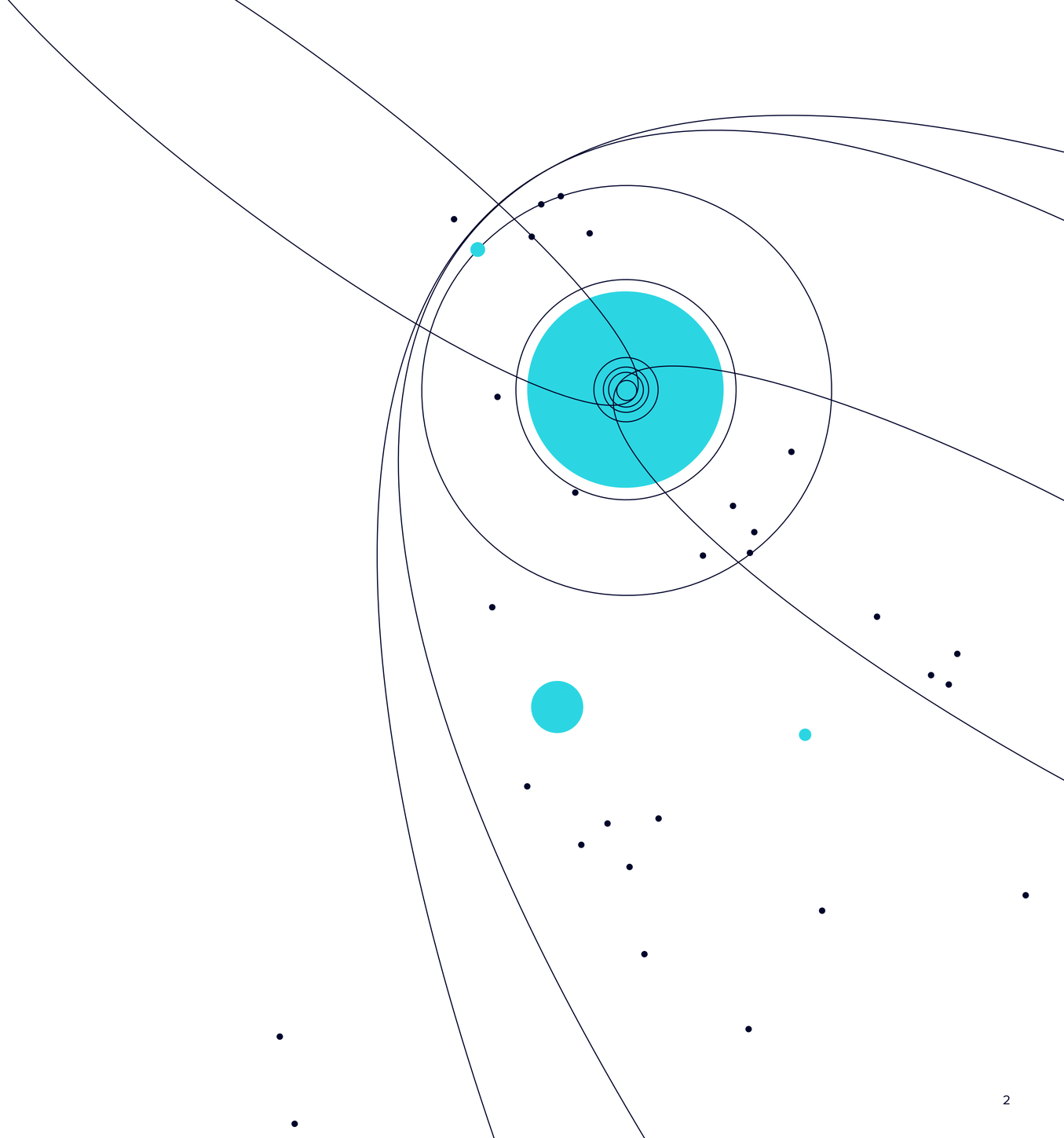
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About the **2026 State of the Media Report**

For more than a decade, public relations and corporate communications professionals around the world have trusted Cision's State of the Media Report to be their essential guide to a rapidly changing media landscape.

For the 2026 report, we surveyed 1,800+ journalists to better understand what they want and need from the PR professionals they work with. We went beyond simply reporting the data to provide in-depth insights and actionable takeaways for media relations professionals.

The result is an exclusive analysis of what it takes to forge stronger media relationships and empower truthful, accurate, and trusted storytelling – at a time when it's needed most.



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Key findings

1

Accuracy vs. misinformation is journalists' biggest challenge

In an era increasingly defined by "post-truth" narratives, 50% of journalists say accuracy, fact-checking, and combating misinformation is their biggest challenge, making it the top issue facing the profession. With public trust and information integrity under pressure, journalists are prioritizing credible sources, verifiable data, and expert insight more than ever – creating an opportunity for PR professionals who can provide well-supported, trustworthy information.

2

Resource pressures are reshaping the newsroom and increasing reporter reliance on PR

Nearly half of journalists (49%) cited "resource constraints" as their biggest challenge, a sizable jump from 29% who said the same in 2025. Newsroom layoffs and shrinking teams mean journalists are expected to produce the same level of content with fewer resources. And they need PR's help – 66% say they rely on PR for story ideas and leads, reinforcing PR's role as a critical partner in helping journalists identify timely stories and sources.

3

The modern journalist is a multi-platform content creator

Alongside their primary job function, 47% of journalists also contribute to a digital site, 35% to media owned channels, 29% to personal channels, 23% to newsletters, and 22% to podcasts. With journalists feeding multiple formats and audiences, PR teams must think beyond traditional coverage and consider how stories could translate across formats.

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Key findings (cont.)

4

Journalists are embracing AI, but remain wary of its use in PR

Journalists are increasingly experimenting with generative AI tools: The percentage who say they do not use AI dropped from 33% in 2025 to 21% in 2026. However, attitudes toward AI-generated PR pitches remain cautious – more than half (53%) oppose them, citing concerns about spam, low-quality writing, and lack of personalization. For PR professionals, the takeaway is clear: AI may assist the process, but thoughtful, human-centered outreach is still expected.

5

LinkedIn has emerged as the most valuable social platform for journalists

Among social media platforms, LinkedIn stands out as the most widely used for professional purposes (cited by 62% of respondents). Further, 33% name it the single most valuable platform for their work. For PR professionals looking to research journalists, understand their interests, or engage with their content, LinkedIn has become an essential channel.

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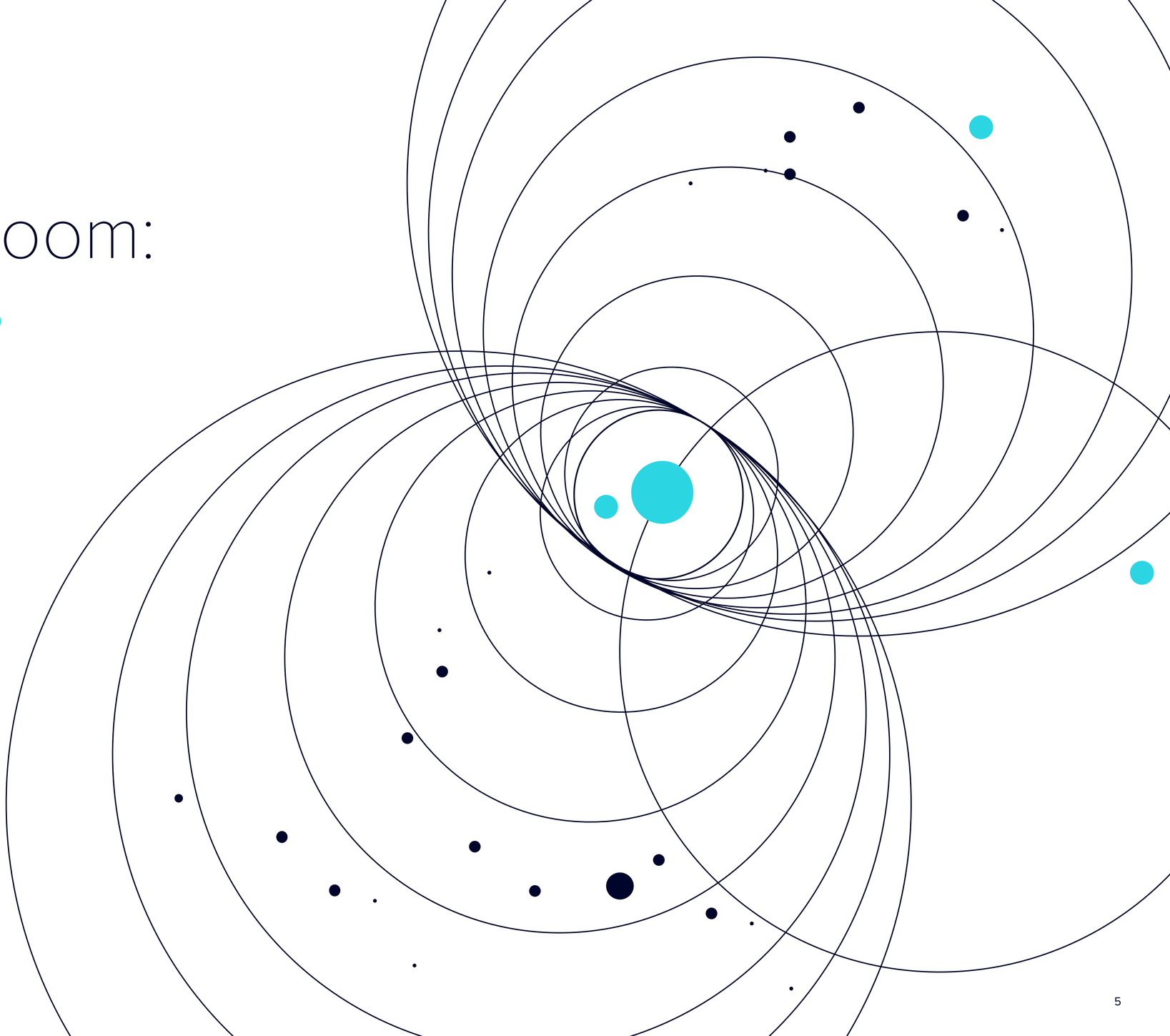
Journalists are under intense inbox pressure, making relevance essential

Most journalists receive 50 or more pitches per week, yet 72% say fewer than a quarter are relevant to their work. This gap highlights one of the biggest frustrations in media relations: Untargeted outreach. PR professionals who tailor their outreach to individual journalists and offer something unique (data, original research, exclusives, etc.) stand a far better chance of breaking through.

Inside the newsroom: **How journalists work today**

Our report takes an inside look at how journalists work today – from the challenges they face and the resources they depend on, to their use of social media and how generative AI is shaping their workflows. The more PR practitioners understand these pain points, the better partners they can be.

When PR teams can align their strategies with journalists' specific needs, they build the high-level trust required to secure coverage in an increasingly competitive media landscape.



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The biggest challenges journalists face

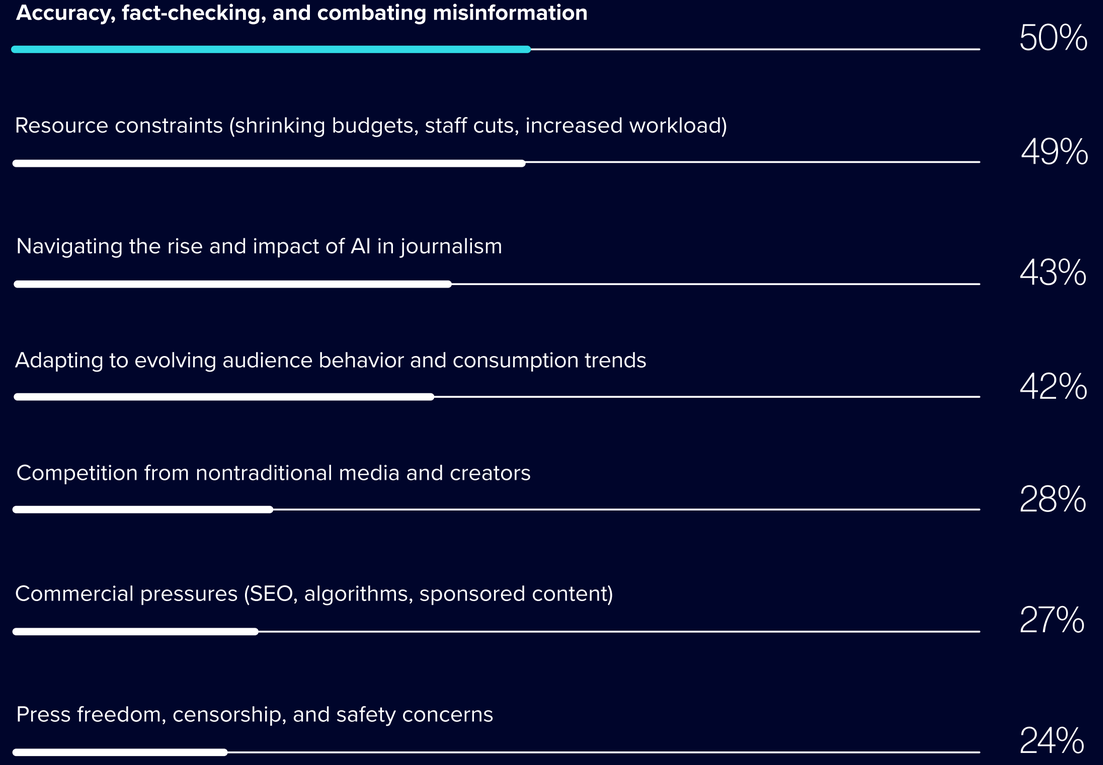
Journalists say the biggest obstacles over the past year range from tight deadlines and shrinking resources to rising audience expectations.

The findings point to pressure on all sides: Credibility is under strain from misinformation and AI, while newsroom cuts and changing audience consumption habits are reshaping how journalists work and how they reach audiences.

Half of journalists cite accuracy and combating misinformation as their top challenge, and many say they're spending more time verifying facts and defending their credibility.

At the same time, leaner teams leave less time and patience for unvetted pitches, even as AI is helping them do more with less. They're also competing with independent creators and algorithms for a limited share of audience attention.

What do you believe were the biggest challenges for journalists in the last 12 months?



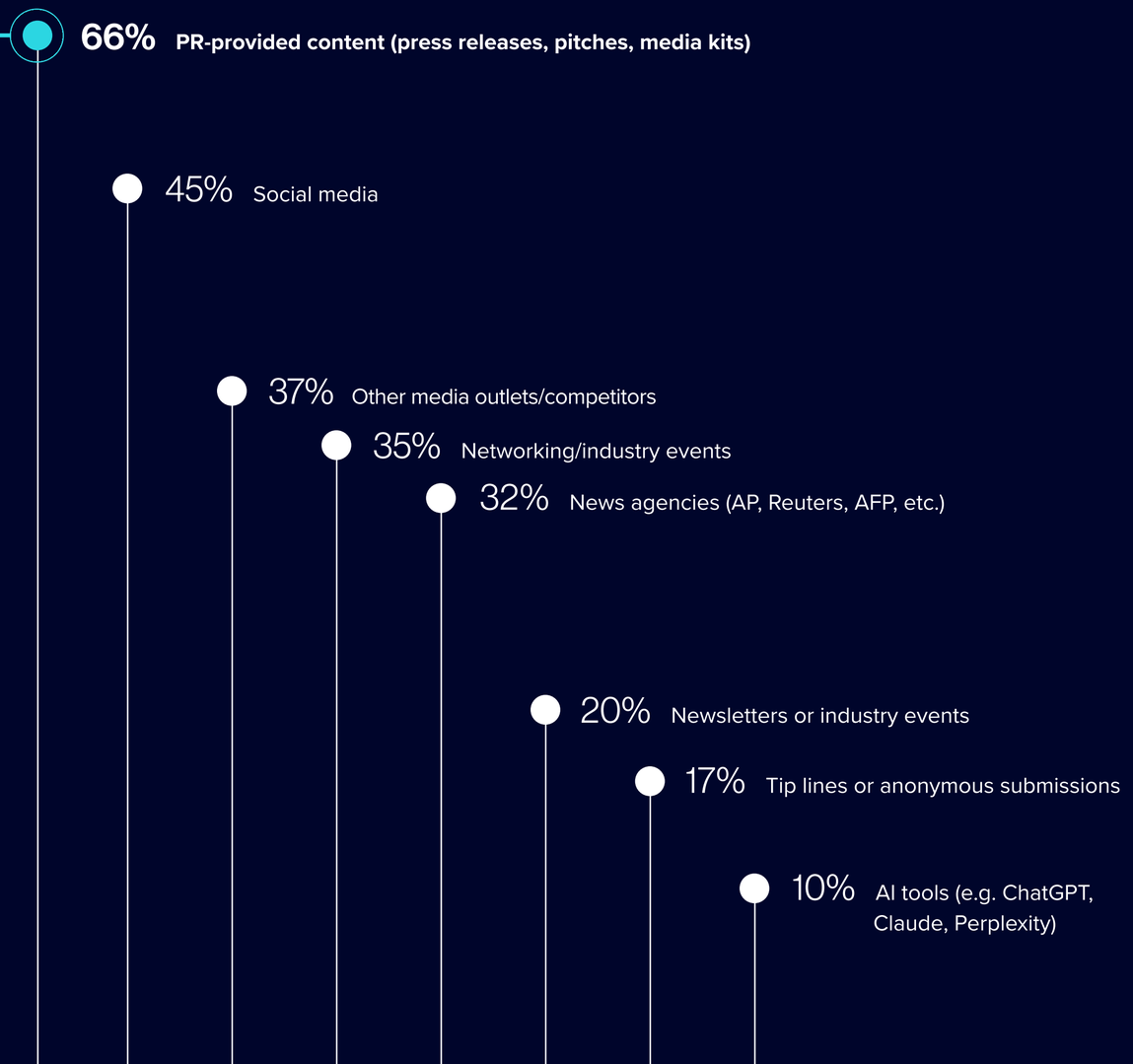
Where journalists find story ideas

Despite current pressures, the hunt for fresh, meaningful stories never stops. This chart reveals where journalists are most likely to seek inspiration and new leads – and thus how PR professionals can position their pitches where they'll have the greatest impact.

Even with the rise of AI and social media, PR professionals remain a powerful engine of the news cycle. An overwhelming majority of journalists (66%) rely on PR-provided content (press releases, pitches, and media kits) as their top source for story ideas.

This signals a shift in the role of PR from "publicist" to "newsroom partner." In short: PR professionals aren't just pitching stories, they're providing the assets reporters need most.

Which of the following resources do you most often rely on to find story ideas or leads?



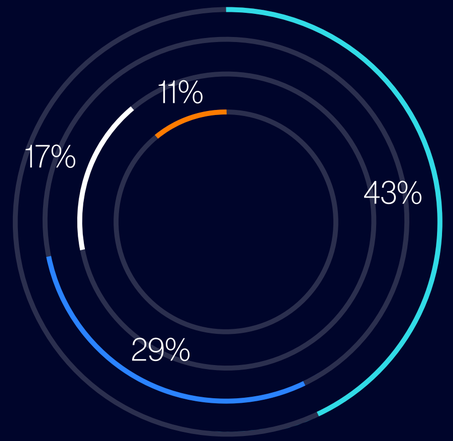
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Quality vs. quantity: What's in journalists' inboxes

If every journalist's inbox tells a story, it's one of overflow. We asked how many pitches they receive and how many truly stand out.

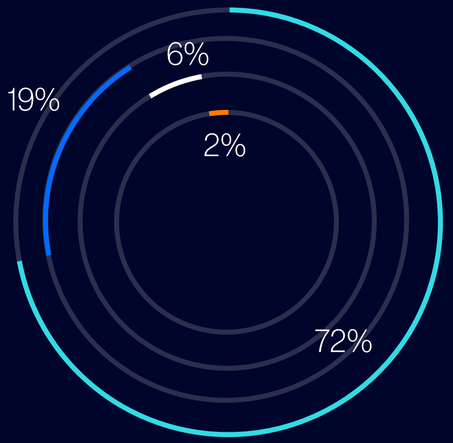
The findings show that while journalists value PR-provided content, they often find it frustrating when it isn't relevant to their beat or audience.

Most journalists say only a fraction of the pitches they receive are worth considering, and the majority are sorting through more than 50 pitches per week.



On average, how many pitches do you receive a week (including emails, phone calls, social media messages, etc.)?

- receive **≤ 50**
- receive **≥ 151**
- receive **51 - 100**
- receive **101 - 150**



What percentage of pitches do you receive that you consider relevant to your audience and what you cover?

- consider **≤ 25%** relevant
- consider **51% - 75%** relevant
- consider **26% - 50%** relevant
- consider **76% - 100%** relevant

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In their own words:

What is one thing PR professionals could do to better support your work?

Provide clear, accurate, and complete information up front – confirmed specs, real context (what's actually new), clear embargoes, and realistic assets. It saves time, avoids errors, and makes better work possible.

Think deeply about why you are pitching me a story idea, then show me in the pitch that you understand why I would want to bite on it as editorial content.

Please look at a map. At least 95% of PR pitches I get are useless because they're about events/people 300-plus miles away on the other side of the state...or they're happening in other states or regions of the nation.

Make information far more accessible. Too many companies/PR firms make it too hard to quickly track down contact details, press releases, background information, etc. This is especially infuriating when writing for online outlets, when deadlines are tight.

Don't rely blindly on AI platforms! If you use them, go back and verify/fact-check data and information as a human being, with your human brain. AI can be one of the biggest sources of misinformation. In a world where journalists are already accused of 'fake news,' AI is not helpful. Source your material where able, so journalists can independently verify it more easily.

The information you provide in your pitches helps inform journalists' questions, sources, and news angles. This is always good to keep in mind as you put together a news release or media pitch.

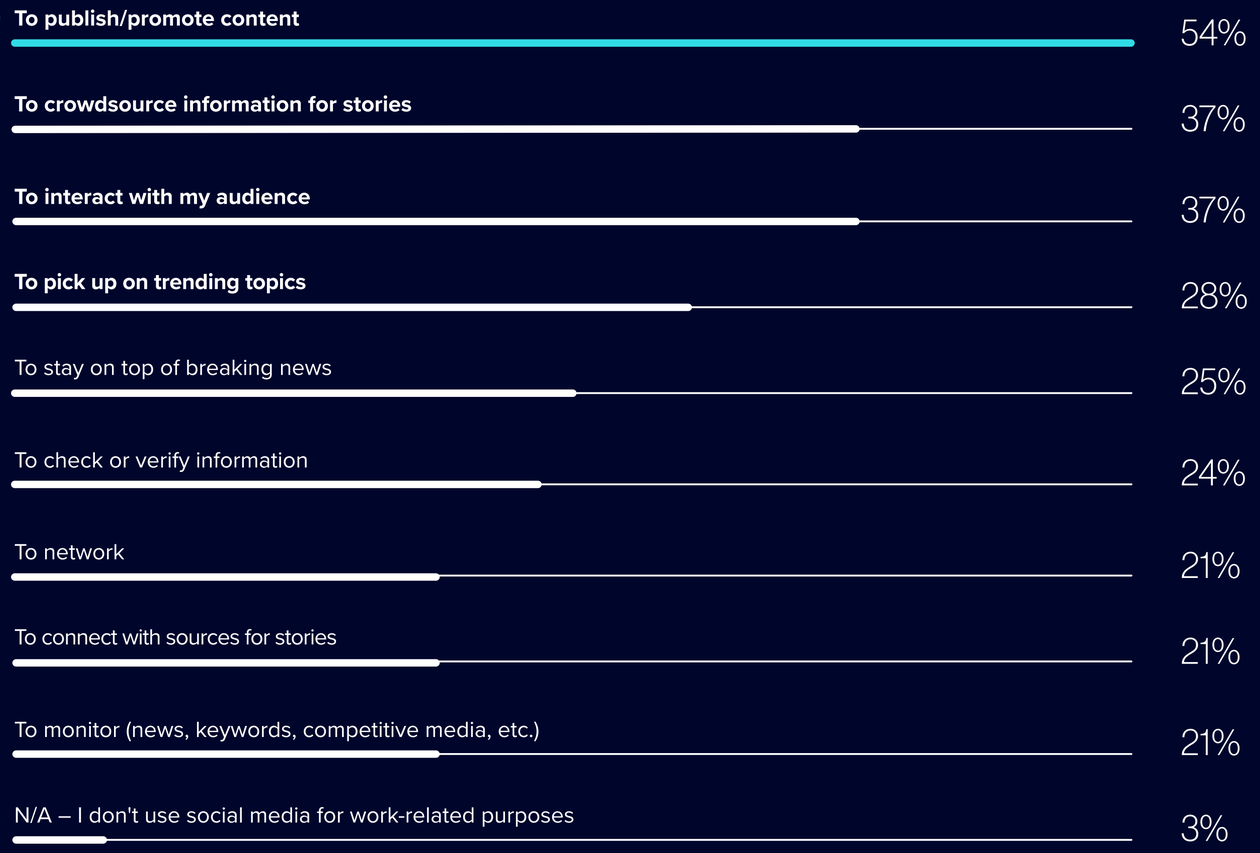
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How journalists use social media for work

Over the past several years, social media has become a must-have channel for the vast majority of journalists, moving beyond just a networking tool to a critical distribution and production hub.

In an era of shrinking newsroom reach, journalists have become their own marketing departments. Thus, it makes sense that the No. 1 reason journalists are on social media is to publish and promote their own content.

In the past year, what are the main reasons you have used social media for work?



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Most-used social media platforms

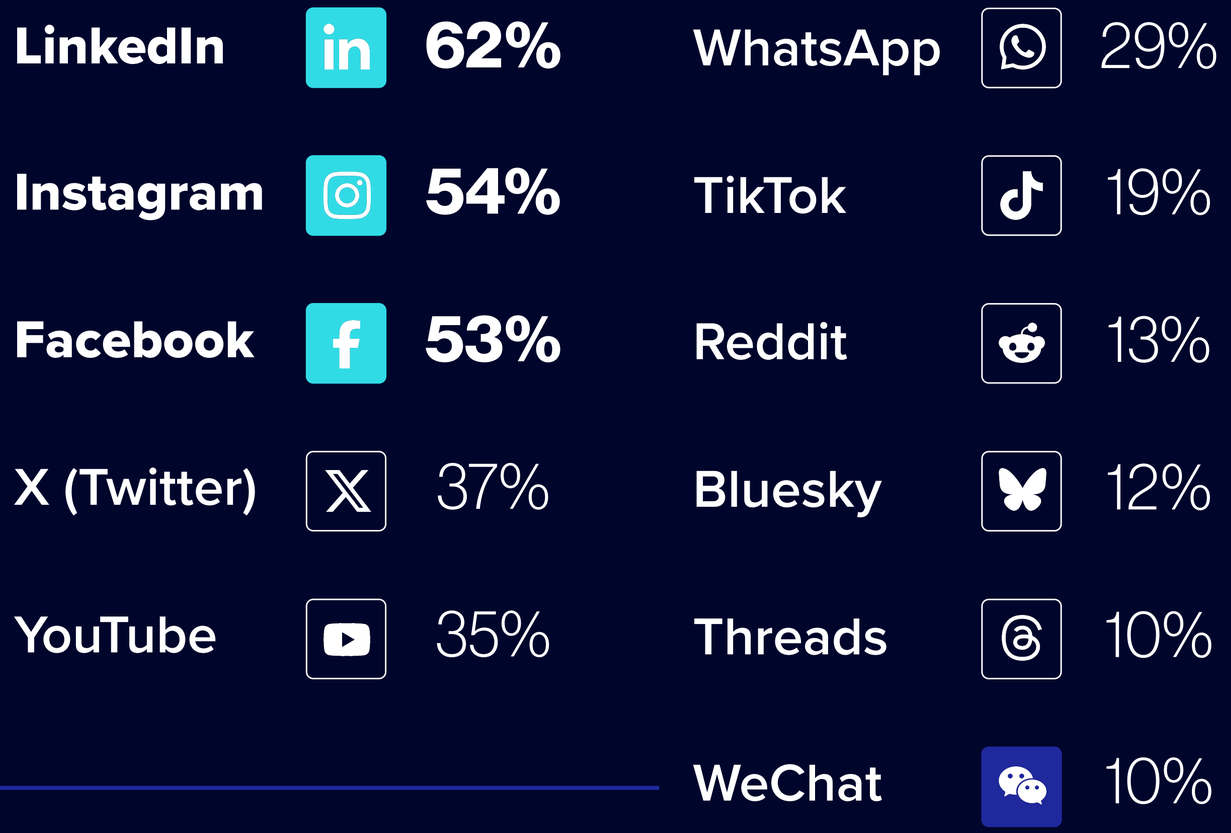
While the reasons journalists use social media vary, certain platforms dominate their time and attention. This snapshot highlights which channels are shaping how journalists engage with information and audiences today.

When we asked about the platforms journalists use most frequently for work, the top answer was LinkedIn, cited by 62% of respondents. Instagram and Facebook followed at 54% and 53% respectively.

Global view: One notable exception here is China, where WeChat, Rednote, and Weibo are the most frequently used social media platforms.

China was also the outlier when we asked journalists to name the one platform they find most valuable for their work. LinkedIn is ranked #1 for 33% across North America, EMEA, and all Asia-Pacific countries except for China, where WeChat is favored by 58% of journalists.

Which of the following social media platforms do you use most frequently for professional purposes?



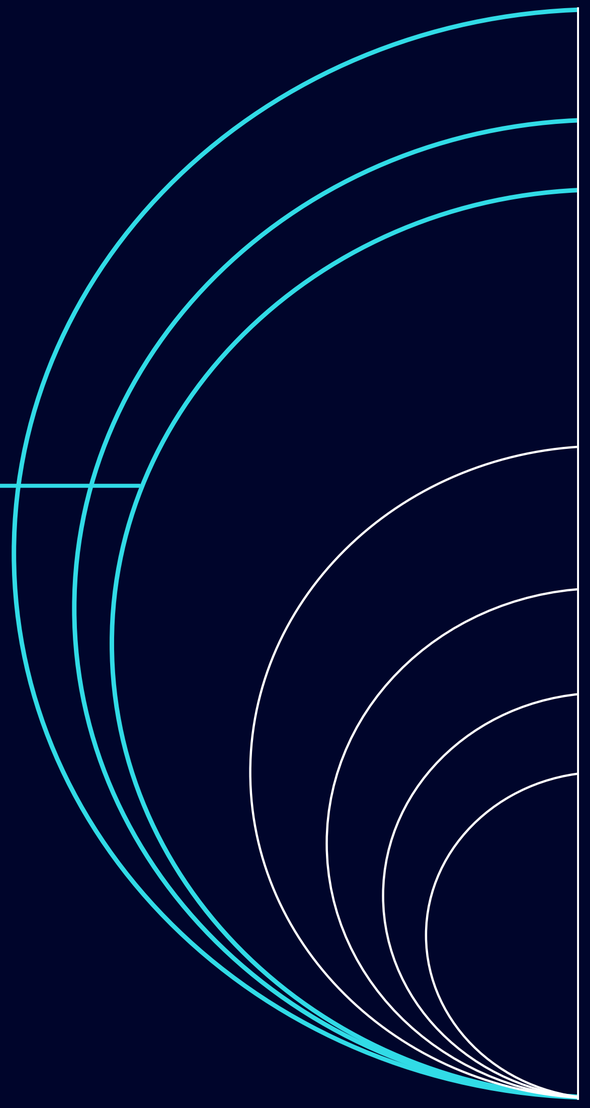
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How journalists use generative AI

For most journalists, generative AI is fast becoming as ubiquitous as social media. From speeding up research to helping brainstorm headlines, here's how journalists are utilizing AI tools.

While journalists are largely avoiding AI for the final creation of stories (and 1 in 5 avoid it altogether), many are using it as a behind-the-scenes "co-pilot" to handle the heavy lifting of logistics, research, and ideation.

Global view: There is a vast geographical divide on AI usage and adoption: Journalists in North America are less likely to engage with AI than their counterparts in European countries and far less than those in APAC. More than 1 in 3 North American journalists say they don't use AI (down from 49% who said the same last year), compared to only 30% in EMEA and a mere 11% in APAC.



48% **Brainstorming (story angles, interview questions, headlines)**

43% **Research or fact-checking**

41% **Transcription or summarization of interviews/audio**

27% Content creation

21% N/A – I don't use generative AI tools

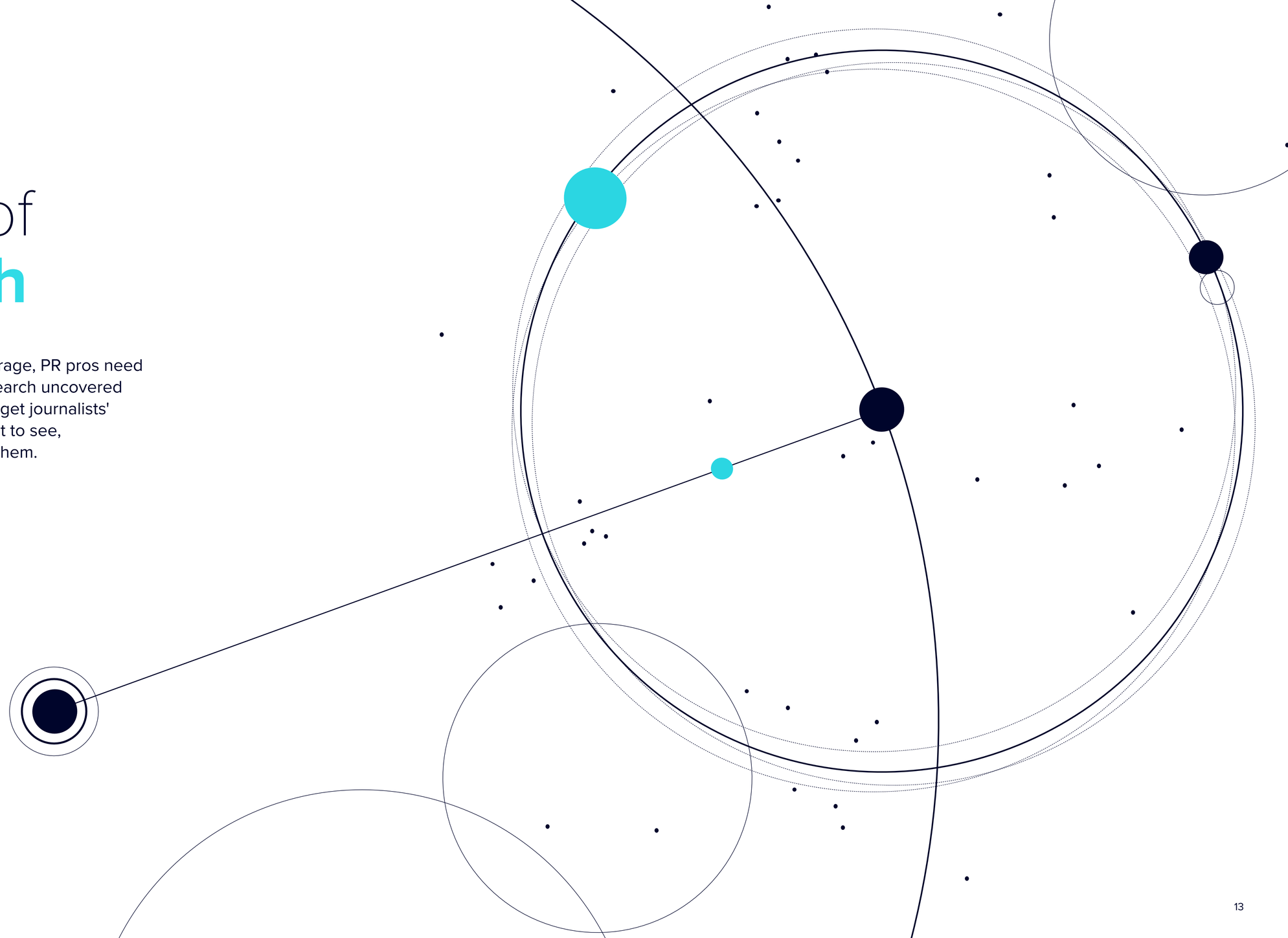
17% SEO optimization

15% Audience analysis (social trends, engagement data, reader interests)

In the past year, have you used generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) for any of the following?

The art of **the pitch**

To secure earned media coverage, PR pros need to have a great pitch. Our research uncovered what elements are needed to get journalists' attention, what they don't want to see, and the best ways to contact them.



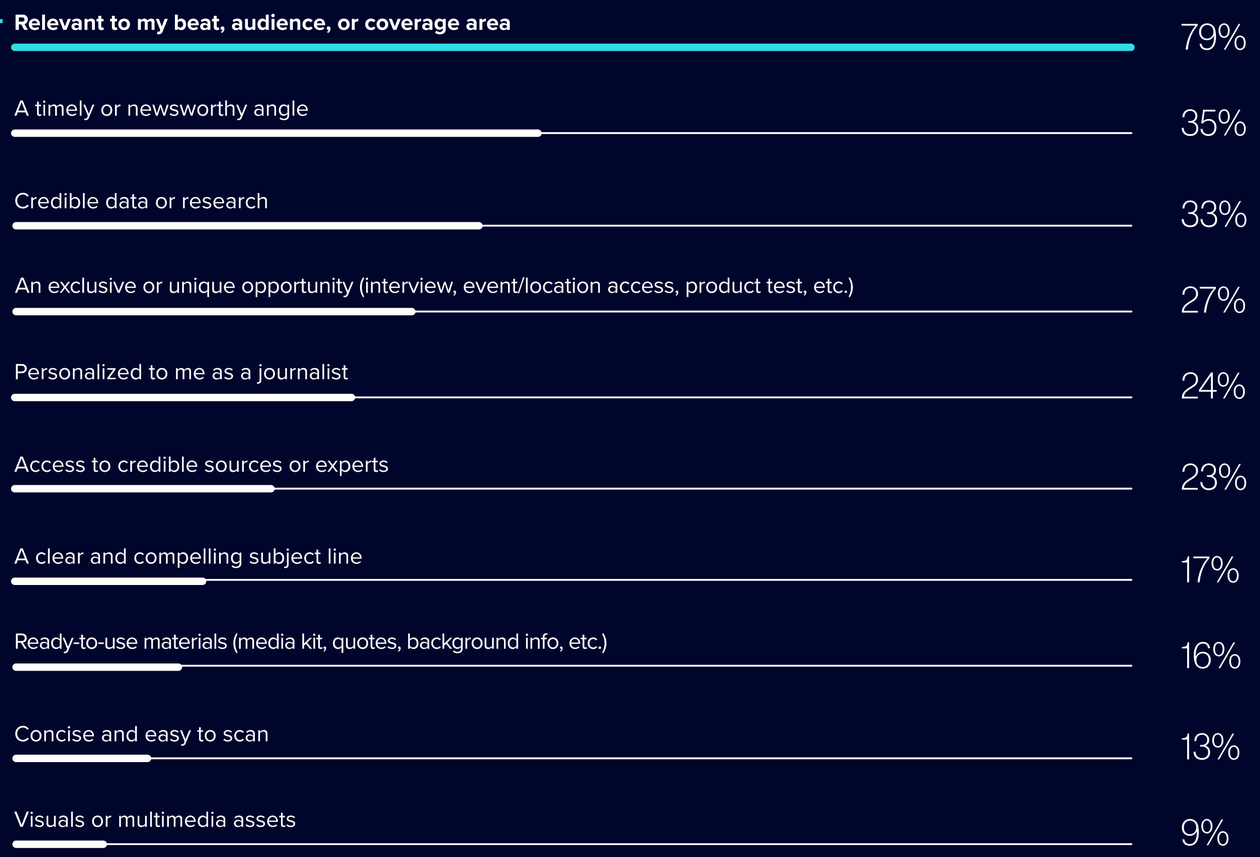
What makes a PR pitch stand out

It's the eternal question for PR: What makes a pitch stand out? When we asked journalists to help answer this question, one factor rose far above the rest: Relevance. Nearly 4 in 5 said they're most likely to engage with pitches aligned to their beat and audience.

Beyond that, timeliness, credible data, and access (whether to exclusives or expert sources) all meaningfully increase interest.

The message is clear: A strong pitch starts with relevance, but it earns attention through news value and added depth.

What elements make you more likely to engage with or consider a PR pitch?



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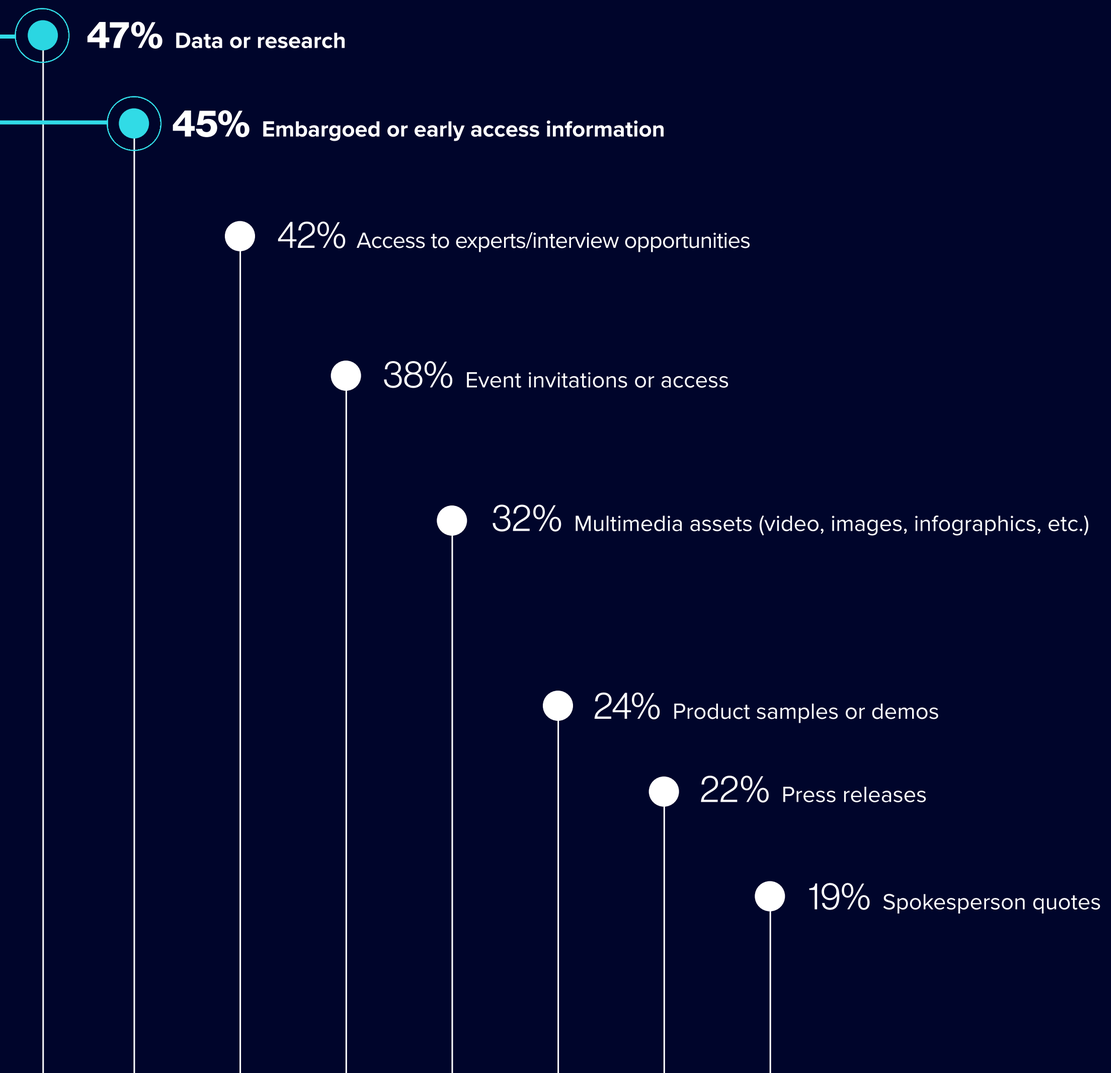
Give them (more of) what they want

Journalists want data and research – the clear leader when it comes to the most useful PR-provided content. It brings a hook and factual backbone that enables journalists to produce stories with unique points of view.

Embargoes and early access are also highly valuable, giving journalists the gift of time to research, fact-check, and produce a high-quality piece without the fear of being scooped.

Given the rise of AI-generated deepfakes, perhaps it's no surprise that real human expertise is also among the most requested resources.

Which of the following resources would you like PR professionals to send you more of?



Word count matters

Journalists are often crunched for time and don't have the bandwidth to digest an essay-sized pitch. In general, whatever you send over needs to be short, sharp, and to the point.

Though the general sweet spot is around 100 to 200 words, our survey data shows flexibility in terms of the type of pitch being sent.

How long should a written pitch be for each of the following types of outreach?

	I don't work with this type of content	Less than 100 words	100 - 200 words	200 - 300 words	300 - 400 words	More than 400 words
Breaking news/timely announcement	11%	26%	32%	17%	9%	5%
Feature or story idea	7%	11%	27%	24%	15%	15%
Expert commentary/source offer	12%	13%	25%	21%	14%	13%
Product launch or update	20%	17%	24%	18%	10%	8%
Event announcement or invite	7%	34%	31%	17%	6%	4%
Newly released data, report, or research	7%	7%	18%	24%	19%	23%

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Think twice, follow up once

Once a pitch is out the door, there's still a dilemma about whether to follow up or not. Our data shows that one extra nudge is enough, but you need to act fast if a journalist reaches out to you first. When asked how soon they expected PR pros to respond to them, more than half (52%) said within 24 hours.

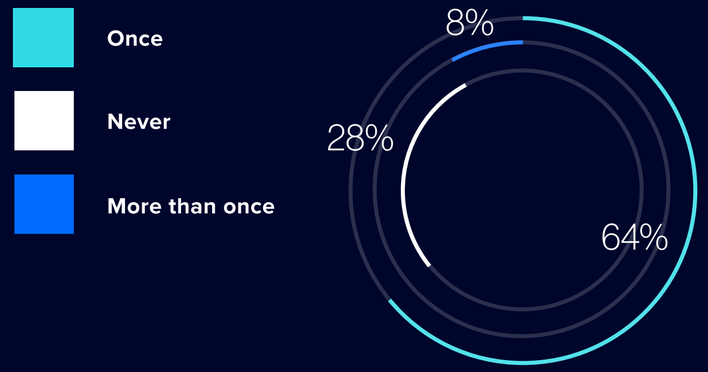
When it comes to reaching out with a pitch, the overwhelming majority of journalists (97%) prefer email. Messaging apps like WhatsApp, Signal, and social media/DMs are tied a distant second with 14%.

Global view: Journalists in APAC are much more amenable to non-email pitches. Though 89% prefer that method, 41% are open to being contacted via messaging apps and 39% through social media.

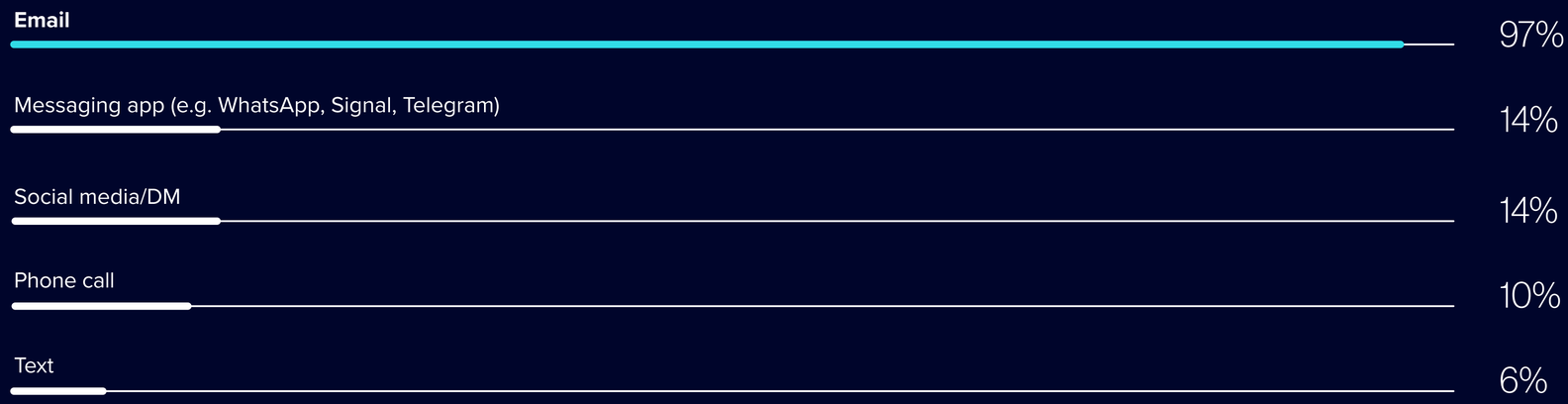
How quickly do you expect a PR professional to respond when you reach out?



How many times should a PR professional follow up with you after sending a pitch?



How do you prefer to receive pitches?

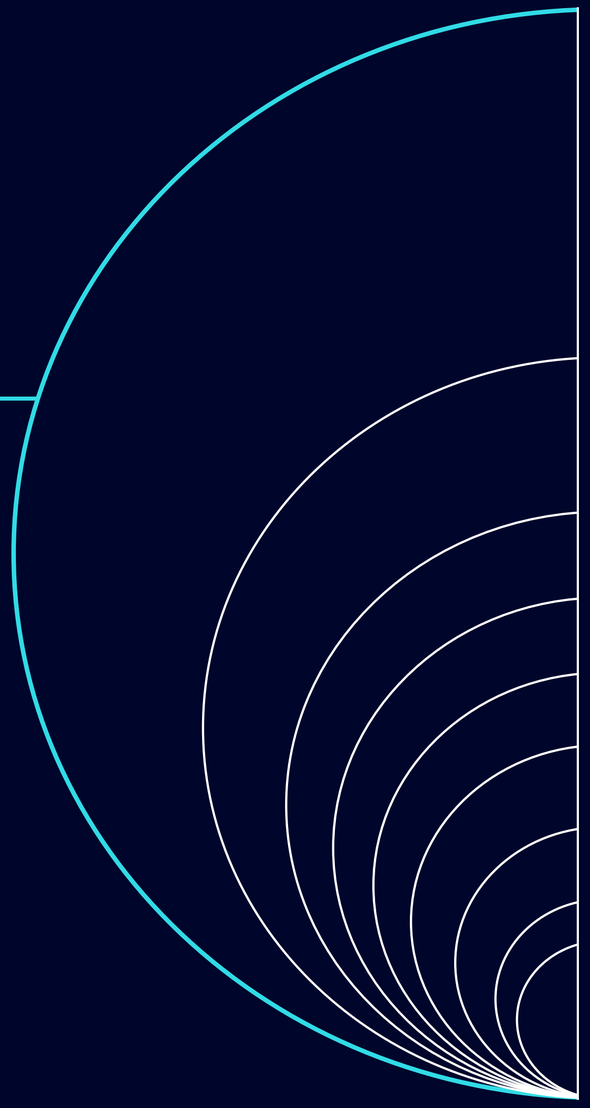


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What to avoid: Why some pitches miss the mark

When asked about what compels journalists to hit “delete” on a pitch, the top answer reinforces the importance of relevance in media outreach. The fact that 82% will actively reject an irrelevant pitch suggests that relevancy isn’t a nice-to-have, it’s a baseline requirement for entry.

These findings also prove that journalists aren’t interested in being a promotional channel for a PR team’s client – they want a clear, newsworthy angle that provides a compelling “so what?” for their audience.



82% **Not relevant to my audience or coverage area**

53% Too promotional or sales-focused

34% No clear news angle or point of view

27% Too generic/mass-email feel

20% Insufficient information

16% Too long to read quickly

8% No contact info for follow-up

5% Too similar to content I’ve recently covered

4% They don’t include multimedia assets

4% Arrives at an inconvenient time

What are the most common reasons for rejecting pitches?

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In their own words:

What is one thing PR professionals could do to better support your work?

I love when PR professionals reference my past stories and offer sources, new information or other angles to move the coverage forward. Any local sources or community orgs that they can connect me with is a PLUS.

Have a better sense of what stories/issues we cover and how we do it. Tailor their pitches to our publication.

Once you've booked the interview, butt out. Too many PR people lately insist on sitting in on – and often trying to shape – interviews and photoshoots. No story is worth that kind of aggravation.

Be reliable! It's amazing to me the number of times I have to follow up with a PR person after I've requested an interview, assets, or additional information. Or the number of times a PR person says they're going to send me something (a sample, a quote, a photo) and just...doesn't.

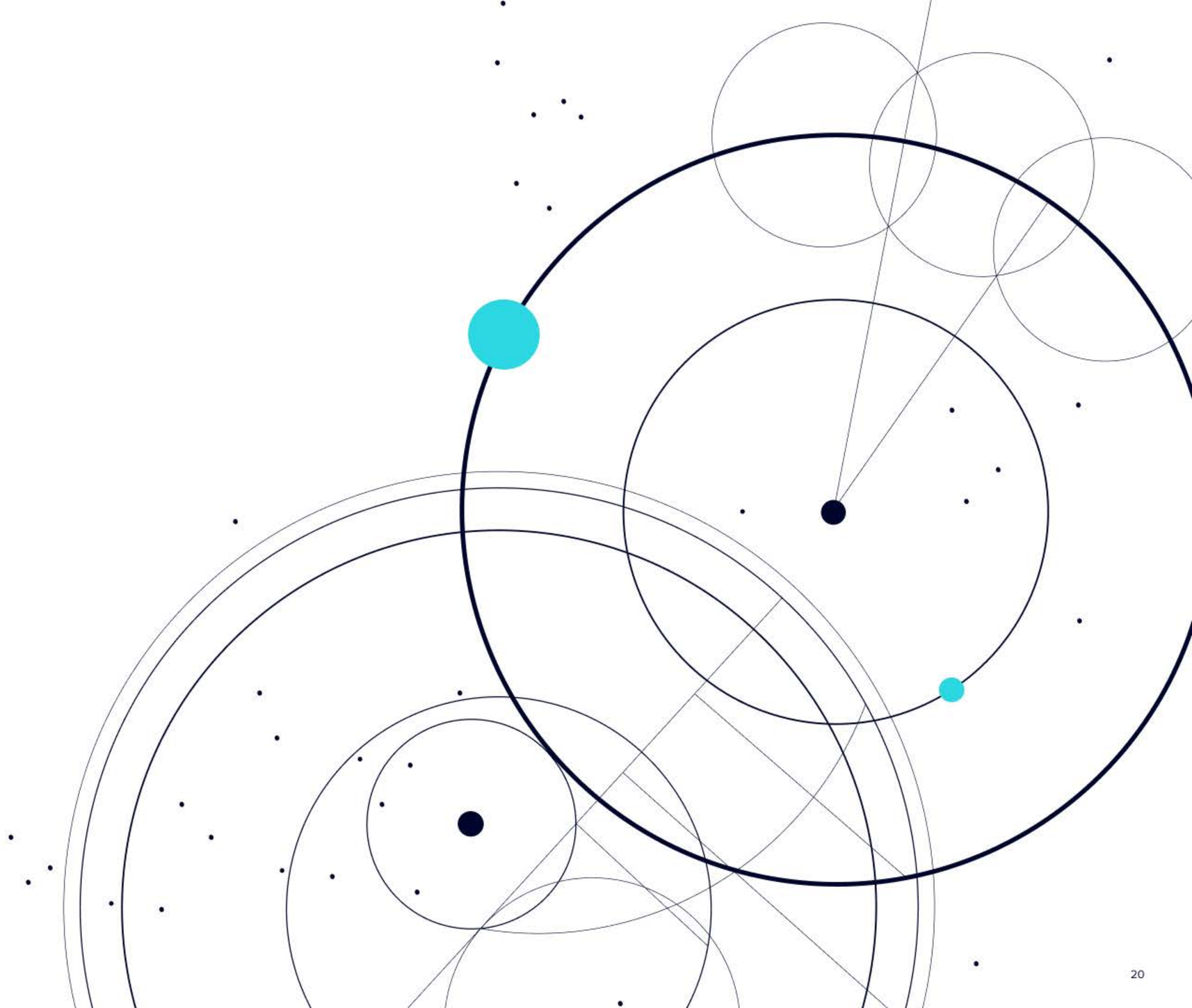
Always provide images in any product or service you pitch. Do NOT say: If you want images, reach out or let me know. I just don't have time for that.

Do not bait and switch with subject matter experts. Too often I am offered the CEO for an interview and after I book the interview, they instead give me an underling, claiming the CEO is busy.

Building better **partnerships**

For PR professionals, relationships are everything. Talking to peers, engaging with customers, or networking with journalists are the heartbeat of public relations.

Working with the media is one of the most important of them all, but our data shows that creating those bonds can be complicated.

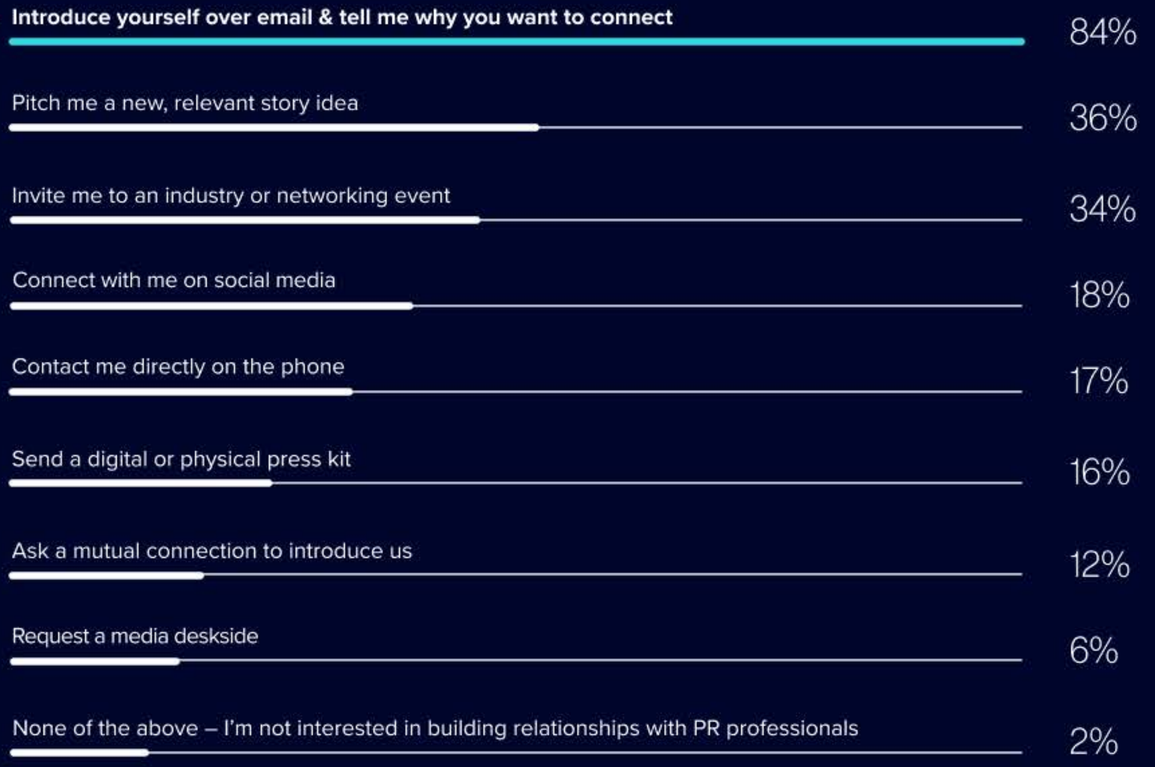


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Creating connections and building relationships

The good news for PR is reporters are open to building relationships – and most agree on a clear way to begin the conversation: Send an email. Eighty-four percent of respondents named this method as the best way to connect with them, putting it far ahead of pitching a new, relevant story idea, or offering an invite to an industry event.

For PR professionals who want to focus on building professional relationships with journalists, what is the best way for them to connect with you/introduce themselves?



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Journalists' biggest frustrations

As well as knowing what journalists do want from their PR partners, it can be equally important to know what they don't want.

Journalists will give PR pros who spam them with irrelevant pitches short shrift, with 72% saying it's the quickest way for them to land on a "don't call" list. Pitches that come across like marketing or glorified advertisements follow, with inaccurate or unsourced information in third spot – a clear connection to reporters' worries about misinformation, cited as their biggest challenge.



72% **Spamming me with irrelevant pitches**

49% Pitches that sound like marketing brochures

40% Providing inaccurate or unsourced information

38% Following up with me repeatedly

22% Dodging inquiries/lack of transparency

19% Canceling on me last minute

13% Failing to respond to me same day/within deadline

What are the biggest reasons you would block a PR professional or put them on your "don't call" list?

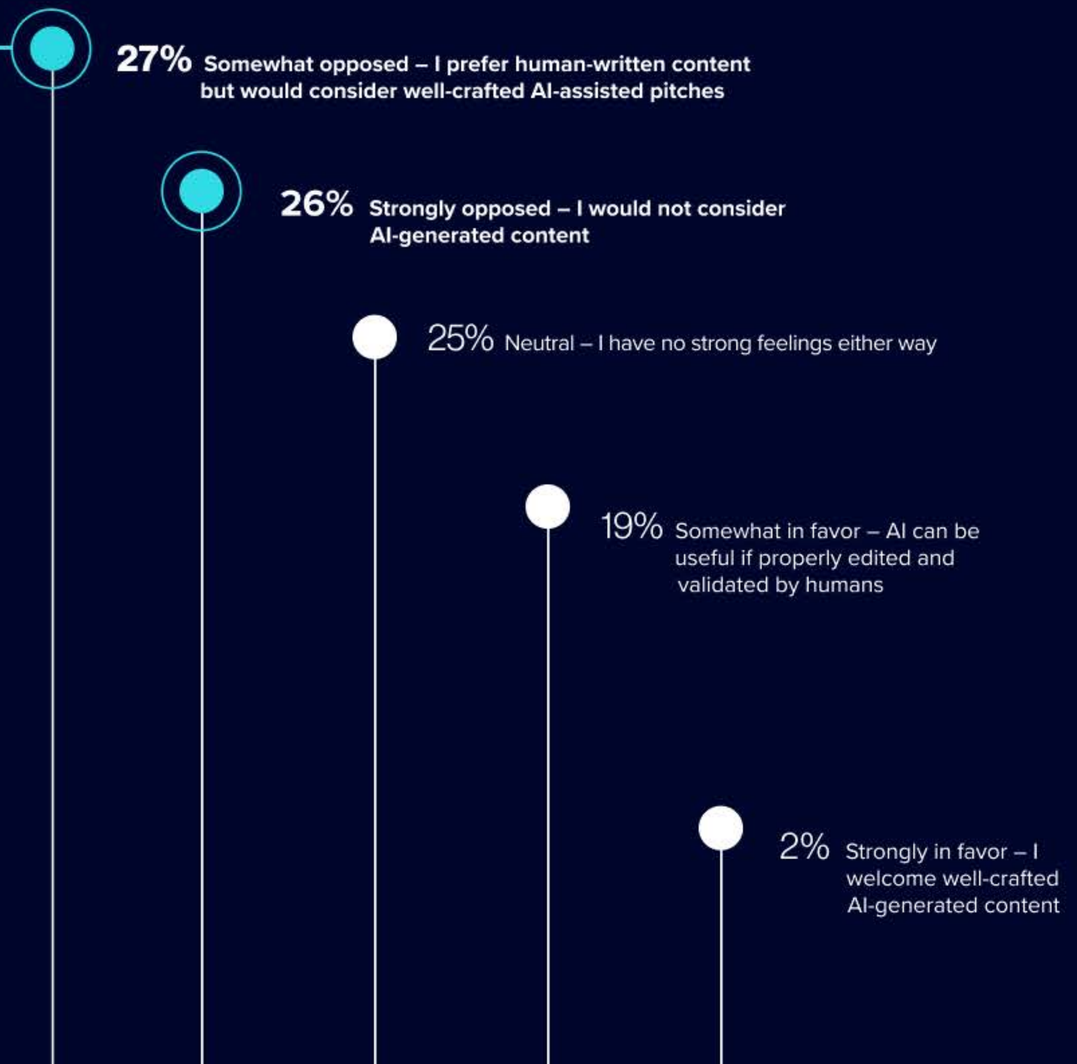
Is AI an asset or obstacle to media relations?

PR pros are using AI to help produce pitches and press releases, but how do journalists feel about this?

The answer is mixed. More than half (53%) of reporters are opposed to being on the receiving end of AI-generated work from PR, but 25% are neutral and 21% are in favor. This isn't an overwhelming "no," but it is an indicator that PR pros need to tread carefully with use of AI in content sent to journalists – accuracy, personalization, and a human tone are critical.

Global view: There's a significant regional divide when it comes to opinions on AI. Journalists in North America show the strongest opposition to PR professionals using the technology: 39% say they are "strongly opposed" to it compared to 25% in EMEA and just 8% in APAC.

How do you feel about PR professionals using AI to generate pitches or press releases?



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In their own words:

What is one thing PR professionals could do to better support your work?

Get back to me. And when you say you have a subject expert at hand willing to talk, make sure that you really do. Don't leave me hanging for hours only to tell me just before deadline that they're unavailable. When you do that, I start blocking your email.

Too many PR professionals pitch me without ever learning who I am or what I do. Their pitches are thus irrelevant. If they can't be bothered to craft a real relationship, then I can't be bothered to respond.

If PRs dodge me or are rude, I don't fancy working with you again...I don't know why you wouldn't want to nurture a positive working relationship [with a journalist]. Always remember, reporter today, could be editor tomorrow and ban your agency/comms team.

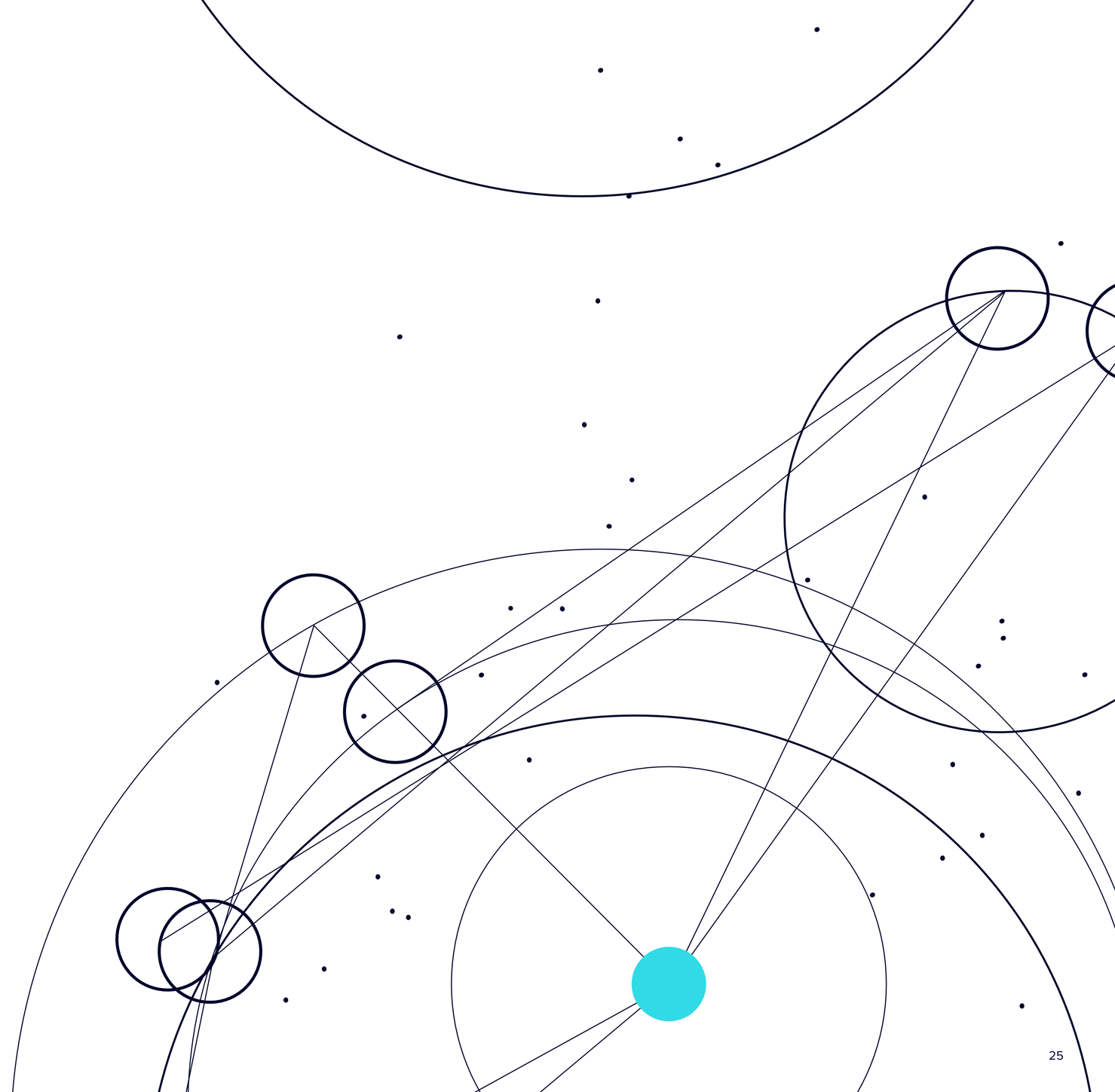
Don't send unfinalized press releases and don't send multiple amended releases. Wait until it's accurate.

Do not send me irrelevant pitches. Recognize my beat. Sometimes I think I'm included in a pitch splash for the PR professional, particularly a young one, to meet a quota.

Support writers, advocate for us... Have people in the coverage share and amplify the earned media and the writer.

Next steps:
Takeaways for PR

This year's State of the Media data makes it clear that earning journalists' trust requires a focus on relevance, responsiveness, and respect for their time. Keep in mind these takeaways as you look to build strong relationships, deliver more effective pitches, and develop your outreach strategy.



Takeaways for PR professionals

1

Relevance is THE competitive advantage in media outreach

Journalists are inundated with pitches, but the vast majority they receive miss the mark, and are irrelevant to them or their audiences. In overloaded inboxes, personalized pitches are the single biggest differentiator. To stand out:

- Research the journalist's beat, audience, location, and recent coverage before pitching
- Tailor each pitch to the specific publication and the journalist's platform (newsletter, podcast, digital site, etc.)
- Lead with the clearest angle for their audience – not a generic, mass email message

PR teams that prioritize quality and targeting over volume dramatically improve their chances of getting noticed.

2

Help journalists help you

Journalists are overworked and under-resourced – that leaves little time to verify facts, chase assets or reshape vague pitches. They're also relying on PR-provided materials above all other sources for ideas or leads. If you want journalists to cover your story, make it easier for them to do so:

- Provide clear, accurate information and transparent methodology for any data or research
- Include ready-to-use assets such as high-resolution images, b-roll, infographics, quotes, and background materials
- Respond quickly and meet deadlines when journalists reach out

The more work you remove from journalists' plates, the more valuable you become as a source.

3

Give journalists what they want – data, expertise, and early access

When asked what they want from PR professionals, journalists consistently prioritize original data, research, expert access, and embargoed or early information over traditional promotional materials. That means:

- Lead pitches with a compelling statistic or unique data point
- Offer exclusive or embargoed information whenever possible
- Provide access to credible subject matter experts who can add context and insight
- Include suggested story angles or interview questions to spark ideas

Providing something journalists can't easily get elsewhere is one of the most effective ways to earn coverage and build relationships.

Takeaways for PR professionals

4

Respect journalists' time and communication boundaries

Inbox overload means journalists have little patience for spammy outreach or persistent follow-ups. The data suggests clear boundaries: Most say one follow-up is enough, and excessive outreach is a top frustration.

- Send concise, well-written pitches with a strong subject line and clear news hook
- Follow up once, then move on
- Avoid mass emails and irrelevant pitches
- Use social media for research and listening, not unsolicited pitching

Being respectful of journalists' time and preferences signals professionalism and helps build long-term credibility.

5

AI is changing the workflow, but authenticity still matters most

Journalists are increasingly experimenting with AI tools for research, brainstorming, and summarization – and the number who don't use AI has dropped significantly compared to last year. At the same time, most oppose AI-generated pitches, largely over concerns about impersonal outreach and misinformation. With that in mind:

- Use AI as a support tool, not a replacement for personalization
- Ensure all content is accurate, fact-checked, and written in a human voice
- Focus on what AI can't replicate: Exclusive access, nuanced insight, and authentic storytelling

The takeaway: AI should enhance your work, but the relationship with journalists must remain human.

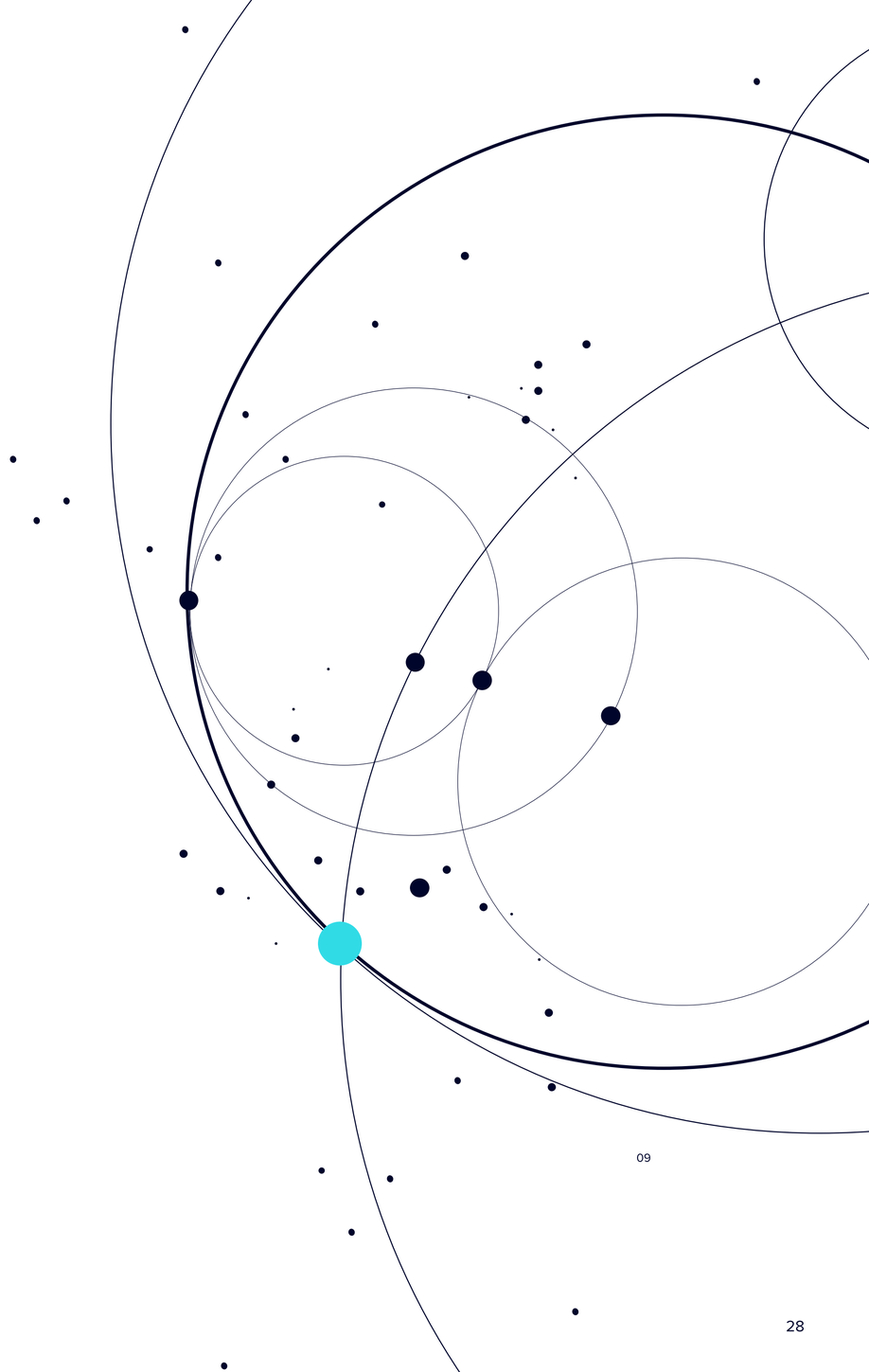
Methodology

Cision conducted its 2026 State of the Media survey in January and February of 2026. Surveys were emailed to Cision Media Database members, who are vetted by the company's media research experts to verify their positions as media professionals, influencers, and bloggers. We also made the survey available to media professionals in the PR Newswire for Journalists database.

This year's survey collected responses from 1,899 respondents in 19 markets across the globe: U.S., Canada, UK, France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Spain, Portugal, China, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. For select questions throughout this report, respondents were permitted to choose more than one answer, resulting in percentages exceeding 100%.

A portion of the questions asked in the survey were also optional, so participants may have skipped some, resulting in percentages less than 100%.

It's also important to note that for this year's survey, we evolved several questions to derive more insightful data. As a result, direct comparisons to previous years' data may not be available. Any direct comparisons we were able to make to last year's data are noted throughout the report.



About Cision

Cision is the global leader in consumer and media intelligence, engagement, and communication solutions. We equip PR and corporate communications, marketing, and social media professionals with the tools they need to excel in today's data-driven world. Our deep expertise, exclusive data partnerships, and award-winning brands and products, including CisionOne, Brandwatch, Trajaan, and PR Newswire, enable over 75,000 companies and organizations, including 84% of the Fortune 500, to see and be seen, understand and be understood by the audiences that matter most to them.

To learn more about how to apply the insights and findings from this year's report into your own communications strategy, schedule a consultation with an expert today.

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